



Earth-Kind<sup>®</sup>  
Landscaping



Texas A&M AgriLife Extension





# Earth-Kind Plant Selection

Tim Hartmann



# Plant Selection

***The right plant can only be right in the right place!***





# Plant Selection Considerations: Climate

- ⦿ Temperature

- ⦿ Cold (hardiness and chilling)
- ⦿ Heat (daytime highs / night temps.)

- ⦿ Humidity / rainfall

- ⦿ Light

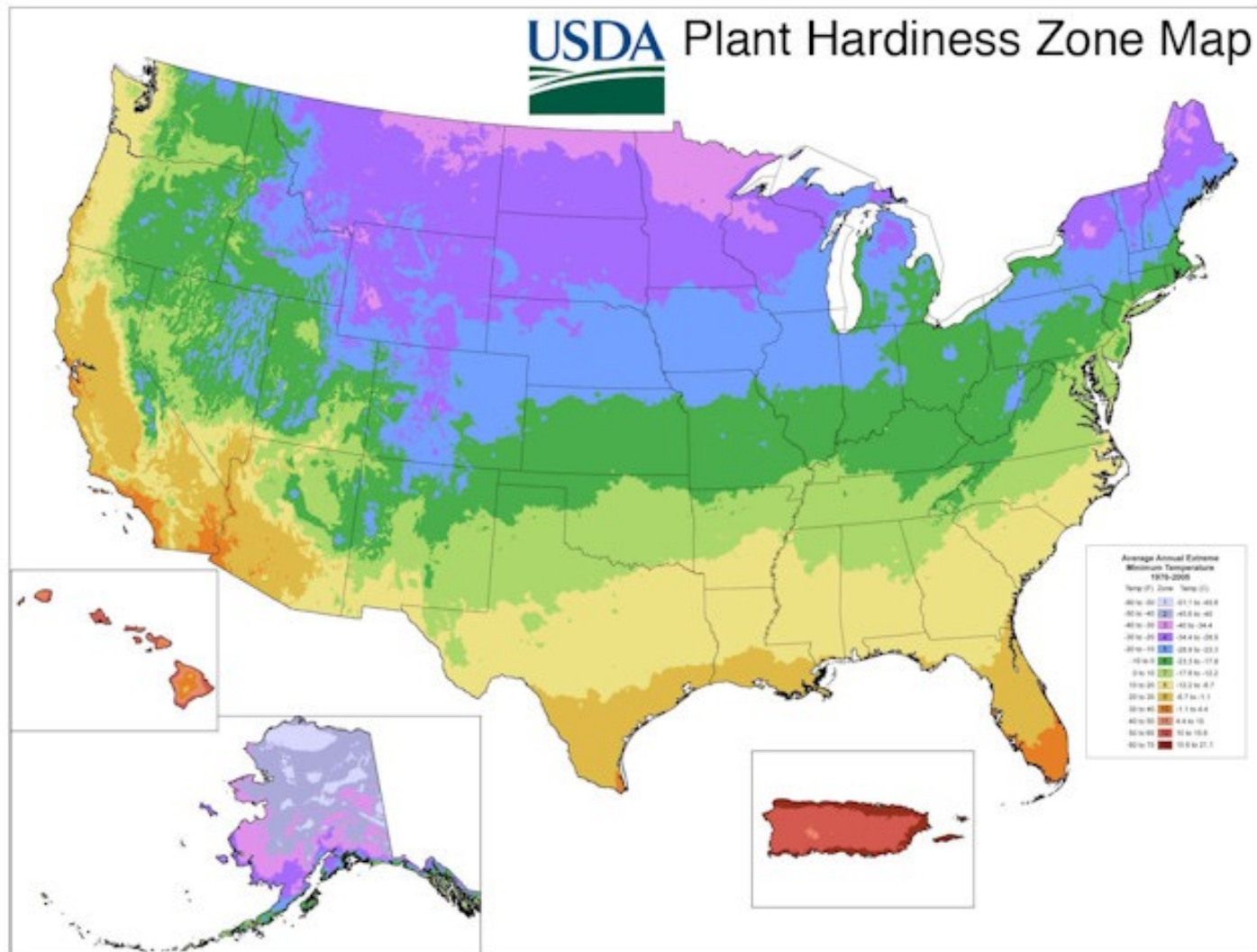
- ⦿ Quantity, quality, and timing

- ⦿ Prevailing wind





# Cold Tolerance





**More Information:**

[Local Forecast Office](#)

[More Local Wx](#)

[3 Day History](#)

[Mobile Weather](#)

[Hourly Weather Forecast](#)

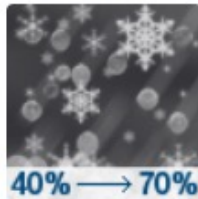
**Sunday**



Slight Chance  
Wintry Mix  
then Slight  
Chance Rain

**High: 36 °F**

**Sunday  
Night**



Chance Wintry  
Mix then  
Snow/Sleet  
Likely

**Low: 19 °F**

**Washington's  
Birthday**



Snow/Sleet  
Likely then  
Slight Chance  
Snow/Sleet

**High: 19 °F**

**Monday  
Night**



**Low: 6 °F**

**Tuesday**



**High: 27 °F**

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**College Station, TX**  
**February 17<sup>th</sup> 2021 A.D.**



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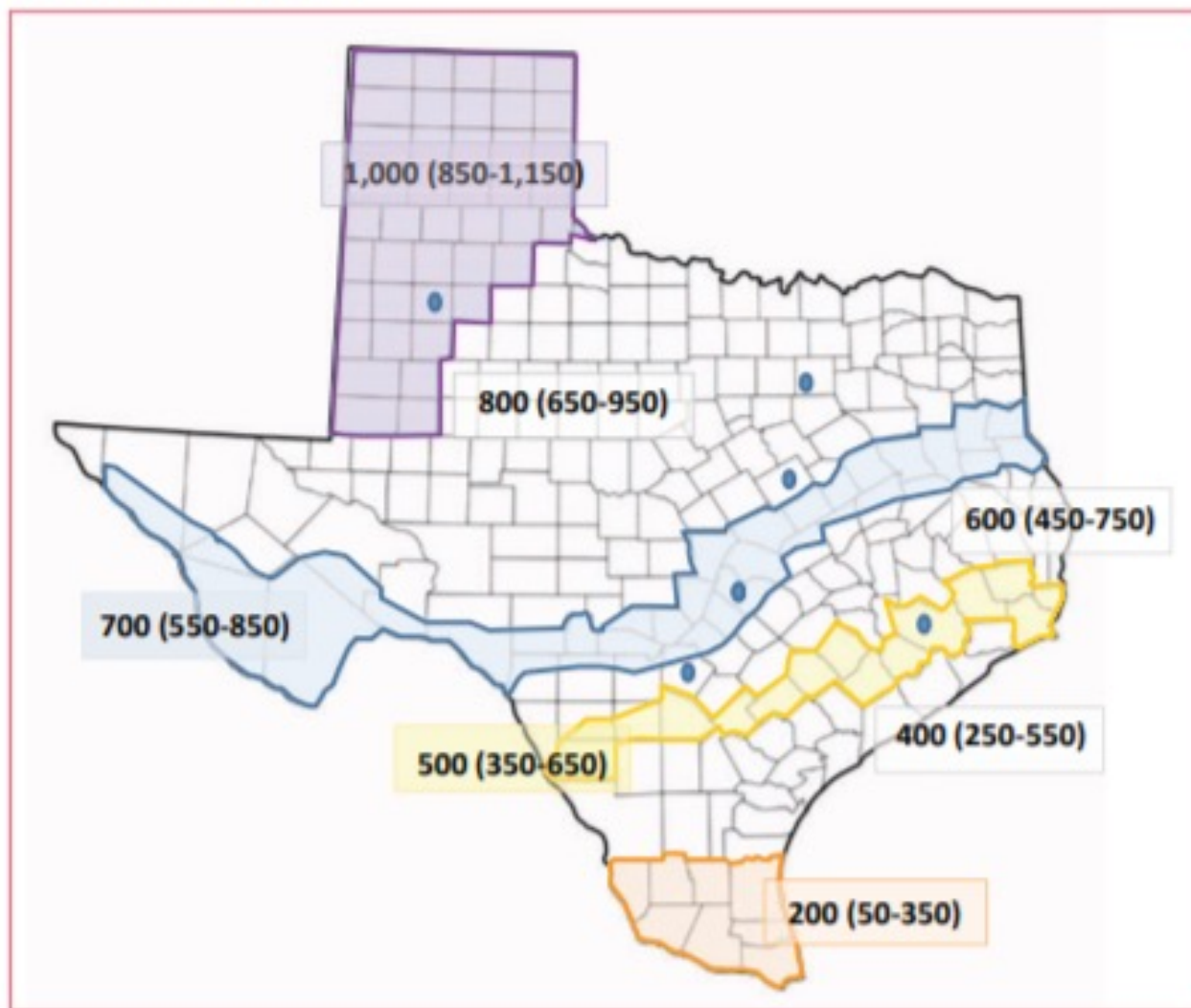


Figure 3. Average number of hours of winter chilling below 45° F in Texas.







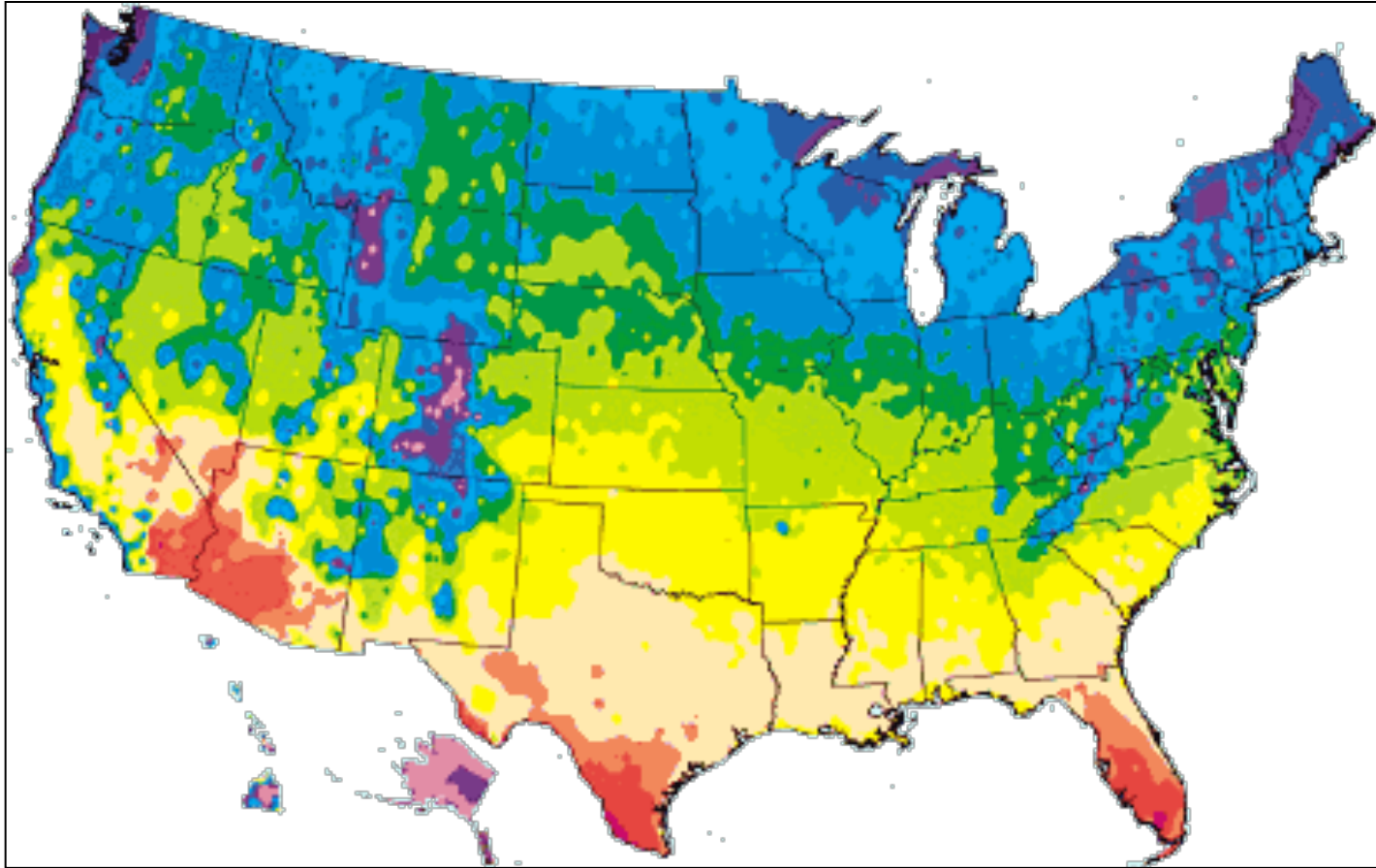






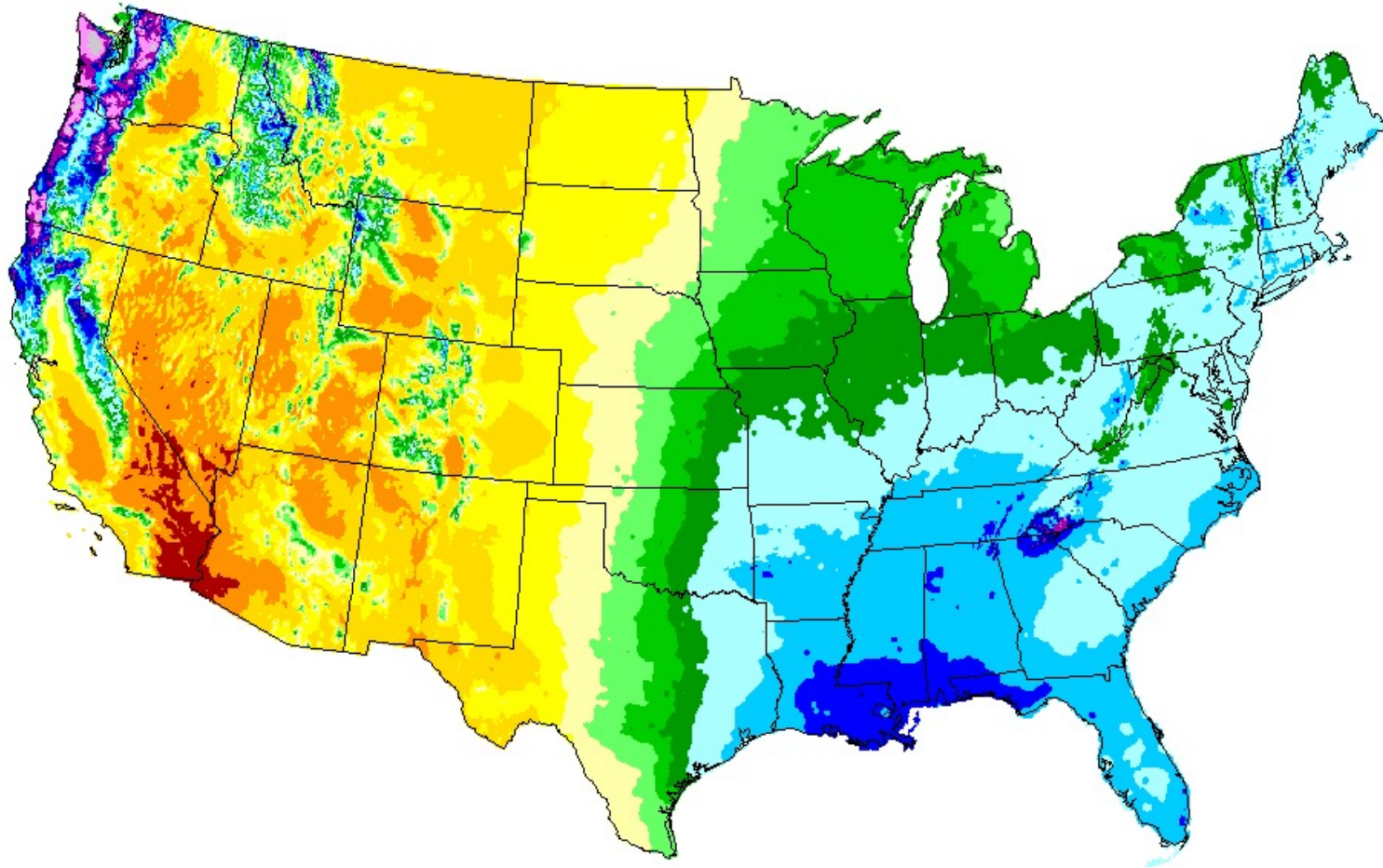


# ASHS Heat Zone Map:





# Precipitation





























# Other Environmental Considerations

- ◉ Soil-related

- ◉ Texture / structure
- ◉ pH
- ◉ Depth



- ◉ Water-related

- ◉ Quantity
- ◉ Salinity / impurities
- ◉ pH / alkalinity

- ◉ Pest / Disease

















# Agarito

## *Berberis trifoliolata*

- ◉ USDA 7 to 9
- ◉ Spread 3 to 5 feet (occasionally to 8 feet in height)
- ◉ Full sun to partial shade, alkaline or slightly acid soils
- ◉ Native to South and Central Texas, heat and drought tolerant
- ◉ Pointy, evergreen foliage with red berries resemble American Holly
- ◉ Aromatic flowers in early spring give way to edible berries in May









# Zoning Irrigation

- ◉ Regular watering:

- Turf grass (sprinklers)
- Annuals
- Vegetables

- ◉ Occasional watering:

- Perennials
- Some trees / shrubs

- ◉ No / limited supplemental irrigation:

- Most adapted trees, shrubs, and groundcovers





# Regular water use plants

- ⦿ Most turf grasses
- ⦿ Vegetables
- ⦿ Wax leaf begonia
- ⦿ Dianthus
- ⦿ Sweet William
- ⦿ Coleus
- ⦿ Impatiens
- ⦿ Caladium
- ⦿ Gerbera daisy
- ⦿ Geranium
- ⦿ Pentas
- Nasturtium
- Banana
- Zinnia
- Snapdragon
- Pansy
- Elephant ear
- Croton
- Hosta
- Day lily
- Gingers



# Medium water use plants

- ◉ Lantana
- ◉ Verbena
- ◉ Firebush
- ◉ Most ornamental grasses
- ◉ Esparanza
- ◉ Bird of Paradise (*Caesalpinia*)
- ◉ Artemeisa
- ◉ Hibiscus
- ◉ Most Iris
- ◉ Perennial herbs
- ◉ Turk's cap
- ◉ Perennial phlox
- ◉ Crinum lily
- ◉ Amaryllis
- ◉ Liriope

Cast Iron Plant  
Asparagus fern  
Mealy sage  
Echinacea  
Autumn sage  
Mexican bush sage  
Mexican mint marigold  
Gomphrena  
Purslane and moss rose  
Wandering Jew  
Vinca  
Rock rose  
Society garlic  
Holly fern



# Low water use plants

- ⊙ Asiatic jasmine
- ⊙ Yaupon holly
- ⊙ Possumhaw
- ⊙ Crepe myrtle
- ⊙ Oleander
- ⊙ Primrose jasmine
- ⊙ Flowering quince
- ⊙ Red yucca
- ⊙ Elaeagnus
- ⊙ Natal plum
- ⊙ Cotoneaster
- ⊙ Pitosporum

Earth-kind roses  
Crimson barberry  
Desert willow  
Chinese pistache  
Cedar elm  
Bald cypress  
Yuccas  
Agaves  
Texas redbud  
Mexican plum  
Monterrey and Chinkqpin oak  
Live oak



# What about microclimates???

- ✓ Sun / shade patterns
- ✓ Air movement (hedges, fences, etc.)
- ✓ Pavement
- ✓ Modification of soil (compaction, amendments)
- ✓ Irrigation
- ✓ Mulch
- ✓ Planting pattern (crowding)







# Microclimates around structure

- ⊙ North side: shade & heavy water-users
- ⊙ East side: part shade / heavy water users
- ⊙ West / Southwest: arid / heat-tolerant
- ⊙ South side: tropical / tender plants





# Microclimates around structures

- ⊙ North side: shade & heavy water-users
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- ⊙ South side: tropical / tender plants









# What about provenance?



Slide credit: Laura Miller



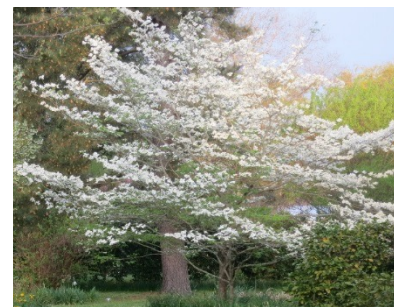
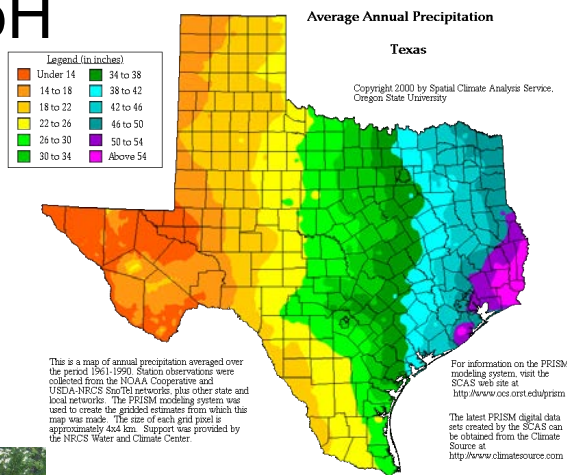
# Texas Natives





# Native, to what region?

Considerations: Temperature, precipitation, soil, and pH





# What is a Non-native

“A plant introduced with human help (intentionally or accidentally) to a new place or new type of habitat where it was not previously found. Note: Not all non-native plants are invasive. In fact, when many non-native plants are introduced to new places, they cannot reproduce or spread readily without continued human help (for example, many ornamental





# What is an Invasive?

“A plant that is both non-native and able to establish on many sites, grow quickly, and spread to the point of disrupting plant communities or ecosystems. Note: From the Presidential Executive Order 13112 (February 1999): 'An invasive species is defined as a species that is 1) non-native (or alien) to the ecosystem under consideration and 2) whose introduction





# Can a Native be Invasive?

“A native plant that is able to take advantage of disturbance to the soil or existing vegetation to spread quickly and out-compete the other plants on the disturbed site”.

-NRCS





# Plant Diversity is important!





# Monocultures can be native too.....





# Hardiness can be “bred out” of natives





# Other Adapted Plants









# Plant Quality Considerations

- ⦿ Final height and width
- ⦿ Growth rate
- ⦿ Form and growth habit
- ⦿ Aesthetic quality
  - ⦿ Color, texture, bark, flowers, fall color, etc.
- ⦿ Plant use
  - ⦿ Tree, shrub, perennial, ground cover, etc.



# Purchasing Shrubs and Trees

- ◉ Bare-root

- Dormant-planted deciduous plants
- Lower cost, but short shelf-life



- ◉ Balled-and-burlapped (B&B)

- Field-grown deciduous or evergreen with root ball
- Longer planting window, but more costly



- ◉ Container-grown

- Trees: 5 to 10 gallon
- Shrubs: 1 to 5 gallon
- Others: 4" to 1 gallon (perennial / groundcover)





# Purchasing Shrubs & Trees: considerations

Plant size: bigger isn't always better!



Root : Shoot proportion



Plant architecture and shape



Plant health and condition



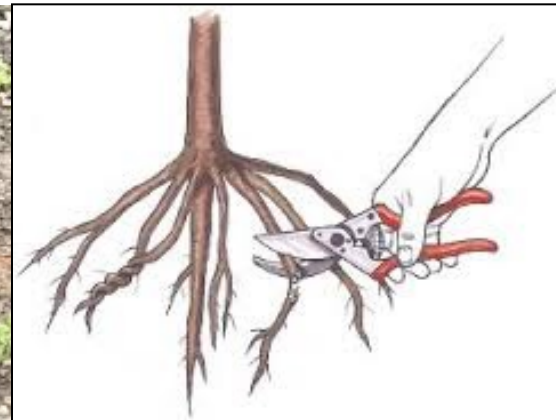


# Planting Shrubs and Trees: preparation

**Circling roots on container plants should be cut with a knife or shovel to prevent stunting and severe damage later.**



**Broken / damaged and circling / crossing roots should be removed from bare-root plants before planting.**

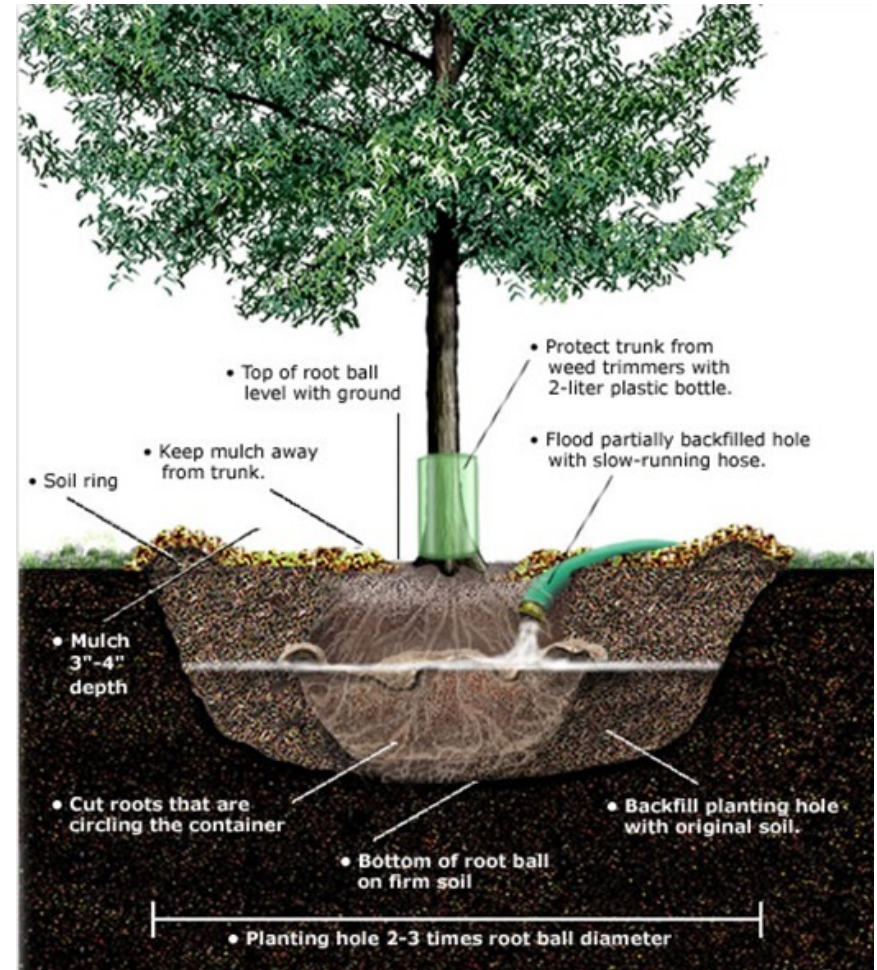




# Proper Planting:

*Because a million dollar hole doesn't make a million dollar tree!*

1. Dig hole twice as wide, no deeper
2. Plant at original depth
3. Backfill with ORIGINAL soil
4. Soil ring and mulch
5. Water deeply
6. Stake loosely (if necessary)
7. Trim back top as necessary





# Plant Use Types

- ◎ **Trees**
- ◎ **Shrubs**
- ◎ **Vines**
- ◎ **Groundcovers**
- ◎ **Perennials**
- ◎ **Annuals**
- ◎ **Turf**





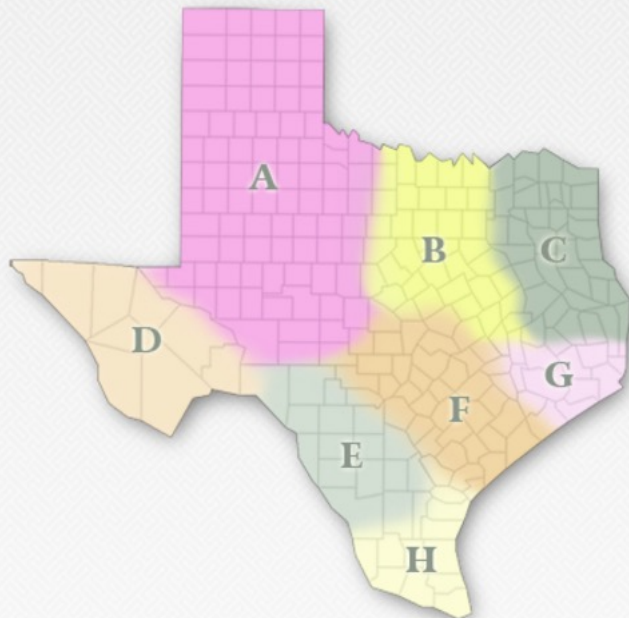
# Earth-Kind® Plant Selector

Select your general region on the map or use the region list. You can also find your region by searching via zip code. The next page will allow you to search for plants by specific characteristics, or view all plants for the particular region.

The Earth-Kind® Plant Selector DOES NOT provide information concerning the potential invasiveness of a plant. A high Earth-Kind® index value will generally indicate a plant is less likely to be invasive. For more information, see [Invasiveness](#).

ekps.tamu.edu

## Regions



## USDA Hardiness Zones



## Find Region by Zip Code

Please enter the Texas zip code for your region

5-Digit Zip Code

## Search by Region

Please select the Texas region

Region

## Search by USDA Hardiness Zone

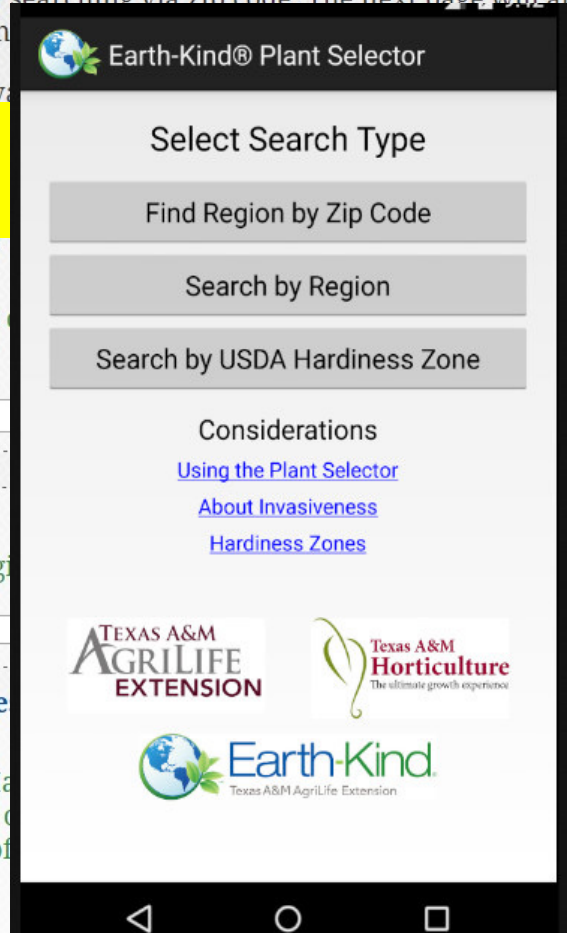
Select the desired USDA Hardiness Zone(s). Click on the zone(s) you want. Click on the left for a larger view of the map.

Hardiness Zone:

6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10 ☐

## Additional Considerations

- [Using the Plant Selector](#)
- [About Invasiveness](#)





## “Region B - North and Central Texas”

Fill in the information to refine your search, or select "Show ALL Plants for Region" to see all plants listed for your region/zone. Plants will be ordered by those most well adapted to your region. *Photos are not available for all plants at this time.*

### Name 🌿

Common Name:

### Scientific Name 🌿

Scientific Name:

### Growth Habit 🌿

Habit or Plant Use:

### Exposure 🌿

Partial sun ☒ Shade ☐ Sun ☒

### Blooming 🌿

Flower Color:

Bloom Period:

Fall ☐ Spring ☐ Summer ☐ Winter ☐

### Leaf Character 🌿

Annual ☐ Deciduous ☐ Evergreen ☐ Herbaceous perennial ☐ Semievergreen ☐

### Firewise Index 🌿

Firewise Index:

### USDA Hardiness Zone 🌿

The dropdown below only lists hardiness zones found in the current region

USDA Hardiness Zone:



[Click image for enlarged map of USDA Hardiness Zones](#)

[Search by Above Criteria](#)

[Clear Form](#)







OR



# Landscaping

« 1 2 »

Results Per Page: 20 ▼

Photo	Common Name	Scientific Name	Exposure	Earth-Kind® Index
	<a href="#">Rockrose</a>	<i>Pavonia lasiopetala</i>	sun, partial sun	10.00
	<a href="#">Turk's Cap</a>	<i>Malvaviscus arboreus</i> var. <i>drummondii</i>	sun, partial sun, shade	10.00
	<a href="#">Eastern Redcedar</a>	<i>Juniperus virginiana</i>	sun	10.00
	<a href="#">Coralberry</a>	<i>Symphoricarpos orbiculatus</i>	sun, partial sun, shade	10.00
	<a href="#">Asian Jasmine</a>	<i>Trachelospermum asiaticum</i>	sun, partial sun, shade	10.00
	<a href="#">Salvias or Sages</a>	<i>Salvia</i> spp.	sun, partial sun	10.00



[Back to Search Results](#)**Common Name:**

Rockrose

**Scientific Name:***Pavonia lasiopetala***Family Name:**

Malvaceae

**Description:**

Rockrose is a small deciduous to semi-evergreen shrub, subshrub, herbaceous perennial or summer annual depending upon the region in which it is grown. Plants have irregularly rounded crowns and look best in masses. The small cordate leaves and pink hibiscus-like flowers add seasonal interest. It works best as summer color, a tall bank or groundcover, in mixed perennial borders, for naturalizing, or low shrub in warmer regions.

**Plant Habit or Use:**

warm season annual, perennial, groundcover, shrub, small shrub

**Exposure:**

sun, partial sun

**Flower Color:**

Pink

**Blooming Period:**

Spring, summer, fall

**Fruit Characteristics:**

Schizocarp

**Height:**



Schizocarp

### Height:

1 ft to 5 ft

### Width:

2 ft to 5 ft

### Earth-Kind® Index:

10.00

[Explanation of the Earth-Kind® Index numerical value](#)

- Heat Tolerance: High Heat Tolerance
- Water Requirements: Low Water Use
- Soil Requirements: Low Soil Requirements
- Pest Tolerance: High Pest Resistance
- Fertility Requirements: Low Fertility Requirements

[Explanation of the Earth-Kind® Index breakdown](#)

### Firewise Index

10.00

[Explanation of the Firewise Index numerical value](#)

### USDA Hardiness Zones:

7, 8, 9, 10, 11

#### **Regions that intersect these hardiness zones:**

Region A - Panhandle and High Plains • Region B - North and Central Texas • Region C - Northeast and East Texas • Region D - West Texas • Region E - Upper Rio Grande • Region F - Hill Country and Central Coast • Region G - Southeast Texas • Region H - Rio Grande Valley



*Click image for enlarged map of USDA Hardiness Zones*

### Additional Comments:

Plants are marginally hardy in USDA zone 7 and are usually subshrubs or herbaceous perennials in zone 8.



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RESEARCH



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AGRI LIFE  
EXTENSION



# Criteria for Selecting a Texas Superstar<sup>®</sup>

- 1) Must be attractive and useful to the gardening masses.
- 2) Must be unique and offer desirable and ornamental characteristics not usually available in commonly sold plants.
- 3) Must consistently perform well for Texas consumers regardless of their plant expertise and growing locations.
- 4) Must be as pest resistant as possible (deer proof an added bonus).
- 5) Must be able to be propagated and mass-produced in sufficient numbers to meet the increased consumer demand.
- 6) Must be so attractive in the sales container that it sells itself to the consumer who has never heard of the many attributes of the plant.



# Texas Superstar<sup>®</sup>

## Major Trial Sites





# Texas Superstar® Executive Board

- ◉ Brent Pemberton, Chair  
Texas A&M AgriLife Research-Overton, TX
- ◉ Mike Arnold  
Texas A&M University-College Station, TX
- ◉ Tim Davis  
Texas A&M University-College Station, TX
- ◉ Dan Linberger  
Texas A&M University-College Station, TX
- ◉ Cynthia McKenney  
Texas Tech University-Lubbock, TX
- ◉ David Rodriguez  
Texas A&M AgriLife Extension-San Antonio, TX
- ◉ Larry Stein  
Texas A&M AgriLife Extension-Uvalde, TX





# Texas Superstar® Plants

## Strong and Stunning Plants for Texans

Texas Superstar® plants have survived several years of extensive field trials and proven themselves to be super-performing plants under Texas growing conditions. They receive minimal soil preparation, minimal water and no pesticides. What does that mean for your garden? It means landscape success with beautiful, proven, Texas-tough plants.

Whether spring, summer, fall or winter, Texas is unsurpassed when it comes to the natural beauty and color of our flowers and plants.

*Put Down Texas Superstar® Roots – and Enjoy the View!*



Visit [www.texassuperstar.com](http://www.texassuperstar.com) for additional information about Texas Superstar® plants.

Look for this tag when shopping for Texas Superstar®



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TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE



**Texas  
Superstar®**

**Strong and  
Stunning Plants  
for Texans.**



**GO TEXAN.**

COMMISSIONER TODD STAPLES  
TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

E-mail [Grow.Texan@TexasAgriculture.gov](mailto:Grow.Texan@TexasAgriculture.gov) for a free copy of the Texas Superstar® Strong and Stunning Plants for Texans brochure.



# Groundcovers



# Asiatic Jasmine

## *Trachelospermum asiaticum*

- ⊙ USDA 8 to 11 (Apocynacea)
- ⊙ Full sun to shade
- ⊙ 6" to 24" layer-forming mound
- ⊙ Glossy evergreen foliage (seldom flowers)
- ⊙ Rapidly spreading, but does not climb
- ⊙ Tolerant of drought, salinity, pest/disease
- ⊙ Variegated forms less vigorous
- ⊙ Cold damage further North (typically returns)
- ⊙ "Go-to" groundcover for most of Texas





# Ornamental Sweet Potato

*Ipomoea purpurea*





# English Ivy

*Hedera helix*

- ◉ USDA 4 to 8 (Araliaceae)
- ◉ Mostly sun to dense shade
- ◉ Widely adapted as groundcover or vine
- ◉ Many cultivars, including variegated forms
- ◉ Climbs via aerial rootlets (benefit or liability)
- ◉ Unattractive adult form should be pruned out
- ◉ Often used for topiaries





# Beauty can be fleeting.....





# Liriope / Lilyturf

## *Liriope muscari*

- ◉ USDA 6 to 10 (Liliaceae)
- ◉ Sun to shade (variegated forms need shade)
- ◉ 8" to 18" tall, quickly spreading
- ◉ Clump-forming grass-like groundcover or edging
- ◉ Appreciable white to purple flowers in late summer
- ◉ Tolerant of heat/drought once established
- ◉ Periodic shearing to ground





# Mondo/Monkey Grass

## *Ophiopogon japonica*

- ⦿ USDA 6 to 10 (Liliaceae)
- ⦿ Partial sun to shade
- ⦿ Dark green grass-like mat; groundcover / edging
- ⦿ 2" to 12", depending on variety
- ⦿ Finer texture than Liriope, less attractive flowers
- ⦿ Less tolerant of heat/sun than Liriope
- ⦿ Drought tolerant once established





# Setcreasea / Purple Heart

## *Tradescantia pallida*

- ◉ USDA 9-13 (survives 8b)
- ◉ Full sun (best color) to dense shade
- ◉ 12" to 18" tall, spreading
- ◉ Warm season perennial in cooler regions
- ◉ More compact improved selections
- ◉ Good drainage, tolerates some drought





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# Prostrate Rosemary

*Rosmarinus officinalis* 'Prostratus'





# Vines



# Cross Vine

## *Bignonia capreolata*

- ◉ USDA 6a to 10 (Bignoniaceae)
- ◉ Full sun to partial shade
- ◉ Woody, evergreen vine native to E. Texas
- ◉ Yellow to orange trumpet-shape blooms
- ◉ Early spring, sporadically throughout summer
- ◉ Tolerates heat, drought, and range of soils





# Coral Honeysuckle

## *Lonicera sempervirens*

- ⦿ USDA 4 to 9 (Caprifoliaceae)
- ⦿ Sun to partial shade
- ⦿ Evergreen vine with tubular red/pink flowers in spring
- ⦿ Texas native is better behaved than its Asian cousin
- ⦿ Requires less support than many vines
- ⦿ Tolerant of salinity, drought, and pests/disease





# Shrubs



# Coralberry

## *Symphoricarpos orbiculatus*

- ◉ USDA 3 to 9
- ◉ Full sun to mostly shade
- ◉ Spread: 2' to 4', spreading from rhizomes
- ◉ Native for naturalizing or groundcover
- ◉ Tolerant of wide range of soils, drought tolerant
- ◉ Showy pink berries persistent through winter





# Rosemary

## *Rosmarinus officinalis*

- ⦿ USDA 7 to 10
- ⦿ Spread: 2 to 5 feet, prostrate form 1 foot tall and spreading
- ⦿ Full sun to partial shade, needs well-drained soil
- ⦿ Mediterranean plant tolerant of drought and heat and variety of soils
- ⦿ Gray-green to blue-green needle-like foliage is extremely aromatic
- ⦿ Tiny tube-shape lavender flowers in spring and summer





# Possumhaw

*Ilex decidua*

- ◉ USDA 4 to 9
- ◉ Full sun to almost full shade
- ◉ Max. spread: 8'-12' tall x 6'-10' wide
- ◉ Texas native that is tolerant of heat, drought, and heavy soils
- ◉ Deciduous foliage gives way to red berries persistent through fall and winter
- ◉ Best to plant named female clones





# Feijoa / Pineapple Guava

## *Acca sellowiana*

- ⦿ USDA 8 to 11
- ⦿ Full sun to partial shade (some afternoon shade beneficial)
- ⦿ Spread: 8'-12' high x 7'-9' wide with gray-green foliage
- ⦿ Tolerant of a variety of soils, but prefers well-drained
- ⦿ Moderate heat and drought tolerance
- ⦿ Showy (edible) pink flowers give way to tasty fruit in late fall





# Small Trees



# Texas Mountain Laurel

## *Sophora secundiflora*

- ⦿ USDA 8 to 10 (can survive in 7 with some occasional damage)
- ⦿ Max spread 8'-12' tall x 4'-8' wide
- ⦿ Full sun to partial shade with good drainage
- ⦿ Showy evergreen foliage with very fragrant purple pea-shaped flowers in spring
- ⦿ Great native with excellent heat and drought tolerance





# Mexican Plum

## *Prunus mexicana*

- ⦿ Small 15' to 20' deciduous tree
- ⦿ USDA 7 to 9
- ⦿ Full sun to part shade
- ⦿ Drooping leaves, white flowers, and edible fruit
- ⦿ Attractive peeling bark and nice winter form
- ⦿ Tolerant of alkaline soils and cotton root rot
- ⦿ Needs good drainage





# Chinese Fringetree

## *Chionanthus retusus*

- ⦿ Small to medium, 15 to 30 feet
- ⦿ USDA 6 to 9
- ⦿ Full sun / part shade
- ⦿ Multi-trunked with corky bark
- ⦿ Dark green deciduous leaves
- ⦿ Fragrant white flowers in spring
- ⦿ Widely tolerant of soil types
- ⦿ Improved selections grafted





# Medium and Large Trees



# Texas Red Oak / Spanish Oak

*Quercus buckleyi* (*Q. texana*)

- ⦿ USDA: 6 to 9 (Fagaceae)
- ⦿ Full sun
- ⦿ Medium size deciduous tree, 30 to 50 feet
- ⦿ Smaller version of shumard oak
- ⦿ Variable red/orange color in late fall
- ⦿ Better suited to drought, alkalinity than *Q. shumardii*
- ⦿ Susceptible to Oak Wilt
- ⦿ Requires good drainage





# Cedar Elm

## *Ulmus crassifolia*

- ⦿ USDA: 6 to 9 (Ulmaceae)
- ⦿ Full sun
- ⦿ Medium to large upright/oval tree (40 to 70 feet)
- ⦿ Fairly dependable creamy yellow/gold fall color
- ⦿ Rugged and widely adapted TX native
- ⦿ Well-adapted to limitations of urban plantings:
- ⦿ Tolerant of heat, drought, salinity, compacted soils
- ⦿ Better tolerance to D.E.D. than *U. americana*





# Bur Oak

## *Quercus macrocarpa*

- ◉ Large, 60' to 80' deciduous tree
- ◉ USDA 3 to 9, full sun
- ◉ Stout trunk with coarse “clubby” growth
- ◉ Deeply lobed leaves and very large acorns
- ◉ Too large for most residential applications
- ◉ Tolerant of drought and variety of soils





# Perennials



# Mealy Cup Sage

*Salvia farinacea*





# Autumn Sage

*Salvia greggii*





# 'Gold Star' Esperanza

*Tecoma stans*





# Firebush

## *Hamelia patens*

- ⊙ USDA: 8b to 11 (summer annual elsewhere)
- ⊙ Full sun to partial sun
- ⊙ Herbaceous perennial (small shrub in tropics)
- ⊙ 3 to 5 feet spread, to 8 feet in the tropics
- ⊙ Dense green foliage with red blush
- ⊙ Brilliant red to yellow-orange tubular flowers
- ⊙ Great for hummingbird / butterfly gardens
- ⊙ Extremely heat-tolerant; best in middle of summer
- ⊙ Tolerant of drought, salinity, and alkaline soils





# Pride of Barbados

## *Caesalpinia pulcherrima*

- ⊙ USDA: 8b to 11 (annual elsewhere)
- ⊙ Full sun to partial sun
- ⊙ Herbaceous perennial, tropical shrub in S. Texas
- ⊙ 3 to 6 feet spread (to 15 feet in Tropics)
- ⊙ Panicles of stunning orange/yellow, mimosa-like foliage
- ⊙ Great choice for areas with reflected heat
- ⊙ Tolerant of heat, drought, salinity, and alkaline soils
- ⊙ Requires at least decent drainage
- ⊙ Often planted with *Tecoma stans* (Esparanza)





# Ornamental Grasses



# Gulf Coast Muhly Grass

*Muhlenbergia capillaris*





# 'Princess Caroline' Napier Grass









# Other Resources

<http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/earthkind/>

<http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/ornamental/>

<http://texassuperstar.com/>

<http://urbanlandscapeguide.tamu.edu/>

<http://texastreeplanting.tamu.edu/>

<http://ipm.tamu.edu/>

<http://itc.tamu.edu/Drip%20Project.php>