My wife Mary Grace and I took a trip to Big Bend National Park last year, and with all the beautiful scenery, what we came back home most enamored with was the spectacular fauna we discovered in the park. Some varieties were so unique it felt like we were on Tatooine instead of West Texas (please excuse my terrible Star Wars joke).

So I got to thinking… how can I incorporate some of these plants into our landscape and truly have a piece of Big Bend with us at all times? As bad as we wanted to take plants home with us (don’t -- it’s illegal!), I decided to do some research and find out what works well in West Texas that could also work well in our own gardens.

A forewarning regarding these plants… let it be known that they like it **HOT and DRY**. You do not want to be caught overwatering a plant meant for the arid climate of West Texas. While it stays nice and hot here, Dallas can get 3 times as much rainfall as Big Bend can. So there isn’t much extra irrigation needed for these plants.

**Texas Sotol** : *Dasylirion texanum*

These spiny shrubs can get about 5 feet tall and provide a texture unrivaled in the garden. You can truly plant it and forget it. They usually do best in the background away from kids and pets -- because of the spiny leaves. Their bloom consists of a vertical stalk that can get around 15 feet tall. Natives used their durable leaves for basket weaving and building materials. These guys are tough!

Continued on pg. 4 ...
PLANT…

- **Add some new COLOR** to your planting beds to boost your landscape’s “WOW” factor! Since it’s already hot out there, add some bright, bold colors like hot pinks, yellows, and reds. *Zinnia, Periwinkle, Portulaca, Penta,* and *Lantana* love the heat. Replace weak looking plants in your containers with something fresh and blooming!

- Now is the best time to choose **Crape Myrtles** for their **bloom color**. Be sure to check the mature size of the ones you are interested in and then be sure to give it the right sized space in your landscape. Remember you can help prevent ‘Crape Murder’ by selecting the correct mature size. Bring a picture and measurements of your space, we will be happy to help you choose!

- **Container trees** can be planted as long as you are prepared to water and tend to your new tree properly. For the best chance of success we suggest waiting until the cooler temps return in the fall season to plant B&B (balled and burlap) trees.

PRUNE…

- **As needed** to shape errant growth. Consider abandoning that old-fashioned hedging technique and let your plants grow naturally. Really ... those little meatballs and cubes went out with bell bottoms. Spent blooms and flower stalks can be removed from perennials to tidy them up and encourage re-blooming.

FERTILIZE…

- With **Gardenville 7-2-2**. If you missed June’s application, you can fertilize everything now. Use **Colorscapes, Color Star**, or **Osmocote** on color plantings and color pots. Most tropical plants bloom on new growth so fertilize well to keep them growing and blooming. For those with Palms, we have a good **Palm Food** to help them.

WATER… **as needed.**

- **Please continue to Be ‘Water Wise’**. Follow your city’s watering recommendations. Follow the cycle and soak method. Hand-water those thirsty plants between soakings. Consider installing drip irrigation in beds and even small lawn areas. We need to continue to practice water conservation even though our lakes may be full from recent plentiful rains. You can find some helpful information on the ‘**Education Center**’ page of our website. And, you can find information, help, and advice on most city websites. Here is the City of Frisco’s Water Resource information page: [http://www.friscotexas.gov/177/Water-Resources](http://www.friscotexas.gov/177/Water-Resources)
**PESTS...**

- **Tackle fire ants** with a three-pronged attack:
  - a) **Molasses** drives them out of your yard and improves your soil’s health.
  - b) **Come and Get It** is bait which can be used on mounds or over your entire yard.
  - c) **Mound Drench** those stubborn ant mounds to get back at ’em quickly.

- **Watch for Scale** on Crape Myrtles, Hollies, and Magnolias. When the temps reach over 90°F, we suggest a systemic insecticide called **Bayer Tree & Shrub Protect & Feed** to kill scale.

- **For the fungus** among us we carry **Serenade®** which is an organic fungicide that controls a broad spectrum of fungal problems.

- For your turf grasses, we also carry **Infuse™**, a systemic disease control for Brown Patch and Take-All Patch diseases.

- As always, **bring us samples** – it’s hard to make accurate recommendations over the phone.

- Pick up some ‘**Sandalwood**’ **Mosquito Sticks** (yes they’re back in stock!!), **Mosquito Bits®** and **Mosquito Dunks®** to keep those pesky mosquitoes away.

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**NOTES FROM BILLO VERDE**

**Plea For Seed ...**

If you have collected any seed of *Aristolochia fimbriata* (vein leaf pipevine), I need some for next year.

Will trade for two or three 1-gallon perennials!

~Brice
**Plants of the Big Bend Area ...**

by Cameron McCauley

**Mexican Feathergrass** : *Stipa tenuissima*

High up in the Chisos Mountains lies a beautiful meadow of stipa grass as far as the eye can see. One thing that makes Big Bend so unique is the varying habitats it provides; from the high mountains, to the desert, to the banks of the Rio Grande. It really is a sight to behold. Feather Grass, as we call it, has become quite common as an easy, dependable grass here in north Texas. It is always neat to know where a common landscape plant came from.

**Havard Agave** : *Agave havardiana*

Century Plant, as it is commonly known, is becoming more and more popular in the north Texas area as a good Xeriscape option. The base stays pretty small, around 3 feet tall by 3 feet wide, but it puts off an enormous flower stalk that can get 20 feet tall! Jarratt took a picture of a blooming agave during his recent travels. Easily the signature plant of Big Bend, and it can thrive in DFW!

**Wine Cup** : *Callirhoe involucrata*

This one is native to all of Texas and can survive in even the harshest climates. I was surprised to see it down there in very early spring but then I remembered how tough this guy is. Give it some room to spread out and take over in full sun or part shade, and enjoy those magenta blooms.
I’d Plant These, Before It Gets TOO HOT … (LOL)
by Brice Creelman

Salvia Sage, ‘Silke’s Dream’
*Salvia darcyi* hybrid
Found in an Austin garden. Cross between Salvia darcyi and Salvia macrophylla. Blooms heaviest of all the salvias in the fall. As native as you can get. Avg. 24” tall x 36” wide Full Sun to Part Sun

Jacob’s Ladder, ‘Stairway to Heaven’
*Polemonium reptans* ‘Stairway to Heaven’
Cheap shot using such a well-know song, but it might work for you. Think it is called this because leaves line up opposite of each other, so it’s kinda like a ladder. To heaven. Use your imagination. Avg. 24”-30” tall and wide SHADE only

Joe Pye Weed, ‘Baby Joe’
*Eupatorium dubium* ‘Baby Joe’
Eupatorium means butterfly in Latin, so all of them are excellent butterfly attractors. Joe Pye Weed blooms late in the year to coincide with butterfly migrations. We, and the butterflies, love those huge blooms. Latin for butterfly is really ‘papilio’. Think Dustin Hoffman. Avg. 24” tall and wide Full Sun to Part Shade

Japanese Aster, ‘Daisy Mae’
*Kalimeris integrifolia* ‘Daisy Mae’
Great addition to your ‘Redneck Garden’. Hard to find. Easy to grow. Goes through our heat swimmingly. Cut back to keep blooming, from June to September. Avg. 24” tall and wide Full Sun