Great Water Wise Plants
for
Lea County Gardens
Series Written by David Hooten,

Part II

Here is the second edition of the series on great Water Wise and low maintenance proven landscape plants for Lea County. These plants will perform in our climate, ranges of temperature extremes and drought hardiness. Plants identified in the article will thrive on low water irrigation practices and they are tough and colorful. The varieties that will be discussed are readily available in the local nurseries and retail garden centers.

**Big Sagebrush** – Sage brushes are tough drought hardy plants hard to beat in our Lea County landscapes. There are several varieties of natural occurring sage brushes growing in Lea County and they range from the sand dunes to the hard pack soils across the County. These shrubs have erect stems covered in silver-gray fine textured leaves. They have small yellow clustered flowers that appear at the tops of the stems. The leaves contain the resin oils that that produce a distinct aroma.

Grow Big Sagebrush (varieties)-Artemisia tridentate in informally and in naturalized gardens. The silver-gray foliage lends itself to imaginative color gardens of contrast orange, pink and blue. Will not tolerate standing water at its roots from over-watering.

**Three Leaf Sumac** – a rounded, deciduous shrub the reaches 3 to 6 feet tall and wide. The leaves are bright green and have a great red/yellow fall color pattern. Yellow flowers appear in late spring and a good attractant for bees. Red berries will form that certain birds will eat. The overall shrub is clean and attractive. Grow Three Leaf Sumac (Rhus trilobata) for slope cover and makes a great foundation plant in informal, formal and xeric landscapes. A great plant for low water use areas. Can be trained into a small tree form. It is somewhat salt tolerant. A common wild land plant that is found growing in the Guadalupe Mountains and Lincoln National Forest of southeastern New Mexico.
**Chocolate Flower** - a herbaceous perennial with upright stems to 15 inches tall that hold the drooping pale yellow flowers with a dark eye center. The plant's foliage has a pale green color. The daisy flowers are scented with the chocolate fragrance and are usually heavier in the morning and late afternoons.

Grow Chocolate Flowers (*Berlandiera lyrata*) in prairie and xeric landscapes. Plant it in full sun for best bloom. They will attract butterflies to the garden. The plants are hardy about reseeding themselves in sandy soils.

**Blackfoot Daisy** – an herbaceous perennial that is a low-mounding form in the landscape. It has white flowers with a yellow center. The whole plant has soft, gray, small, narrow foliage and the inch size blooms. It is a great plant for hot and dry locations and takes reflected heat well.

Grow Blackfoot daisies (*Melampodium leucanthum*) in prairie gardens, xeric and mixes well with cactus and succulent gardens. Use it as a border plant or large sweeping drifts across graveled beds. It will not grow and thrive with wet roots to any degree. It is a short lived perennial but a great performance plant.