

XERISCAPE

NATURE'S CHOICE OF LANDSCAPE



Dalea

Daleas are a diverse group of plants that have delicate texture, provide wonderful winter to early spring color, and tolerate our hot summers. The nearly 200 species of these plants include trees, shrubs and groundcovers, many of which are native to the deserts of the Southwest. Most of the recent introductions of daleas are groundcovers or shrubs that range in height from 1 ½ to 5 feet in height. The pea-like flowers vary from purple to rose to yellow, and attract pollinating bees and butterflies. A variety of birds like quail, dove, and finches enjoy the seeds.

These plants perform best in a sunny location, in well-drained soil, and with minimal supplemental irrigation. Most species are hardy to 15 degrees F or below. Because they are legumes, they "fix" nitrogen and hardly ever require fertilizer. Over-watering or drought conditions in the summer can cause partial leaf drop.

Daleas can be used as a groundcover or informal hedge in the landscape. They are excellent partners with other desert plants including fairy duster, brittlebush, sweet acacia, autumn sage, blue palo verde and agave. While requiring very little maintenance, new growth and increased flowering can be encouraged by lightly trimming or cutting back every two or three years in the fall to early spring. Only three of the most popular daleas are featured here but many others are also available.

Dalea frutescens

Black Dalea

This small mounding shrub grows to 3 feet with a 4 foot spread, and works well for informal foundation plantings or combined with other desert plants. Black dalea has fine-textured silvery green foliage and brilliant ¾" clusters of tiny purple flowers blooming in late winter, early spring and fall. *Dalea frutescens* is found throughout the Chihuahuan Desert of western Texas, southern New Mexico and northern Mexico.

Dalea greggii

Trailing Dalea

Trailing dalea has tiny gray-green leaves growing on a mounding groundcover 18 inches in height and spreading up to 6 feet. In the spring, *Dalea greggii* has masses of delicate lavender flowers. This Chihuahuan Desert native creates a low, billowing appearance and is an excellent choice for erosion control on slopes. The soft, gray-green foliage contrasts well with plants with bright green leaves. Rabbits find trailing dalea unappealing.

Dalea pulchra

Bush Dalea

This southeastern Arizona native shrub grows to 5 feet tall and wide and has silvery gray foliage. Be sure to allow ample room for it to grow. In early spring bush dalea has abundant violet flowers grouped together into showy heads at the ends of the branches. Bush dalea is typically open and loosely branched, but it can be lightly pruned to control shape and size using 'selective' or 'natural' pruning techniques. For excellent combinations, plant with pink fairy duster (*Calliandra eriophylla*) or chuparosa (*Justicia californica*).