



FROM A GARDENING PERSPECTIVE...

BLUEBONNETS FOR NEXT YEAR

By://

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What a wonderful year 2016 has been for Bluebonnets! There has been plenty of rain and a long, mild spring to keep them lingering. Some people started seeing blooms as early as late February and there are still vestiges of blue everywhere.

As highway vistas change from blue to yellow, pink, white and purple, the perennial question occurs: How does a person get Bluebonnets to bloom at home? Well, "home" needs to be very sunny, poor soil and no irrigation. Bluebonnets are legumes which means they produce beans. They also are nitrogen fixers which means that in nature they sprout up where the soil has been disturbed, burned or abused. They help poor soil recover. That doesn't mean that Bluebonnets won't grow in good soil...if the soil at "home" is good soil...it just means that their other needs (sun and no irrigation) need to be met.

Now is the time to collect bluebonnet plants from the yard, field, a friend's yard or field, or with permission from private landowners who happen to have big bluebonnet fields. The Palo Pinto Master Gardeners discussed the process of collecting seeds and came up with a couple of suggestions. The easiest is just to pull old plants, bag them up and take them to an area for seeding. Toss them around the area and mow or don't mow as desired. Mowed plants look more tidy. For an even more tidy result, the pulled plants can be put in a large plastic bag and left in a hot area (unsealed and not direct sun). After a day or so, the seed pods can be heard popping like popcorn in the bag. Then the bag with plants inside is scrunched up, stepped on or otherwise abused until the seeds are separated from the plants and the pods. The messy part can be thrown into the garden mulch pile and the seeds can be discreetly sown in a sunny part of the lawn or in the heat zone between the street and sidewalk. That's all that needs to be done. The Bluebonnet seeds will lay around all summer and bake like they do in the wild. In the fall, they should germinate and grow little rosettes of green which will dot the landscape through the winter. In the warmth of spring, they will bloom.

Another choice is just to buy some bluebonnet seeds. The Natural Resources Conservation Service sells seeds at a reasonable price. They usually put a sign out in the fall saying the bluebonnet seeds have arrived. They are located at 206 SE 3rd Avenue in Mineral Wells.

If you have questions for a Master Gardener, call the Texas Agrilife Extension Office in Palo Pinto 940-659-1228. Be sure to look at the Palo Pinto County Master Gardener page on Facebook and read past articles on our website, <http://palopinto.agrilife.org/>.