

## TIPS FROM OUR GARDEN

by La Donna Stockstill, Parker County Master Gardener  
Pictures from La Donna Stockstill's Yard

### SUN TO SHADE GARDENING:

Our garden went from full sun to mostly shade over the years and we have had to rethink much of our garden to accommodate this fact. We now have deep shade, medium shade with a few places still in full sun so this makes for interesting gardening. Rather than fight to make things grow in areas that do not fit their needs, we have found replacements that are suited to our landscaping. When we find a plant that requires too much attention and we feel needs too much chemical control to make it happy, we have chosen to remove many of these and replace them with proven winners for this area.



### Plants we no longer use in our landscape and some plants we use in their place:

Thrift: They seem to come equipped with Spider Mites.

Red Tip Photinia: We have taken out most of the ones we have because of the Entomosporium Fungal Leaf Spot. The remaining ones that are doing well will remain unless they show signs of the disease. The remaining ones are as large as trees and are beautiful in our landscape. We have no idea why some thrived and some died.

Hostas: Snails, slugs and sow bugs are a problem with these and we have replaced them with Cast Iron Plants (*Aspidistra Elatior*).



We love Hostas but had a great deal of difficulty growing them because of sow bugs, slugs, and snails and less than desirable soils. We used many forms of controls and have had great success with most plants in my landscape, other than the Hostas. Rather than continuing the fight, we decided to find a different plant that we could use in these areas. We now use the Cast Iron Plant in the areas where we once had Hostas. They must have total shade but can survive with less moisture than Hostas. They are evergreen, multiply on their own and are wonderful in floral arrangements. The leaves are larger than Hostas and

can make a bold statement in a garden. Since these are so bold, they usually are best as background plantings.

Temperature requirements: our heat does not bother these plants, as long as they are in the shade. They are listed as hardy to Zone 7 but in a severe winter, may need a floating row cover over them. We have had them in my garden since 1995 and have never covered them but they are in a yard that has a great

deal of protection. Since the leaves are so large, sometimes the wind can be a problem and windburn the tips. We have continued adding these plants throughout our landscape and have been very pleased with them. They are a great boost for shade gardens.

Nana Nandinas: We love the other Nandinas and use many of them throughout our landscape but have taken the Nana Nandinas out because of the Entomosporium Fungal Leaf Spot. The other Nandinas are wonderful and highly recommended.

Periwinkles: When our periwinkles appeared to wilt as if hot water had been poured over them, we knew we had Phytophthora Stem Disease and no longer plant them.

Junipers: We have chosen not to plant anymore of these because of Spider Mites but will keep the ones we have but will add no more.

Bradford Pears: We have taken out two of these but still have three and have pruned them to compensate for their weak crotches. We will keep the ones we have until they display problems. Since these are not native, they have become a haven for grackles. Their upward branching is ideal for grackle nests so this is another minus for this tree.

Waxleaf Ligustrum: We had several of these and lost them in the winter of 1981, when the temperatures plunged to below zero. We have replaced these plantings with hollies such as Nellie R. Stevens, Yaupon (regular, weeping and dwarf) and Burford.

### **Other thoughts:**

#### **COLEUS:**

We enjoy coleus all year around and since they are so easy to root from cuttings, I always have a great supply for containers inside and out and still have ones to plant outside in the summer garden for color interest.



#### **PLANT MARKERS:**

When you change a plant and want to change the plant marker, don't worry about the old one having the name of the old plant on it. Just spray the marker plate with silver aluminum paint and when it dries, it is as good as new and ready to take the name of the new plant. These can be used over and over for years.

#### **BULB PLANTERS:**

When you are adding small plants to an area that is filled with existing plants, just use your bulb planter to make the holes. This will enable you to dig into an area and not disturb the other plants. Sometimes when using a spade or shovel, you disturb a larger area than necessary for a small plant. This way the soil is not moved from the existing plantings. The bulb planter goes easily into the ground and brings the soil up, pop the new plant in and cover it with the soil.

