

## GARDENS IN BLOOM

(week of Dec. 27, 2020)

The South Texas Botanical Gardens & Nature Center currently cannot offer Saturday classes, weekend Rep-Tales and Parrot Talk, or Orchid-ology series, due to COVID-19 protocol, plus health and safety of guests. Fulfilling its horticulture, environmental education and conservation mission, **WHAT'S BLOOMING**, each week spotlights a featured tropical and native plant—to enjoy on a visit this week, or enhance your landscape!

### LOQUAT or JAPANESE PLUM (*Eriobotrya japonica*)

Loquat, a small ornamental tree well-adapted to South Texas landscapes, is a Zone 8 plant tolerating freezing weather to 10°F, and salt-tolerant even when poor water quality. It can mature to 20-30 feet, but only reaches 15-20 feet here. While the common name “Japanese Plum” tells its origin, it surprisingly is a member of the Rose (Rosaceae) family.

Its large, attractive dark-green leaves, ranging 6-9 inches long and 2-3 inches across, have a rust-colored fuzzy texture on the underside, and serrated edges—a popular choice for floral design-- also offering a striking alternative to more common small-leaved shrubs and trees in the landscape.

**See Loquat in the Sensory Garden, currently blooming with spikes of small white flowers about a half-inch across, which, after being pollinated by bees or butterflies, transform into small fruit, which can be eaten after turning golden.**



### PINK MINT (*Stachys drummondii*)

This wildflower only has been documented naturally occurring in Texas, according to the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center, particularly from Northern Mexico near the Gulf, through the Eastern Rio Grande Valley and up along the Coastal Plain toward Houston. The species was named after Scottish naturalist Thomas Drummond who, in the 1830s, collected more than 750 plant samples, and identified more than 150 birds in the Southwest U.S. and Northern Mexico. Also, known as “Drummond’s Hedge-nettle,” it is a member of the Mint Family (Lamiaceae), along with most culinary herbs, salvia and coleus.

Pink Mint has stalks with small lavender-pink tubular blossoms, a white throat and lavender speckles, shaped similarly to cousins in genus *Salvia*. Plants have light green foliage, and grow 1-2 feet tall, blooming in cooler months lasting through spring. Blossoms die off in April, when spent flowers should be left to dry and produce viable seeds for next year. Plants die back in June and July from heat, with seedlings returning in November as temperatures drop. These “weeds” to some are an important nectar source for resident butterflies in winter and early spring.

**See Pink Mint most prominently found in the Butterfly Garden and Butterfly Hill, but also naturally occurring in small populations in other gardens, and sunny spots along the Brennecke Nature Trail.**

