

Bell County Master Gardener
Tip of the Week
By Mary Lew Quesinberry

Globe Mallow

Globe mallow is a common wildflower across the desert southwest. It is the most drought tolerant member of the mallow family. There are twelve species native to Texas: *Sphaeralcea angustifolia*, *coccinea*, *digitata*, *fendleri*, *hustulata*, *incana*, *laxa*, *leptophylla*, *lindheimeri*, *pedatifida*, *polychroma*, and *wrightii*.

It has greenish to grayish, maple shaped, hairy leaves. Globe mallow has cup shaped blooms that are present most of the year. Bloom color ranges from scarlet to pink to shades of orange. This perennial herb grows four feet in height and four feet in width. Native Americans used globe mallow to relieve irritated skin, as a hair gel, for teething pain, sore throats, eye irritations, blistered feet, and bladder infections.

Globe mallow is a handsome addition to a wildscape/xeriscape landscape. It thrives in hot temperatures and with limited water. Plant it in raised beds with a generous amount of decomposed granite to provide it the drainage and gritty soil it requires. Think about adding perennials *Salvia greggi*, Blackfoot Daisy, New Gold Lantana, the shrubs *Pride of Barbados* and Red Yucca, the native grass Deer Muhly, and from the yucca family, *Nolina texana*, and you will have a colorful drought and heat tolerant garden full of motion and texture.

These plants will be a magnet for hummingbirds and butterflies. Plan to water deeply with a drip system or soaker hose. This will conserve water also through our hot summers. Overhead watering washes away vital plant nectar for the hummingbirds and butterflies. Avoid pesticides to prevent the loss of wildlife and beneficial insects so necessary for pollination and beauty in the garden. There are organic solutions on the market; look for them.

Have any questions about gardening in Central Texas? Contact ask.bcmga@gmail.com

In the picture: Desert globe mallow (*Sphaeralcea ambigua*) is the most drought tolerant member of the mallow family. It blooms most of the year and is an evergreen perennial in Central Texas. It is native to the desert Southwest and is a wonderful addition to a xeriscape garden.

