

## If You Can't Lick 'Em, Join 'Em

Paul A. Foerster, Bexar County Master Gardener



Texas nightshade grown on a trellis. Photo courtesy Paul Foerster, BCMG

As an 85-year-old living in the “age of COVID-19,” I have been reluctant to participate in volunteer activities that bring together groups of my BCMG colleagues. To satisfy the urge for gardening, I’ve been spending more time in my own garden.

One thing the garden needed was a remedy for the persistent appearance of certain unwanted plants in various places. Volunteer Texas nightshade vine grows along the ground at one corner of the garage, despite efforts to dig it all out. Snailseed vine is a persistent intruder at the cross fence between the house and the driveway. A dichondra-like plant with tiny leaves grows flush with the surface on our decomposed granite walkways. And straggler weed appears just about anywhere there is bare soil. All keep coming back.

So, with time on my hands, I decided to take the advice, credited to Indiana Senator James E. Watson in 1932, “If you can’t lick ‘em, join ‘em.” I painted an old trellis and attached it to the side of the garage, just above a clump of the Texas nightshade. Another trellis attached to the cross fence now supports snailseed vines. Short, taped bamboo stakes mark bluebonnet plants sprouting in the decomposed granite walkway to prevent being trampled.



Snailseed vine grown on a trellis.

A dichondra-like plant emerged several years ago in the granite walkway [left, below]. Don’t know where it came from - it just grew! It is spreading [right, below] and hopefully will cover the entire 100-plus feet of walkway, giving green-carpeted paths.



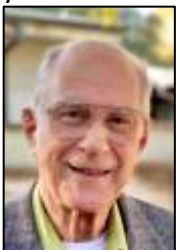
Left photos - Dichondra-like plant spreading in decomposed granite. Photos courtesy Paul Foerster, BCMG

Finally, inspired by Bexar County Master Gardener Lynn Cox’s recent webinar, I have been transplanting native horseherb (which is what many gardeners call straggler weed) to a spot where I *want* it to grow. I have moved it to a place where grass won’t grow because it is shaded by Mexican orchid, anacua, mountain laurel, and pecan trees. When transplanting, it works well to put the clumps of horseherb in a tub of water as you dig them out, water the holes in which you are to plant the clumps, then treat the transplants with a root stimulator.



Horseherb/straggler weed transplanted to a shady “lawn” area. Photo courtesy Paul Foerster, BCMG

Hope this gives you some ideas of how you can use time when pandemic considerations keep you around home.



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