



NATIVE PLANTS - SOLUTION FOR "GUMBO GARDENERS"!

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Does your soil have standing water during our monsoon rains, is it sticky when wet and like cracked concrete when dry? Congratulations, you have black gumbo clay, which gives many gardeners in the Greater Houston area nightmares! You are a "Gumbo Gardener".

You could build raised beds, or mix in huge amounts of sand and compost. Maybe you've even considered just hauling your soil off and replace with bags of synthetic soil sold at the big-box stores.

There's really no need to go through this expensive, exhausting route. Just select the right local native plants that thrived in our black gumbo long before Texas was settled. Through the eons, many local native plants have evolved and have successfully adapted to our region's affinity for deluge and can handle the thick soup of our gumbo soils with no help needed.



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Once you select the right plants, you can relax and enjoy pretty blooms, fall color, gorgeous butterflies and flitting birds making themselves at home. Here's three of our favorite local natives that love it when their "feet and toes" are contained in thick gumbo soil:

Blue Mistflower (*Conoclinium coelestinum*); grows 1 to 3 feet high, with triangular leaves. Light blue clusters of flowers attract bees and butterflies August through October. It likes part shade or full sun, spreads quickly and can be easily propagated by seed or cuttings.

Texas Frogfruit (*Phyla nodiflora*) is a semi-evergreen ground cover only 3-6 inches tall. It's a larval host plant for several butterflies who love the white "mini-verbena" blooms. Frogfruit will ramble over boulders or spill over hanging baskets. It can tolerate drought and flooding, takes light shade or full sun exposure.

Spider Lily (*Hymenocallis liriosme*) has fragrant white blooms up to 7 inches across consisting of a cup surrounded by straps. Our native blooms in spring, loves standing water up to 6 inches or just kept moist. The strap-like 3 to 4 foot leaves are glossy, freezing to the ground in winter and greening up again in spring. Spider lily likes part shade or full sun at the edge of bogs and rain gardens.