Adapted Non-Natives — Perennials and Annuals

by Ursula Nanna, Bell County Master Gardener

In the last article, I discussed adapted, nonnative trees and shrubs. Today, I'll discuss ornamental grasses, vines, bulbs, ferns, and perennials. There are also a few annuals that lend themselves to seasonal color, and they will also be mentioned.

As with trees and shrubs, there are some nonnative ornamental grasses, vines, bulbs, and perennials that have become so well adjusted they are now considered a nuisance. What normally occurs is that the root system loves to travel, and, in doing so, the roots surround its neighbor plants, grow through them, and may eventually crowd them out. In other cases, the seeds are very prolific and sprout wherever they contact ground, including your neighbors' property. As with certain vines, they climb without restraint and can damage exterior house structures with suckers, actually crush privacy fence boards.

Some of the nuisance "plants" are: Ruellia (standard 3-4' tall Mexican Petunia); Bouncing Bet (soapwort); Holly Fern; Blood Fern; Goldenrod; Trumpet Vine; English Ivy; and Lyreleaf Sage. Certainly, there may be others that will challenge us, but these are a few. Of course, their beauty of foliage and blooms make them attractive in your landscape.

The following is a list of adapted "plants" that have come to love Texas:

ORNAMENTAL GRASSES: Black Fountain Grass; Chinese Silver Grass; Inland Sea Oats; Japanese Silver Grass; Little Blue Stem Grass;Miscanthus Morning Light; Maiden Grass; Purple/White Fountain Grass; Tall Fescue; and Zebra Grass

VINES: Autumn Clematis; Clematis Ramona; Cypress Vine; Purple Creeper; Silver Lace Vine; Trumpet Vine; and Virginia Creeper

BULBS: Blackberry Lily; Calla Lily; Canna Lily; Crinimum Lily; Day Lily, Hardy Amaryllis; Iris; Lily of the Nile; Narcissus; Rain Lily; and Spider Lily

FERNS: Autumn Fern; Holly Fern; Japanese Painted Fern; Royal Fern; Tassel Fern; and Wood Fern

As if that wasn't enough, the listing of perennials is even longer. We have become used to seeing and using these adapted plants in our landscaping plans, and they are very common now, as well as beautiful!

PERENNIALS: Anise Hyssop; Artemesia Powis Castle; Batfaced Cuphea; Bee Balm/ Monarda; Bicolor Sage; Bleeding Heart; Blue Cardinal Flower; Blue Queen Salvia, Bulbenella; Cherry Sage; Copper Canyon Daisy; Coral Bells; Creeping Vitex; French Hollyhock; Gailardia; Germander; Goldenrod; Hardy Blue Plumbago; Hardy Dianthus; Hummingbird Mint; Lamb's Ear; Lemon Balm; Mexican Bush Sage; Mexican Butterfly Weed; Mealy Blue Sage; Mexican Mint Marigold; Mexican Oregano; Oxalis; Oxeye Daisy; Pineapple Sage; Red Cardinal Flower; Russian Sage; Santolina; Scabiosa/Pincushion; Sedum Autumn Joy; Sedum Dragon's Blood; Sedum Stonecrop; Shasta Daisy; Shrimp Plant; Soapwort/Bouncing Bet; Society Garlic; Spanish Lavender; Stokes Aster; Thrift; and Yarrow.

Remember, for seasonal color, Peony, and Ornamental Kale gives a great flare. I have even seen some red Mustard Greens added for background color. For spring and then again in the fall, choose adapted Marigolds, Petunias, and Zinnias for the annual bed.

It's almost time to make those choices for next year's gardens. Adapted plants will round out the garden accenting those wonderful primary picks that are Texas Natives. Remember that these adapted plants are not all nuisance plants or invasive. Plan where you want to put them and enjoy their show in your garden. Just choose wisely so they fit in your landscape and be aware as to what their qualities, both good and bad, are.