

GARDENS IN BLOOM

(week of Jan. 24, 2021)

The South Texas Botanical Gardens & Nature Center currently offers limited classes, and no weekend Rep-Tales and Parrot Talk, 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!

GOLDEN ANGEL TRUMPET (*Brugmansia sp.*)

Golden Angel Trumpet is a large-growing tropical reaching up to 8 feet in our region. Large elegant flowers, about 8 inches long and 6 inches across, form on branch tips and hang down appearing to be “trumpets from heaven,” thus its common name. (Their erect-flowering cousins in the genus *Datura*, sometimes are called “Devil Trumpets.”)

Angel Trumpet flowers appear 3-4 times annually, with plants often covered by hundreds of large blossoms, for 1-3 weeks. Flowers are intoxicatingly fragrant, especially in evening and early morning. While golden yellow is one of the most popular colors, *Brugmansia* varieties also are pink, peach, white, or white with purple highlights.

Its tropical nature makes Angel Trumpet susceptible to freezing temperatures, but established plants in coastal gardens usually grow back from the base. *Brugmansia* species are native to South America from Venezuela to Northern Chile, where they were used by shaman for their hallucinogenic properties. Angel Trumpets are part of the night-shade family, *Solanaceae*, along with tomatoes, peppers, eggplant, and potatoes. Although beautiful, all parts of the plant are highly toxic if ingested.

See stunning Golden Angel Trumpet near the Visitors Center Resident Reptiles outdoor entrance.



PRAIRIE ASTER (*Aster subulatus*)

Prairie Aster, also called “Hierba Del Marrano,” is a native annual possibly overlooked in regularly-mowed lawns and fields. Its small daisy-like flowers are about three-fourths inch across, with pale lavender petals and yellow center, which butterflies like for nectar. In Coastal Prairies and Rio Grande Plains, Prairie Aster grows abundantly in swales, ditches and other poorly-drained areas. Cattle and white-tail deer commonly graze on its simple, narrow leaves, keeping it shorter in fields.

Without cutting, it can reach 3 feet tall. A deep tap root helps it survive regular mowing, through winter months, appearing to be only 3-5 inches. It also can live in natural lawns with flowers peeking out between mowings.

See Prairie Aster in mowed areas near the Earthkind Demonstration Garden, in grassy fields between the Arid and Sensory Gardens, and along nature trails.

