

More Hot Weather Blooming Plants

Distribute 08-03-2017

Several weeks ago we discussed growing poinciana, esperanza, lantana, and dwarf ruellia in recognition of their showy blooms this summer. There are a number of other plants that are coping with the heat and providing color in San Antonio area landscapes.

Firebush has small red tubular blooms that cover its stems. If you grow the sun-loving shrub in the ground it will grow back to 6-7 feet tall, upright shrub every summer after freezing back to the roots every winter. Grown in the ground and it meets the definition of a very drought-tolerant plant suitable for a xeriscape landscape. Grow firebush in a container and the plant grows to form a 3feet wide attractive globe that requires regular watering. The difference in drought tolerance relates to its normally far-spreading fibrous root system that is limited in the confines of the container and relies on irrigation rather than collection of water from the soil. However you grow firebush it is a favorite nectar source for hummingbirds. A firebush in a container on a patio is the cause of dogfights for access by the fall migrating hummingbirds. After the first cold wave firebush foliage makes an additional show by turning red-purple. Firebush is often grown in settings with esperanza and Poinciana. Deer eat firebush.

Bougainvillea is another sun-loving plant that is blooming strongly on area patios. There are a number of color choices including lavender, red, pink and off-white. It does very well in a 12-14 inch hanging basket where the crown will be about 30 inches high and wide depending on how it is pruned.

Bougainvillea blooms best if it is only irrigated after the soil dries to one inch deep. Fertilize with Osmocote or hibiscus food. Bougainvillea blooms most when it is root bound. Every time you choose to transplant to a larger container there is a pause in blooming while the plant expands its root system and crown. Bougainvillea is not root hardy so containers need to be moved into freeze protected areas in the winter.

Penta is another colorful plant for the patio that is blooming now. There are several selections of penta available including a new one that is spreading rather than upright. The plants usually grow to 2 feet tall with large continuous clusters of small blooms in red, white, pink and lavender. Penta will grow in the sun but does best in light shade. It is another favorite nectar source of butterflies and hummingbirds.

Moss roses or portulaca are heat-loving annuals that have succulent-like foliage and quarter size rose-resembling blooms in red, yellow, pink, white, and orange. They can be grown in rows or groups in the flower garden but are most impressive as a low-growing container plant for full-sun. They only grow to 4 inches tall but are covered with blooms now in most gardens and container plantings. Do not over water moss rose, they do best when they dry out between waterings.

Vinca is an annual flower that is blooming at its best now. The plants grow 12 to 24 inches tall depending on the selection. The single layer blooms are quarter-size and available in red, violet, pink, white, and bi-colors. The best selection is "Cora" because it is aerial phytophthora resistant. Aerial phytophthora is the meltdown disease that occurred if vinca was planted during cool, moist weather or trying to grow during rainy spells. In addition to its drought tolerance, vinca is not eaten by deer in most situations.

Vinca, moss rose, firebush, and penta are all available at area nurseries in full bloom. They can be planted in containers or the garden in your landscape without missing a day without blooms between now and Thanksgiving. Bougainvillea blooms in cycles so the plants in full bloom will have one or more bloom-pause between now and when the cold weather arrives.