



THE DANGERS OF GENETIC ENGINEERING: A CALL TO ACTION

RODALE ORGANIC GARDENING

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EVERY GARDEN HAS ITS DAY. When temperature, moisture, and sun come together in that trinity of ideal growing conditions, even the beginning gardener can successfully nurture beds of beautiful blooms—for a few weeks anyway. More challenging is to plan and plant a space that radiates color and interest through four seasons. ■ But how can you get there? We asked four garden designers with strong organic sensibilities to share their best four-season plans. These professionals work in widely different climates, but they share common approaches. Each emphasizes flowers, grasses, shrubs, and trees that complement one another and thrive naturally in the given region. ■ So pour a cup of cocoa, dig out a sketch pad, and start planning your own four-season garden. If all goes well, next year's landscape will offer nary a dull moment.

A FULL Year of Blooms

FOUR ORGANIC LANDSCAPE DESIGNERS SHARE THEIR SECRETS FOR NONSTOP COLOR FROM COAST TO COAST. *by Joanna Poncavage; illustrations by Helen Smythe*

PLANTING SPECIES native to the Southwest and adding plenty of compost are a couple of ways that TexaScapes landscaping company in Austin overcomes the climate extremes and poor soils of the central Texas Hill Country.

Soils here tend to be rocky, alkaline clay—or even nonexistent. These conditions, as well as drainage

problems, can be remedied with lots of compost, says Jon van Allen, who along with Michael Brooks created this southwestern design. Both are landscape architects in charge of commercial and residential design for TexaScapes, founded in 1984.

DEEP IN THE HEART OF TEXAS

“In cases of clay, we first incorporate a couple inches of compost,” van Allen says. “Then we recommend a light dressing of compost each year, as well as a monthly foliar feeding with fish emulsion.”

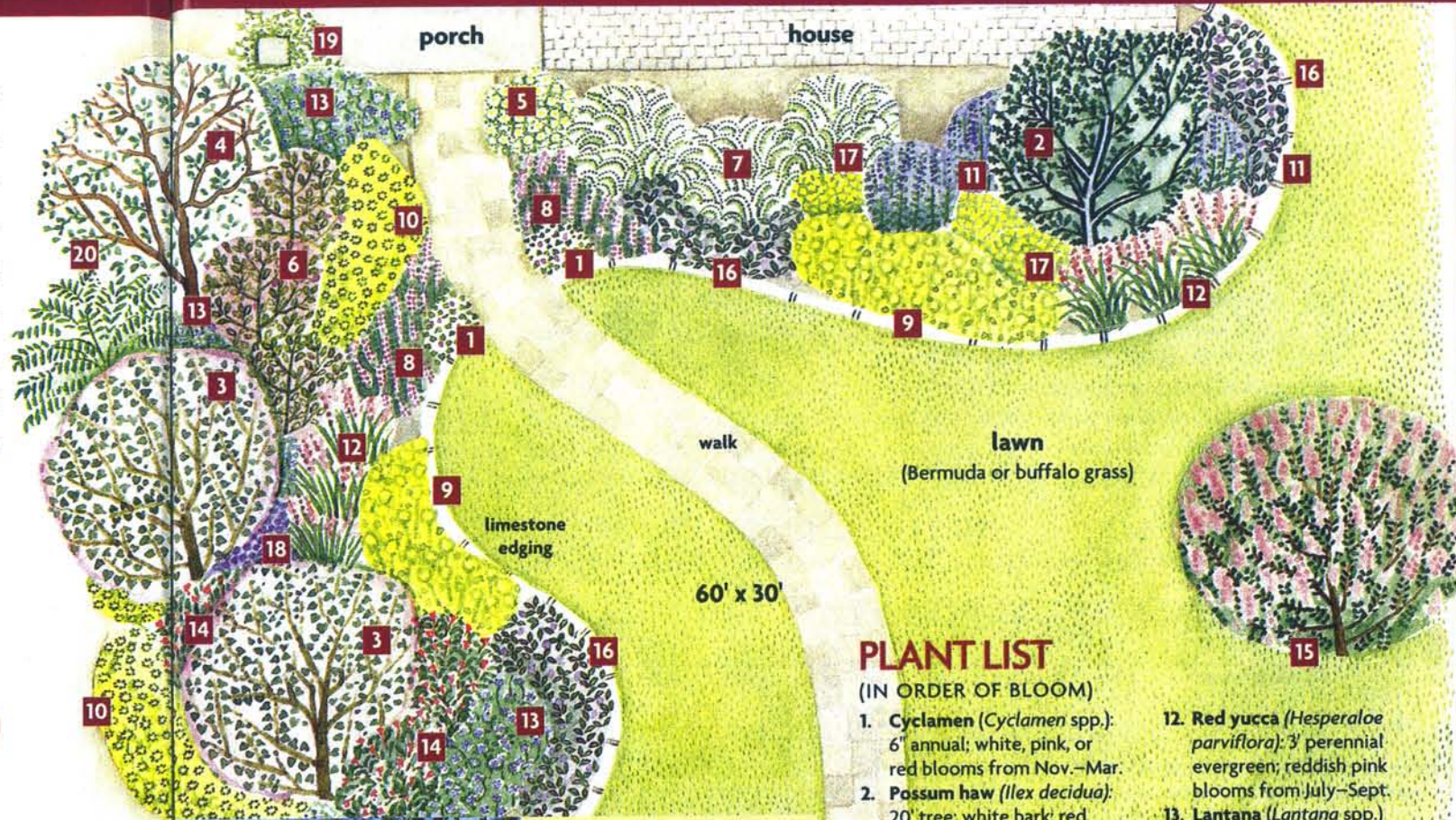
Native plants are key to the company's Organics First program, an initiative to create healthy environments that are naturally resistant to diseases and pests.

Among the biggest pests in the Hill Country are deer, but they won't eat damianita, a common low-mounding shrub. Deer will also pass up lantana, skullcap, salvia, dwarf Mexican petunia, and sweet (or mint) marigold, which has a strong tarragon flavor.

At peak bloom time, the garden exudes a color combination of purples, blues, and yellows. Damianita and lanceleaf coreopsis have good yellow color in spring, and sweet marigold is a bold yellow in the fall. Purple ‘Indigo Spires’ salvia and lavender dwarf Mexican petunia both bloom throughout the warm season.

The trees in this design not only provide blooming color but also make homes more comfortable by shading them in summer and allowing light and sun to pass through in winter after the leaves fall. Possum haw keeps its small red berries all winter. Loropetalum, a small tree from China, has pink blooms in spring, and purple-green foliage. It, too, is deer resistant. Mexican plum has edible reddish purple fruit in late summer, and orange fall color.

All of the plants in this design are drought tolerant and able to survive brief freezes. “And most have year-round interest,” van Allen says.



PLANT LIST

(IN ORDER OF BLOOM)

- Cyclamen** (*Cyclamen* spp.): 6" annual; white, pink, or red blooms from Nov.–Mar.
- Possum haw** (*Ilex decidua*): 20' tree; white bark; red berries (female tree only) from Dec.–Mar.
- Eastern redbud** (*Cercis canadensis*): 25' tree; pink blooms in Mar.
- Mexican plum** (*Prunus mexicana*): 25' tree; fragrant white blooms in Mar.
- Oxeye daisy** (*Chrysanthemum leucanthemum*): 1–3' perennial; white flowers from Mar.–June
- Loropetalum** (*Loropetalum chinense*) ‘Rubra’: 8' tree; purple-green foliage; pink blooms from Apr.–May
- Spirea, or bridalwreath** (*Spirea* sp.): 6' shrub; white flowers from Apr.–June
- Skullcap** (*Scutellaria suffrutescens*): 1' perennial; pink blooms from Apr.–June
- Damianita** (*Chrysactinia mexicana*): 24" semievergreen perennial; yellow blooms from May–June
- Lanceleaf coreopsis** (*Coreopsis lanceolata*) ‘Baby Sun’: 18" perennial; yellow blooms from late May–July
- Salvia** (*Salvia* sp.) ‘Indigo Spires’: 42" half-hardy perennial; deep purple blooms from June–Oct.
- Red yucca** (*Hesperaloe parviflora*): 3' perennial evergreen; reddish pink blooms from July–Sept.
- Lantana** (*Lantana* spp.) ‘New Gold’ or ‘Purple Trailing’: 12" perennial; blooms from July–Sept.
- Mexican firebush** (*Hamelia patens*): 4' perennial; red blooms from July–Sept.; attracts hummingbirds
- Crape myrtle** (*Lagerstroemia indica*): 25' tree; pink, red, purple, or white blooms from July–Sept.
- Dwarf Mexican petunia** (*Ruellia brittoniana compacta*) ‘Katie’: 6" perennial; lavender to purple blooms from July–Oct.
- Sweet, or mint, marigold** (*Tagetes lucida*): 1–2' perennial; yellow blooms from Sept.–Nov.
- Fall aster** (*Aster* spp.): 2–3' perennial; blue–purple blooms from Sept.–Nov.
- Sweet autumn clematis** (*Clematis maximowicziana*, or *C. paniculata*): perennial vine; white blooms from Sept.–Oct.; fruit lasting through winter
- Flameleaf sumac** (*Rhus lanceolata*): 15' shrub; red leaves and fruit from Sept.–Jan.

3 Tips for Success

- [1]** Use mulches to rejuvenate soils, deter weeds, and conserve moisture.
- [2]** Cut perennials back once or twice a year to keep them full and healthy.
- [3]** Plant in fall—especially native perennials—to take advantage of winter moisture.

—Jon van Allen (left) and Michael Brooks



Regional Resources

Extension Horticulture, Texas A&M University, College Station, TX 77843-2133; (409) 845-7342; aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu.

Zilker Botanical Gardens, 2220 Barton Springs Rd., Austin, TX 78746; (512) 477-8672; www.zilker-garden.org.

Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center, 4801 La Crosse Ave., Austin, TX 78739; (512) 292-4100; www.wildflower.org.

BOOKS

- *Native Texas Plants*, by Sally Wasowski and Andy Wasowski (Gulf Publishing Co., 1997, 2d ed.).
- *Perennial Gardens for Texas*, by Julie Ryan (University of Texas Press, 1998).