

# Using Native Plants in the Landscape

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# Why Natives?

**Native plants —  
save water**

**improve water quality**

**provide wildlife habitat**

**reduce maintenance**

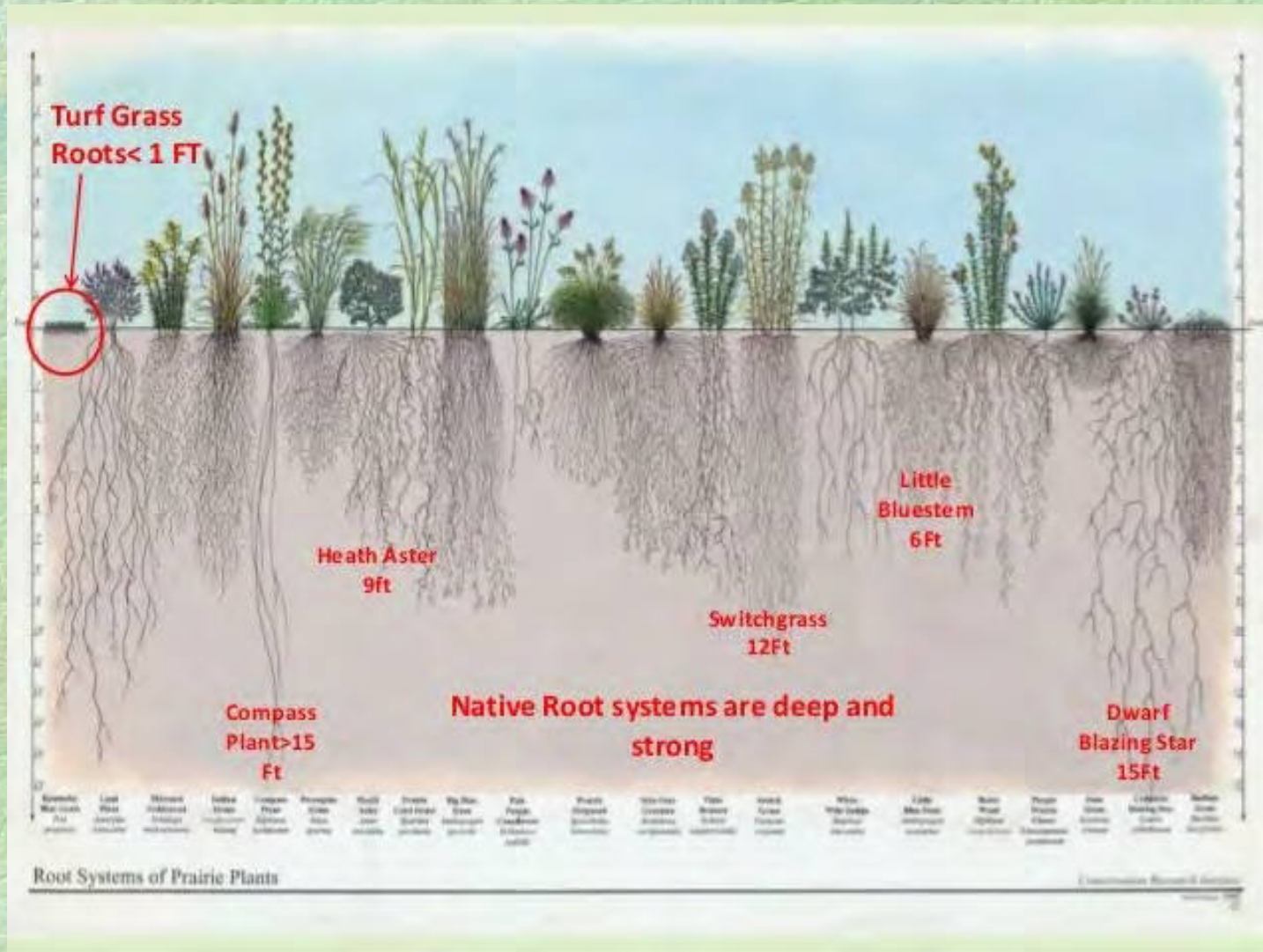
**create a sense of place**



**Prairie Goldenrod *Solidago nemoralis***

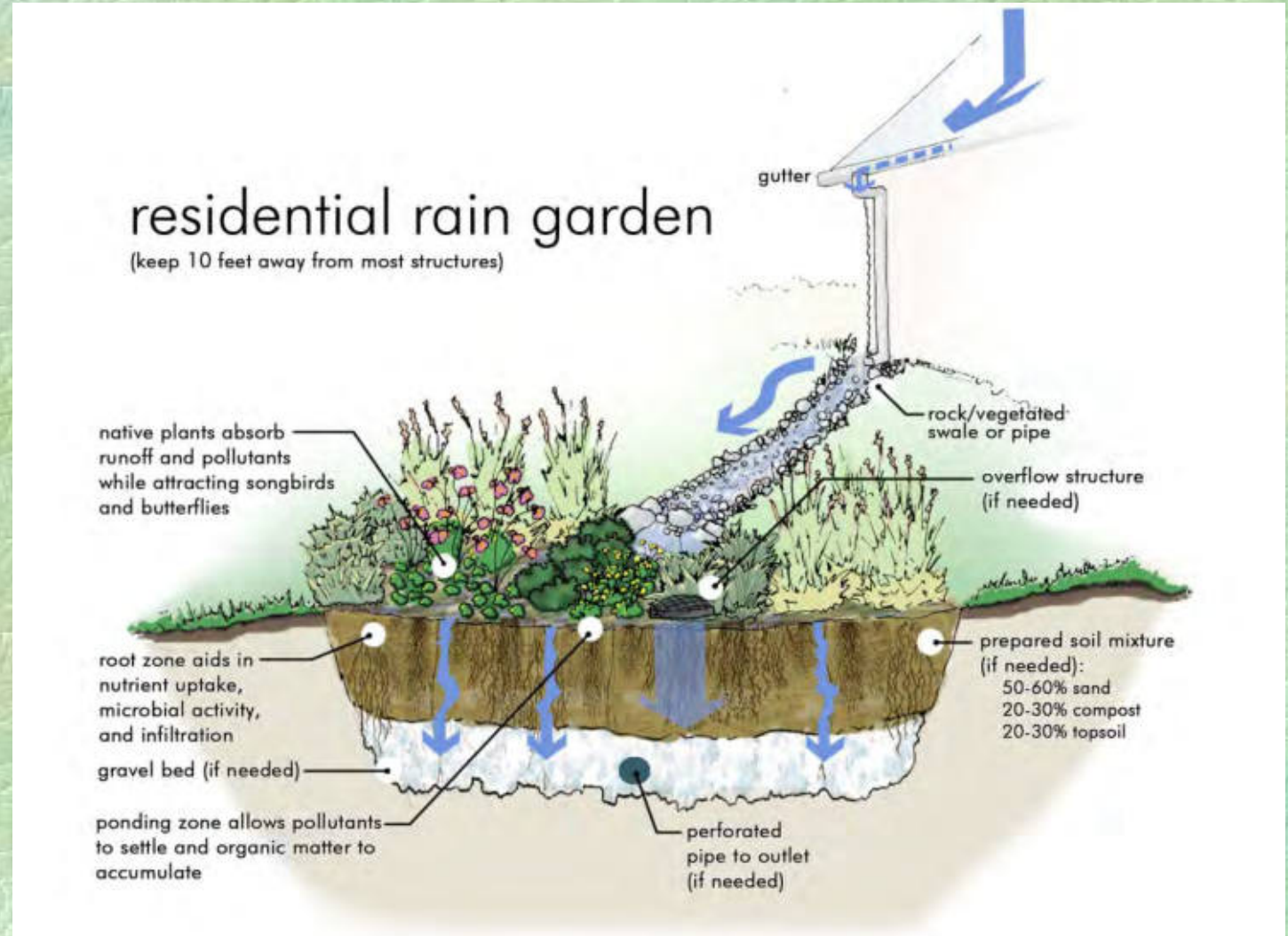
# Natives save water: a limited resource

- Adapted to local rainfall—  
or lack thereof
- Adapted to local soil  
conditions
- Generally have deeper  
root systems



# Natives improve water quality

- Filter water
- Slow runoff
- Reduce erosion



# Natives provide wildlife habitat

All animals need

- food
- water
- shelter
- breeding areas



# Natives require less maintenance

- No pampering
- Little or no irrigation (once established)
- Little or no pesticide or fertilizer use
- Less mowing



Damianita  
*Chrysactinia mexicana*

False foxglove  
*Penstemon cobaea*

**Where is this?**



# Natives create a sense of place





# A Quick Etymology Lesson

Xeri—from the Greek *xeros*, “dry”

Scape—a picture

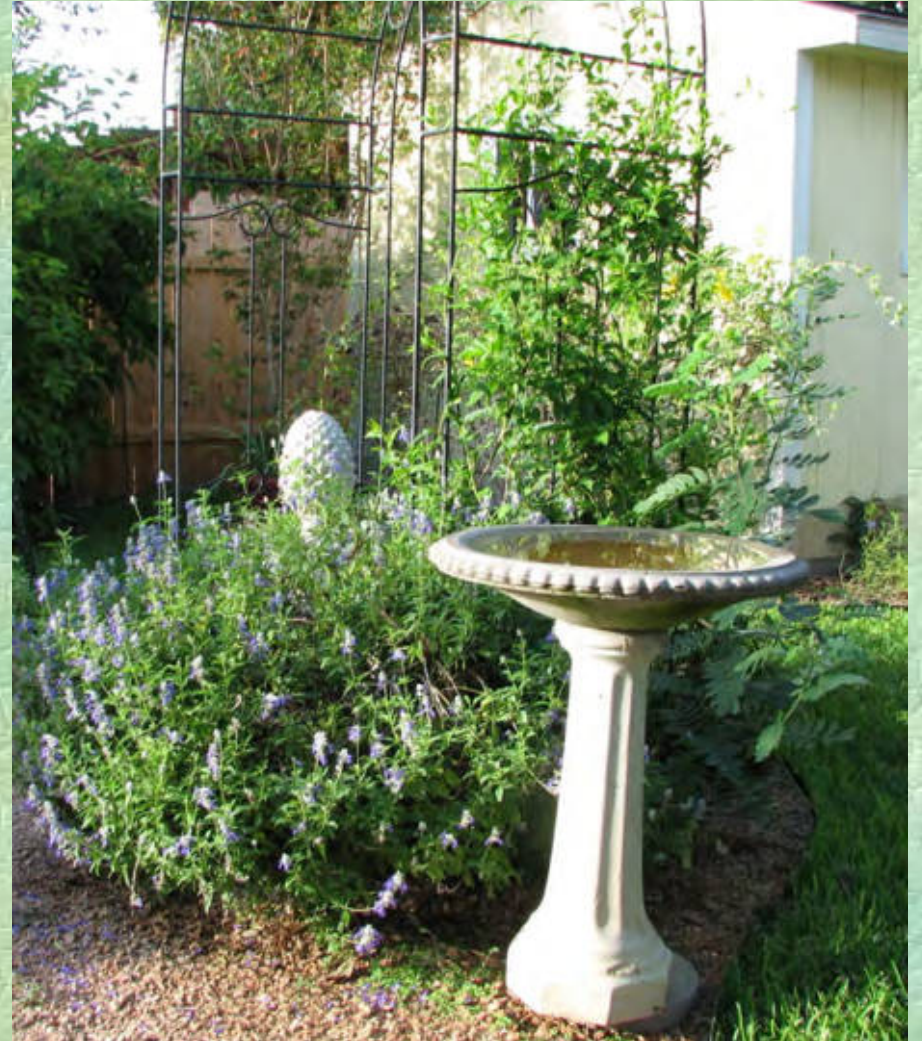
Pronounced *zeri* scape



(There is no zero in it!!)

# Seven Basic Principles of Xeriscape

1. **Reduce the amount of lawn—at least 50%**
2. **Develop a good landscape design**
  - a. works well for the owner's intended uses
  - b. groups plant materials by similar requirements
  - c. considers regional ecosystem and local microclimates
  - d. accommodates what is already there
  - e. is affordable
3. **Choose xeric plants (natives!)**
4. **Amend your soil if needed—or add soil if necessary**
5. **Mulch bare ground**
6. **Use water efficiently**
7. **Practice good maintenance**
  - a. avoid chemicals
  - b. mow to correct height
  - c. prune natives correctly



**Mealy Blue Sage, *Salvia farinacea***

# Don't Rock Your Landscape!

## Why?

### Rocks--

1. are NOT a main component of xeriscape
2. are NOT maintenance-free
3. soak up and release heat
4. increase stormwater runoff
5. offer no nutritional value

### Rocks are fine as landscape *accents* such as—

1. rain gardens
2. shady areas where weeds aren't an issue
3. areas near the street (hell strip)
4. patios or walkways (large rocks)



**It doesn't have to be this—**



**It can be this—**



# Stages in Planning Your Xeriscape

## 1. Dreaming/Imagining—*What do you have and want?*

- Make a site plan: mark what you can't change
- Determine your goal(s) in creating a xeriscape
- Take pictures of xeriscapes/plants you like
- Look in regionally-appropriate books for ideas

## 2. Site Analysis—*Using your space*

- Mark areas with special considerations
- Outline possible features with a hose or rope
- Draw a plan for your yard
- Make water-permeable hardscape your friend!

## 3. Choosing the Plants—*Think natives*

- Keep your special considerations in mind
- Match plants to yard and ecoregion conditions
- Consider the adult size of the plants
- Know plants' bloom time and color

## 4. Implementing Your Plan—*Be realistic!*

- Install sections of plan as you have time
- Celebrate your finished work as you go!



**Black Dalea, *Dalea frutescens***

# **A Case Study**



Boxwoods

Pecan tree

Red Oak

Nov. 1999



Red Oak

Mountain Laurel

Barbados Cherry

Redbud

Gregg's Mistflower

Damianita

Zexmenia

Red yucca

May, 2009





Red oak

Boxwoods

Nov. 1999

Nov. 1999



Oct. 2000



Red oak

Coneflowers

Dwarf yaupon

Mealy blue sage

Wedding flowers

Calylophus

May, 2001



Desert willow

Mealy  
Blue Sage

Calylophus

July, 2002



**New Gold Lantana**

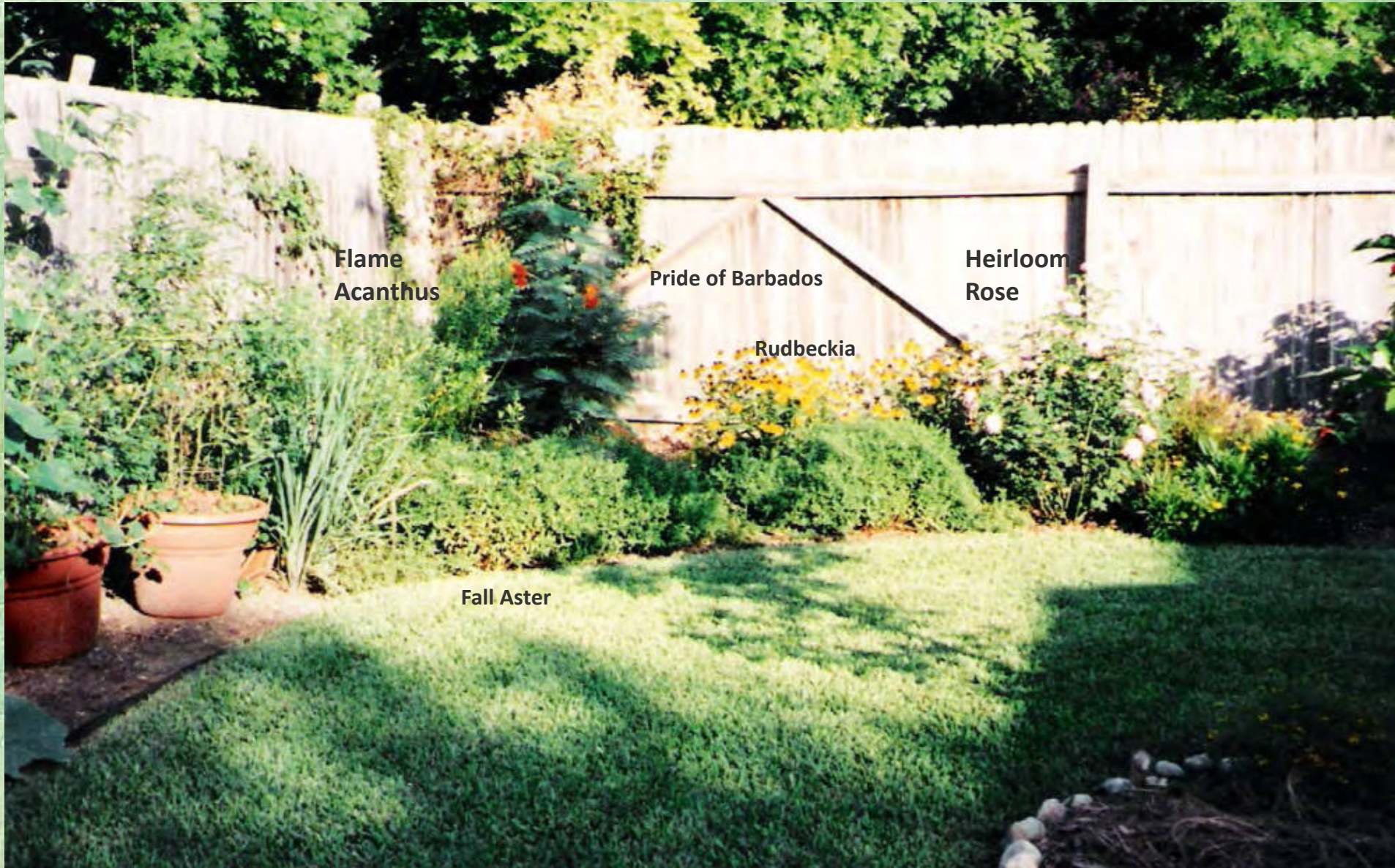
**Barbados Cherry**

**Sept. 2004**



November, 1999

*Nov 1999*



**Flame  
Acanthus**

**Pride of Barbados**

**Heirloom  
Rose**

**Rudbeckia**

**Fall Aster**

**July, 2002 (2 ½ Yrs later)**



Pride of  
Barbados

Fall Aster

**Oct. 2002 (4 months later)**





Wax Myrtle

Butterfly Bush

Roses

Chinquapin  
Oak

Perennial Phlox

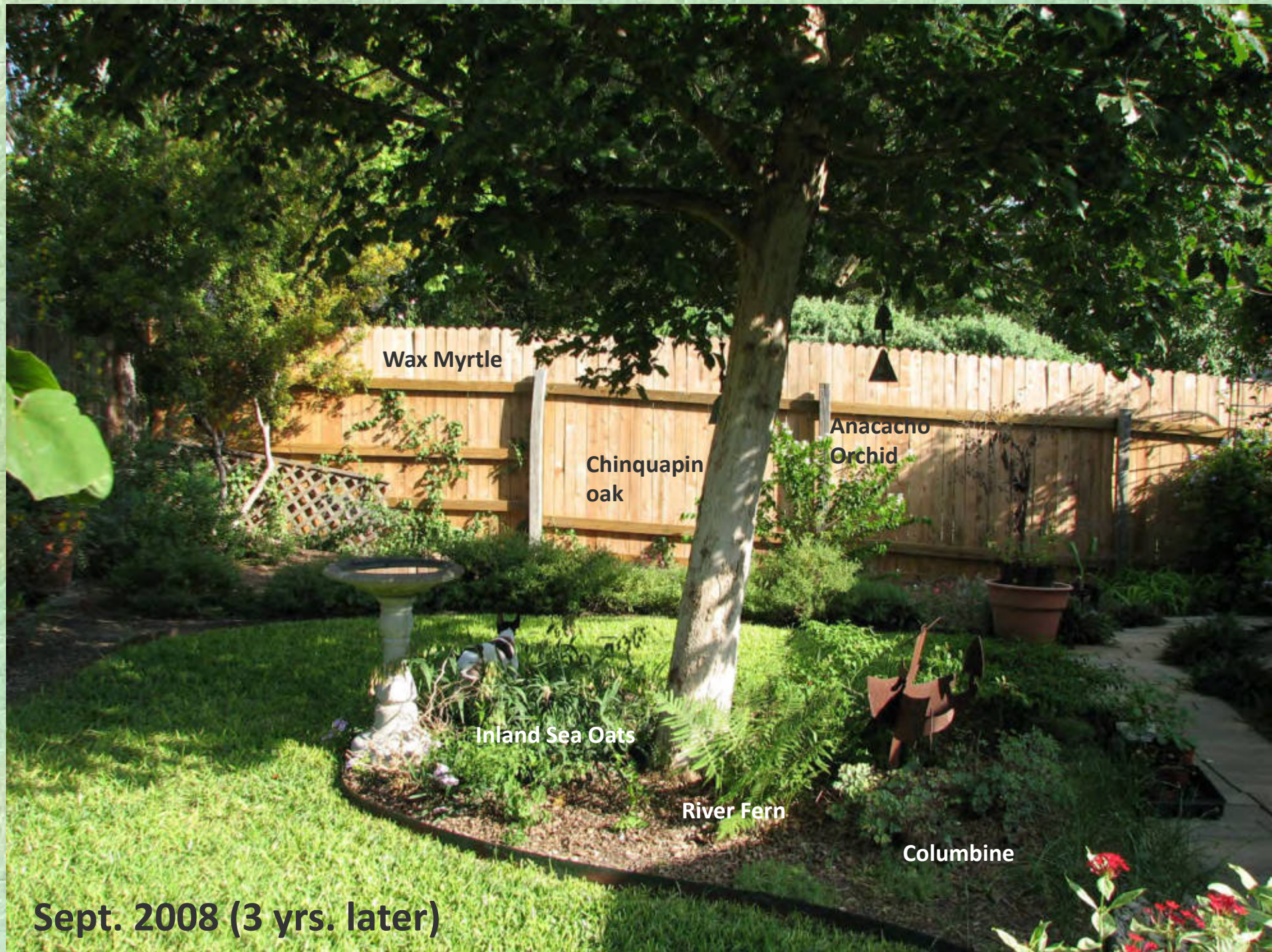
Fall Aster

Chile Petin

Iris

Mexican Petunia

June, 2005 (3 ½ Yrs. Later)



Wax Myrtle

Chinquapin oak

Anacacho Orchid

Inland Sea Oats

River Fern

Columbine

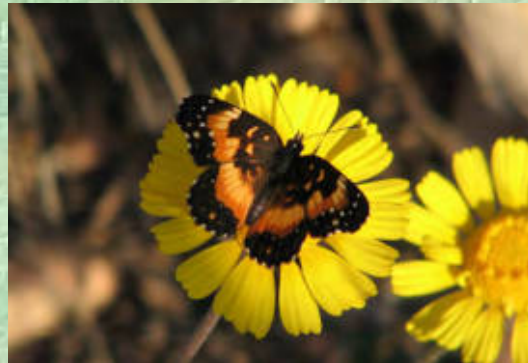
Sept. 2008 (3 yrs. later)

**Easy to Grow and Often Available  
Native Plants for the Landscape**

# Helpful Hints for Growing Native Plants

**When growing plants native to your ecoregion, be aware--**

1. They are wild and not as well-behaved as hybrid plants bred for certain traits.
2. They will SLEEP the 1<sup>st</sup> year planted, CREEP the 2<sup>nd</sup> and LEAP the 3<sup>rd</sup>.
3. Do not fuss over them (they have survived thousands of years without help).
4. They rarely need fertilizer and if used make it organic not chemical. Compost is good.
5. Don't deadhead (cut off dead flowers) if you want wildlife to have the seeds as food.
6. Tolerate a little messiness for the sake of wildlife.
7. Let annuals go to seed for next year's crop.
8. Realize natives will move around the garden when they throw their seeds.
9. Share the surprise seedlings that will appear.
10. Right plant, right place—correct type of soil, sun exposure, amount of water.



# Basic Landscape Tips

1. Group plants with similar sun and water requirements. Ferns and cacti don't mix!
2. Tall plants to the back; short ones in front.
3. Use wide beds.
4. Plant in groups, not lines, using odd numbers – 3, 5, 7 . . .
5. Use a variety of tall plants in hedges instead of just one kind of plant.
6. Use perennials as the landscape backbone; avoid “bedding” plants.
7. Use more grasses either in drifts of several plants or large single plants.
8. Use native annuals to fill empty spots in a new landscape.
9. Don't forget to use BIG pots of natives for interest.



Sun



**Desert Willow, *Chilopsis linearis***

Sun  
Part shade



Sally and Andy Wasowski, Ladybird Johnson Wildflower Center

Possumhaw Holly, *Ilex decidua*

Sun



**Texas Mountain Laurel, *Sophora secundiflora***



Sun



**Cenizo**

***Leucophyllum frutescens***

Sun



**Texas Lantana *Lantana urticoides***



**Sun**  
**Part Shade**



Evergreen sumac, *Rhus virens*



Sun

Part shade

**Flame Acanthus**

***Anisacanthus quadrifidus***



**Sun**  
**Part shade**

**Red Yucca**  
***Hesperaloe parviflora***



**Sun**  
**Part shade**

**Rock Rose, *Pavonia lasiopetala***





**Sun**  
**Part Shade**  
**Shade**

Page Lee, Ladybird Johnson Wildflower Center

**Turks cap, *Malvaviscus arboreus***



Sun



**Autumn Sage, *Salvia greggii***



Sun



**Blackfoot daisy, *Melampodium leucanthum***



Part shade  
Shade

**Cedar Sage, *Salvia roemeriana***

Sun



**Damianita *Chrysactinia mexicana***

**Sun**

**Partial shade**



**Fall aster, *Aster oblongifolius***



Sun



**Gayfeather, *Liatris mucronata***



**Mealy blue sage, *Salvia farinacea***

**Sun**

**Partial Shade**





Sun

Prairie verbena, *Glandularia bipinnatifida*

Sun  
Part Shade



*Zexmenia, Wedelia acapulcensis var. hispida*



Thomas L. Muller, Ladybird Johnson Wildflower Center



Sun  
Part Shade

Frogfruit, *Phyla nodiflora*



Sam C. Strickland,  
Ladybird Johnson Wildflower Center



Sun  
Part shade  
Shade



Horseherb, Straggler Daisy  
*Calyptocarpus vialis*

**Sun, part shade**



**Inland Sea Oats, Wood Oats**  
***Chasmanthium latifolium***

Sun



Mary Hampton, Ladybird Johnson Wildflower Center

**Yellow Indian Grass, *Sorghastrum nutans***

Sun



Lindheimer's Muhly, *Muhlenbergia lindheimeri*

**Questions?**