Bell County Master Gardeners
Tip of the Week
By Mary Lew Quesinberry
“Go Gray “

When making your plant selections, consider adding gray plants to your landscape. Gray plants will, by their quiet demeanor, make other plants stand out; reds are redder, greens are greener when close to gray plants. Gray plants are deer resistant, drought tolerant, and are good candidates for xeriscaping. The leaves of many gray plants are soft and furry.

Gray plants that do well in Bell County are Cat Thyme, Cat Mint, Mexican Bush Sage, Lindeheimer Senna, Russian Sage, Lamb's Ear, Texas Sage (Cenizo), Cotoneaster, Wooly Butterfly Bush, Gray Bush Germander, Eleagnus, Artemesia, Santolina, and the ground covers, Silver Pony Foot and Gregg Dalea, Lavender is also a wonderful gray, drought tolerant plant. My favorites are Spanish Lavender and Provence. Both these lavenders are cold hardy and make beautiful large shrubs.

When planting a drought tolerant plant, ensure that it has good drainage by elevating its planting site. Soak the plant in a bucket of water for a few minutes to ensure that the root ball is moist before planting. Tease the roots and take care not to place the root ball deeper than it was in the pot. Water regularly the first year. Even drought tolerant plants must be watered the first year to get their roots established. The soil in Bell County is either rocky with thin clay soil or Backland Prairie with deep clay soil.

Decomposed granite is a good remedy to clay soil. Incorporate into the soil, one-third decomposed granite. This will keep the clay soil flexible. It will add grit to the clay and it will provide minerals that your plants will appreciate. Decomposed granite is inexpensive and can be found at your local rock yard or garden center.

Have any questions about gardening in Central Texas? Contact ask.bcmga@gmail.com

In the photo: This Provence Lavender has been planted here for four years. It is a fragrant, drought tolerant plant that does well in Central Texas. It is deer resistant and if planted properly will grow into a beautiful shrub.