

WHAT'S BLOOMING?

(week of August 9, 2020)

The South Texas Botanical Gardens & Nature Center currently cannot offer Saturday morning educational seminars, weekend Rep-Tales and Parrot Talk, or Orchid-ology series, due to State of Texas COVID-19 "gathering" restrictions, as well as health and safety of our guests.

However, carrying out its horticulture, environmental education and conservation mission, the Botanical Gardens brings us **WHAT'S BLOOMING**, which each week will spotlight both a blooming plant in the Exhibit Area; and a native in or near the Habitat and Trails area—which you can enjoy on a visit that week!

Firecracker Plant

Russelia equisetiformis

Firecracker Plant is a great summer bloomer in local landscapes. Clusters of tubular red flowers cover weeping branches resembling exploded strings of firecrackers. It also is an excellent hummingbird attractor plant, blooming constantly from spring migration through summer and past fall hummer migration.

Firecracker Plant works well potted or planted in the ground, thriving in full sun or partial shade. Mature landscape forms produce stems 3-5 feet tall. Severe early spring pruning helps clean out dead branches and keeps plants shorter.

A hedge of Firecracker Plant is on display as you enter the Botanical Gardens with additional plants in the Hummingbird Garden.



Mexican Orchid Tree

Bauhinia Mexicana

While most gardeners are familiar with the larger Hong Kong Orchid Tree (*Bauhinia purpurea*), there are two native Bauhinias in Texas. The Mexican Orchid Tree, from deep South Texas is a vigorous grower once established. Reaching 8-12 feet high and similar width, it is identifiable by its 2-2½ inch leaves with two distinctive points. A shorter species, Anaconcho Orchid Tree (*Bauhinia congesta*), has much smaller, rounded leaves and dwarf white flowers, and is native to far West Texas.

This small tree blossoms multiple times throughout the warm months with white flowers with long narrow petals giving it a frilly appearance. The blooms are a great nectar source attracting a wide array of butterfly species as well as hummingbirds. It can produce seedlings underneath to allow easy propagation, but it is not very common in retail garden centers.



In the Botanical Gardens, the Mexican Orchid Tree is located past the Sensory Garden, across from the Monkey Mansion Tree House entrance.