



L to r: Carolina jessamine, Indian blanket (top), yaupon and tropical sage

## SECRETS OF A 'LAZY' NATIVE PLANT GARDENER

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Many people think native plant lovers have an all-natives-or-nothing approach to gardening. We'll tell you a little secret... It's simply not true.

Many native plant gardeners have evolved their craft over many years while some are just starting out. We all have legacy plants like roses, tropical fruit trees or crape myrtles, for whatever reason, we still enjoy in our gardens.



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Like most native plant enthusiasts, consider some of these "Lazy Gardener" ways to add natives to your existing plants:

- If a plant dies or is diseased, replace with a native!
- Protect your vegetable garden from pests by adding native flowers that attract pollinators.
- If you have a large shade tree and grass won't grow underneath, add native shrubs or groundcovers that bloom in partial shade.
- Start small - add a small pollinator garden from a seed mix or with a grouping of native plants.
- Planting natives in clumps of the same flower together between non-natives is eye pleasing and increases their attraction to pollinators.

Another myth is that native plants offer eye-appeal for humans, and nectar and seeds for wildlife, only in the Spring and Fall seasons.

An all-too-well-kept secret is: With a relatively small sampling of native plants, a Houston-area gardener can get 365-day, four-season native coverage. One example of the many local native plants that work as a group, "play well" among non-native plants and provide something for all seasons are:

**Carolina Jessamine (*Gelsemium sempervirens*)** - A fence climbing vine or groundcover with yellow, spicy-fragranced flowers that bloom from January through March offering early Spring nectar for hummingbirds and butterflies.

**Tropical Sage (*Salvia coccinea*)** - Pale green leaves shoot spikes of red tubular blooms extending 1 to 3 feet tall and offer nectar from February through October.

**Indian Blanket/Firewheel (*Gaillardia pulchella*)** - 1 to 2 foot tall, eye-catching ray flowers with yellow and red highlights bloom from April to frost attracting a host of bees and butterflies.

**Yaupon Holly (*Ilex vomitoria*)** - Small tree or shrub, provides rich red berries that are a November to March staple for many of our over-wintering.