

GARDENS IN BLOOM

(week of Nov 29, 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, **GARDENS IN BLOOM**, each week spotlights a featured tropical plant and native plant—to enjoy on a visit this week, or enhance your landscape!

POINSETTIA (*Euphorbia pulcherrima*)

Poinsettias are tropical members of the Spurge or Euphorbia family, along with pencil cactus and crown of thorns. Euphorbias have a milky white latex sap, an irritant to skin and eyes. They are native to Southern Mexico and Central America. Naturally occurring plants may reach 10 feet, but plant breeding and use of plant growth regulators has reduced sizes of plants commercially available.

The actual poinsettia flowers are the tiny yellow centers called *cyathia*. The colorful bracts we associate as the bloom are actually leaves which attract pollinators to the small flower. Bracts change from green to colors in late fall and winter due to extended, uninterrupted nights, but most horticulturists simply call them “short-day” plants.

Poinsettias can be planted in the ground in the Coastal Bend if they are protected from cold weather, wind, and night lighting in fall. Due to these limitations, the Botanical Gardens like most residents, simply purchases these holiday favorites from professional greenhouse growers for our guests to enjoy during “Holly Days.”

See more than 80 poinsettias on full display now in the Anderson Bromeliad Conservatory, including an 8-foot tall Christmas tree crafted with 60 standard red plants. Other varieties displayed include white “Ice Crystals;” seemingly airbrushed “Picasso” petite pink form; white speckled “Red Glitter;” and elegant rounded-bract form called “Valentine” resembling a giant red rose blossom.



SKELETON-LEAF GOLDENEYE (*Viguiera stenoloba*)

Also known as *Resin Bush*, Skeleton-Leaf Goldeneye is native to dry areas from the Rio Grande Valley to Edwards Plateau and west into New Mexico. Its adaptation to dry conditions after establishment makes it a great ‘water-wise’ plant for landscapes, performing best in full sun. It naturally occurs in caliche soils, but grows in other mediums, as long as it has good drainage.

This densely-branched shrub grows into a round form 2-4 feet tall. ‘Skeleton-Leaf’ comes from deeply-serrated foliage producing a fine, almost lacy texture from a distance. In native regions, it is evergreen, holding leaves all winter. In more northern areas, it drops leaves and freeze to the base, coming back from roots. The leaves are aromatic due to essential oils, thus sometimes called *Resin Bush*.

‘Goldeneye’ refers to single 1-inch yellow daisy-like flowers blooming from May through November, more prolifically in fall, providing nectar for butterflies and pollen for bees.

See Skeleton-leaf Goldeneye in the Butterfly Garden, and Butterfly Hill behind the Sensory Garden.

