

WHAT'S BLOOMING?

(week of October 11, 2020)

The South Texas Botanical Gardens & Nature Center currently cannot offer Saturday morning classes, weekend Rep-Tales and Parrot Talk, or Orchid-ology series, due to State of Texas COVID-19 protocols, as well as health and safety of our guests. Carrying out its horticulture, environmental education and conservation mission, the Botanical Gardens brings us **WHAT'S BLOOMING**, each week spotlighting a featured blooming plant in the Exhibit Area; and native in or near the Habitat and Trails area—to enjoy on a visit this week, and even consider for your landscape!

PLUMERIA (*Gina, Delight & Pink Ruffles*)

Plumeria, also known as *frangipani*, often used in authentic Hawaiian leis, are favorite flowers for semi-tropical climates, although native to tropical Americas. We thank our local Plumeria Society of South Texas (PSST), whose members established our early Plumeria Garden in 1996, from personal collections—caring for and expanding the exhibit ever since.

Plumeria are freeze-sensitive, so October is your last chance until spring to see our unique collection in bloom! PSST will be preparing these small trees for winter storage by removing leaves October 31; and November 7, removing plants to store them bare-root in greenhouses. While plumeria can remain outside until we reach temperatures in the mid-30s, the size of the Botanical Gardens collection requires advance-scheduling volunteers, with early November freezes catching us off guard in recent years. Plumeria will be replanted next March, re-leaving by April, with blossoms beginning in May.

Three pink variations featured this week highlight **Gina**, a dark pink blossom with yellow/orange throat. **Delight**, one of our taller plants located along the ramp, features multiple clusters of large, rounded light pink petals with a yellow/orange throat. **Pink Ruffles** begins blooming with striking fuchsia petals, gradually fading to paler pink with an orange throat.

Take the Plumeria Garden ramp up to the Willoughby Viewing Platform to admire fragrant tree-top blooms!

COWPEN DAISY (*Verbesina encelioides*)

The common name "Cowpen Daisy" came from frequent growth in cattle pens in the southwestern United States; but it's also known as "Butter Daisy" and "Golden Crownbeard" in other regions. Naturally found throughout drier areas of Texas in a variety of soils including sand, loam, clay and limestone, it's also distributed throughout much of central and western United States, and down into Tropical Americas. Native Americans and early settlers reportedly used it to treat skin ailments, but details are sketchy.

Flowers are approximately 2 inches across with 3-toothed butter-yellow petals emerging from the classic daisy center of this ray-flower, often found in small clusters. It blooms from May through October, sometimes later in our mild southern climate. This member of the Aster family (*Asteraceae*) has triangular gray-green leaves with toothed edges, plants growing 1-3 feet in height and width. While sometimes available at nurseries as small plants in spring, Cowpen daisy is most commonly propagated from seeds.

It is an excellent butterfly nectar plant, particularly for late season and fall migrating butterflies. The Xerces Society notes it particularly beneficial to native bees and honey bees.

See Cowpen Daisy in the Butterfly Garden, and Butterfly Hill behind the Sensory Garden.

