“Anyone-Can-Grow” Favorites
by Monica Tudor

WHEN FOLKS ASK ME HOW TO TAKE CARE OF A PLANT, THEY usually are asking about how much water and what kind of sun exposure it needs. They almost never ask about the kind of soil the plant prefers. But the kind of soil in the garden (or pot) is just as important as the amount of water or sun. When I find a plant that is tolerant of variances in soil, sun, and water, it makes me believe I’m a gardener.

For background information, I’ve got sand and dirt in my yard. No clay, but in some places the dirt is really packed down. I’ve also got wetter areas and drier areas, as well as full sun to filtered shade. I’ll often place several of the same type of plant in different parts of the garden to see where they like it the best. Here are four examples of my “anyone can grow” favorites and how they have grown in my garden’s microenvironments.

Let’s take a look at *Baileya multiradiata*, or desert marigold. In my garden, this plant got started from a packet of mixed wildflower seeds from the online shop of Theodore Payne Nursery. It’s a great plant to use since it can tolerate a wide variety of conditions and is self-propagating, but not invasive. *Baileya* is considered a short-lived perennial, lasting 3-4 years. It will eventually grow into a mound and carries many small, yellow, daisy-shaped flowers above the fuzzy leaves. *Baileya* blooms almost all year.

Garden View with Allen Chickering Sage, Baileya, Salvia, etc.
beautifully green through and through. The ones in
drier areas are growing, but more slowly, and their
leaves are mixed green and brown.

There are lots
of sages in
my garden.
I like their
scent and their
hardiness. My
two favorite
varieties are
called Allen
Chickering
and Winifred
Gilman. Yup,
both varieties
are planted in sandy dirt as well as packed dirt. Both
are tough,
but the Allen
Chickering is
more drought
tolerant.
Winifred looks
better with
occasional-to-
weekly water-
ing, especially
when it gets
really hot,
while Allen
can do well
with less than
half the water
Winifred gets. I have not been successful in propagat-
ing these sages, but that's OK since they are readily
available in the local nurseries. Like the Bailey and
the Muhley, the sages can tolerate weekly watering
and grow larger in the sandy parts of my garden.

Don’t know where to start with native plants for your
garden? Give these a try.

For readers desiring a tour of my garden, I have a few
dates in September and October available. Please con-
tact me in advance at dosportas@msn.com
or 661 808 8387

Destroying species -
is like tearing pages out of an unread book, written
in a language humans hardly know how to read,
about the place where they live.

— Holmes Rolston III, professor of philosophy (b. 1932)