

GARDENS IN BLOOM

(week of Jan. 10, 2021)

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, **GARDENS IN BLOOM**, each week spotlights a featured tropical and native plant—to enjoy on a visit this week, or possibly enhance your landscape!

POWDER PUFF (*Calliandra haematocephala*)

This exotic is a member of the Mimosa Family (*Mimosaceae*), with characteristic dainty, puffy flowers. Powder Puff's reddish-pink blooms begin as buds resembling raspberries, but expand to 2-4 inches across when open, like an old-fashioned ladies powder puff; and attract butterflies, hummingbirds and bees! Leaves are compound composed of multiple leaflets, each about 1.5 inches wide and 1.5-2 inches long. Leaflets close in the evening, reopening each morning.

A tropical shrub, native to Bolivia, it can reach 12-15 feet tall, spreading 6-8 feet wide untrimmed. Plants may be cut back annually remaining a large shrub, or pruned into a small tree. A much more compact Texas native cousin called "Fairy Duster" (*Calliandra conferta*), only reaches 3-5 feet. Powder Puff is tropical and can suffer some damage to branches in severe freezes, or loss of leaves in a light freeze.

See Powder Puff on outer edge of the Hummingbird Garden, also visible from the edge of the adjacent Brennecke Nature Trail.



SNAKE EYES or "DEVIL QUEEN" (*Phaulothamnus spinescens*)

Snake Eyes, in other regions sometimes called Devil Queen, is a large shrub, 6-12 feet tall, small leaves, with no apparent thorns but sharp, pointed tips on branches providing protection from browsing animals.

Snake Eyes are *dioecious* (having male and female plants) with the female plants producing the translucent white berries which make the large, single black seed inside visible, resembling a small eyeball! A female plant may have hundreds of individual berries scattered on branches, producing several times a year. (The male plant simply produces leaves.)

This member of the Pokeweed Family (*Phytolaccaceae*) is kin to American Pokeweed (*Phytolacca americana*) and Pigeonberry (*Rivina humilis*); and native to South Texas and Northern Mexico, from the Gulf of Mexico to Baja California including Mexican states Tamaulipas, Nueva Leon, and Sonora. Its Spanish name is *Ojo de Vibora*. Don't expect to find these at nurseries, as plants are rarely grown for retail sales.



"Keep an eye out" for several prominent Snake Eyes specimens on the Brennecke Nature Trail, near the Wetland Nursery Bridge, approaching the Bird Tower.