

## GARDENS IN BLOOM

(week of Dec 13, 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!

### PANAMA ROSE (*Rondeletia leucophylla*)

Despite its common name “Panama Rose,” this member of the Madder family (Rubiaceae--along with Ixora, Pentas, Gardenia, and Coffee--actually is native to Chiapas, Mexico! It produces clusters of rose-pink tubular flowers resembling its smaller cousin Egyptian Starflower (Pentas), resulting in another common name, “Bush Pentas.” This perennial shrub typically grows 6-8 feet tall in our area, but has been noted up to 15 feet at maturity in warmer regions. It prefers well-drained humus-rich soils, liking partial shade to full sun.

Panama Rose is almost a year-round bloomer and great butterfly nectar plant, blooming in cool months when other plants may be dormant.

**See a mature Panama Rose in the Butterfly Garden, on the way to the Sensory Garden.**



### BELLYACHE BUSH (*Jatropha gossypifolia*)

Bellyache Bush (*Jatropha gossypifolia*), also known as “black physicnut” or “cottonleaf physicnut” in other regions, is a member of the spurge or Euphorbia family (Euphorbiaceae) along with poinsettia, pencil cactus, crotons, and other *Jatropha* species. Most often recognized for its young glossy, sticky, dark maroon three-lobed leaves which turn green at maturity, the small red yellow-centered flower is not significant, but forms half- inch lobed fruit after pollination. Plants mature 5-12 feet tall, but will freeze back and re-emerge from root or seedlings during a cold winter, limiting their spread in our area.

While this plant is native to South America, Caribbean Islands, India, Mexico and deep South Texas, it's designated a noxious weed in Puerto Rico, and will rapidly reproduce from seed spread by birds if left unchecked. It is toxic to some mammals, with early toxicity symptoms including gastro-enteritis.

**See Bellyache Bush in the Sensory Garden, and behind it near Butterfly Hill.**

