

GARDENS IN BLOOM

(week of March 14, 2021)

The South Texas Botanical Gardens & Nature Center currently offers limited classes, and no weekend Rep-Tales and Parrot Talk, per our COVID-19 protocol, 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!

DENDROBIUM AGGREGATUM Orchid

Dendrobium aggregatum, also known as *D. lindleyi* in some orchid circles, is a spring-flowering species offering a bright burst of bold yellow among more common white and purple orchid flowers. From Southeast Asia, including mountainous areas of Thailand, China, and India, unlike many tall-growing Dendrobiums, this species has compact growth with wide, dark green leaves about 3 inches wide and 6 inches long, hugging the pot. The flower spikes however, soar from the rosette of leaves with showers of golden round blossoms about a half-inch across, often cascading past the pot, making hanging plants the best display option. Spikes may be 12-18 inches long, with 50 or more individual blossoms each.

These orchids like bright indirect light, good air circulation and high humidity, conditions naturally achieved in our area by pots placed under trees much of the year.

See large specimens of this stunning orchid in bloom in the Samuel Jones Orchid Conservatory.



TEXAS BABY BLUE EYES (*Nemophila phacelioides*)

Commonly called *Baby Blue Eyes*, less commonly *Flannel Breeches*, this early spring wildflower is one of the first to emerge after our heavy freeze. A member of the Waterleaf Family (*Hydrophyllaceae*), a subfamily of the Borages, with many of the 20 related species identified as natural astringents, it typically blooms late February through April, dying off by June.

Its .75 inch blue-violet flowers with white centers give *Baby Blue Eyes* their common name. Plants grow 4-6 inches tall with gray-green, rounded hairy leaves. Making a striking show early in the season, they soon are accompanied by other wildflowers, and lost from view due to short stature. Growing in a variety of soils including clay, sand, loams, and caliche, plants are ecologically important providing early sources of nectar and pollen for butterflies, moths, and bees.

See the most prominent *Baby Blue Eyes* in the Arid Garden, but also in grassy fields, between Sensory and Arid Gardens.

