

**October 5, 2015**

**AGRIVIEW**

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**October is bulb buying month. They are in fresh supply and provide welcome late winter and early spring color for the yard. Bulbs which can be planted right after purchasing include daffodils and the smaller flowered jonquils, species tulips and grape hyacinths. The larger showy tulips and hyacinths need to be refrigerated at least 45 to 60 days to provide enough chilling to bloom properly next year. Plant them in late November or early December.**

**The most popular of the cool season flowering annuals to be set out now are pansies. There are so many types and colors of pansies it might be hard to pick just one. There are pastel shades, varieties with no faces, and miniature flowers, so you should have no trouble finding one you like. One tip for flowering annuals - the brighter the color, like reds or yellows, the easier they will be seen from a distance. Blues are best viewed up close.**

**Besides pansies, other bedding plants that can be planted now include pinks, dianthus, flowering cabbage, and kale, snapdragons, violas and calendulas.**

**October is also a great month to divide and plant spring-blooming perennials like native columbines, daylilies, phlox, Louisiana and bearded irises, dianthus, coreopsis, coneflowers and daisies. If you have extras after dividing, give to or trade with a gardening friend or neighbor.**

**Many desirable native or wild Texas plants are adaptable for the home landscape. The natives are hardy to local weather conditions, local soils, and perhaps more tolerant of local garden insects and diseases. Most natives are easy to grow, yet the task of successfully transplanting the desired native from the wild is often difficult and must be done with care.**

**Before digging, decide which native plants will best fit your landscape needs. It would be unwise to select a native dogwood for a sunny location, since dogwood demands shade or overhead protection. The planting area for the new plant should be well prepared prior to transplanting.**

**In choosing the native plant to transplant, do not attempt to transplant an overly large specimen. Small plants are usually more vigorous. They grow much faster and are easier to handle.**

**Pruning transplanted plants can be difficult, but usually is essential for viability. Cut back the upper branches and end shoots of limbs to compensate for loss of root area and to encourage new branching and foliage growth come spring. Some of the foliage should be stripped or removed from evergreen plants.**

**Some of the most desirable and abundant native plants that may be transplanted include: dogwood, redbud, river birch, sassafras, cherry, laurel and native oak elm.**

**Although grass is generally regarded as the most desirable ground cover for the home landscape, there are situations where it may not be the most practical landscape covering. In steeply sloping or heavily shaded areas of the landscape, where grass will not grow well, other methods of covering the soil must frequently be selected. One of the most satisfactory methods is the use of ground cover plants.**

**Ground covers are low-growing plants that spread by underground or above-ground stems that have an inherent trailing growth habit. As these plants grow and develop, they produce a continuous mat on the soil surface. Ground cover plants may range from woody vines to dwarf shrubs, depending on individual needs.**

**Some of the more typical uses of ground covers are to cover bare areas of ground, prevent erosion of the soil, give variety in the yard or garden, regulate foot traffic in the yard or garden when used as edging for pathways and to unify unrelated shrubs and flower beds in the landscape. In addition, ground covers are frequently used under or around trees, where grass grows poorly or where exposed tree roots make mowing a problem. Ground cover plants eliminate the need for mowing as well as concealing the exposed tree roots.**

**Many possibilities for living ground covers are available. For shade or partial shade use vinca, Asiatic jasmine, English ivy, monkey grass, liriop, ajuga, and hypericum. For sunny locations, use Asiatic jasmine, monkey grass, creeping junipers, purple-leaf honeysuckle, liriop, daylilies, santolina, sedum and dwarf yaupon.**

**Proper soil preparation is needed before ground cover plants are planted. Dig the soil at least six inches deep. Rake thoroughly to remove grass roots. Spread two to three inches of organic material such as peat, well-rotted manure, or leaf mold over the ground, and spade it into the soil.**

**It is essential to remove all grass, and to have a weed-free planting area. Once the ground cover is planted, it is difficult to eradicate undesirable weeds and grass.**

**On rocky or uneven soil, where the entire area cannot be worked, dig individual**

holes. Dig these deep enough so that you can back-fill partially with soil mixed with organic material before you set the plants.

Ground cover planting will profit from a mulch such as pine needles or pine bark to hold the soil in place until the planting is established.

Ground covers can be planted anytime during the growing season. Fall and spring plantings give the best results if potted or container plants are used. Keep the new planting well watered until it becomes established. With all of the recent rain, keeping the soil moist shouldn't pose a problem for awhile.

**IMPORTANT DATES:**

- October 10<sup>th</sup> - Hunter Education Class - 7:30 a.m. - Texas Freshwater Fisheries Center, Athens - 903-676-2277 for more information and to register
- October 18<sup>th</sup> - Hunter Education Class - 7:30 a.m. - Texas Freshwater Fisheries Center, Athens - 903-676-2277 for more information and to register
- October 31<sup>st</sup> - Hunter Education Class - 7:30 a.m. - Texas Freshwater Fisheries Center, Athens - 903-676-2277 for more information and to register

*Rick Hirsch is the Henderson County Extension Agent - Agriculture for the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service. Visit our web page at <http://henderson.agrilife.org/>.*