Esperanza (Yellow Bells), Lindeheimer Senna (Velvet Leaf Senna), Desert Willow, Pride of Barbados, and Bougainvillea have done well through the prolonged drought we have experienced this past growing season. The drought and heat has not affected Deer Muhly or Pine Muhly. Other native shrubs that like hot, dry weather are Flame Acanthus, a shrub that is covered with red/orange blooms beginning in July through fall. Its tubular flowers attract butterflies and hummingbirds. It grows 3-4 feet. Chisos Acanthus or Big Bend Acanthus, (Anisacanthus linearis) is a yellow variety.

Texas Lantana, Texas Bird of Paradise, Mexican Bird of Paradise and the showy Pride of Barbados (Caesalpinia pulcherrima) are more hot weather loving shrubs that bloom in hot, dry conditions. Many plants such as Salvia Greggi, Mexican Honeysuckle, Rudbeckia (Black-Eyed Susan), and Mexican Bush Sage considered drought tolerant have struggled to survive. This is due to the lack of time each day for the plant to respire during a cooler nighttime temperature. Plants produce maximum growth when daytime temperature is 10-15 degrees higher than the nighttime temperature. Many evenings the temperature was 99 degrees at 10 PM!

When planting during drought conditions, place the pot in a larger container and thoroughly soak it. While it is hydrating, dig a hole no deeper than the original pot and fill the hole with water several times to soak it. After the water has drained, remove the plant from the pot and tease the roots so that they won’t continue to grow in a circle. Add decomposed granite to the soil you place around the plant to add minerals to the soil and to help keep the soil from compacting. Water often. Newly planted plants appreciate shade the first few days until they get established. You can attach shade cloth to wooden stakes and place over the plant. Providing shade for your newly planted shrub and keeping the plant moist will help it survive the severe drought conditions.

These drought hardy plants will help you select the right ones at the Bell County Master Gardener Fall Plant Sale on this Sat. Oct.1, 7:30 Am to 1pm. Have any questions about gardening in Central Texas? Contact ask bcmga@gmail.com