



# **“Blooming in the Gardens”**

## **LIBRARY**

### **2023**



## BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of December 31, 2023)

Expanding its horticulture, environmental education and conservation mission, **BLOOMING IN THE BOTANICAL GARDENS**, each week spotlights a featured tropical and native plant—to enjoy on a visit this week, try in your landscape, or simply increase your horticultural knowledge!

### LADY OF THE NIGHT ORCHID (*Brassavola nodosa*)

Lady of the Night is a graceful orchid getting its common name from elegant white blossoms with citrus/gardenia fragrance in early evening, fading by morning! Bright white petals attract moths with a long proboscis pollinating the flower. Each flower can measure up to 3" across including long, slender sepals & petals plus a heart-shaped lip or lower tubular petal. A 2-3 week dry period in fall or winter helps induce flowering. Plants grow dense with older plants covered in flowers several weeks. Green pseudobulb leaves are less than an inch wide & 4-8" long.

'Lady of the Night' is one of the easiest orchids for beginners, if not overwatered with excellent drainage. Like other orchids, this one is an epiphyte, growing naturally on trees or rocks needing little soil--an excellent candidate for wooden orchid baskets or mounting on wood.

Commonly found in lowland tropical forests & mangrove swamps in its native areas of Mexico to Columbia & throughout the Caribbean coast & islands, it also stretches south into Brazil, Bolivia & Peru.



**See Multiple specimens currently blooming in the Samuel Jones Orchid Conservatory.**

### BLACK-EYED SUSAN (*Rudbeckia hirta*)

Black-Eyed Susan is a classic fall-flowering annual, native or naturalized in most of the Continental U.S., but our unusually warm fall & mild December has this striking native flower blooming entering winter!

Its daisy-like ray flower configuration consists of a dark brown center protruding about an inch out from the base of the blossom surrounded by bright yellow petals. Like other ray flowers in the Sunflower Family (Asteraceae), that center has true flower components containing pollen & nectar, with a closer look showing tiny flower parts opening over several weeks. The single row of golden yellow petals 1-2" long attracts pollinators & humans alike to the inconspicuous true flowers in the dark brown center.



This annual flower has slightly hairy medium green leaves growing on a small bush form close to the ground, typically with 12-18" of foliage, but flowers towering above reaching 16-30". It grows naturally in sunny areas of prairies, plains, meadows, pastures, savanna and woodland edges.

Its nectar naturally attracts butterflies & it is the larval plant for Gorgone Checkerspot & Bordered Patch butterflies. Birds eat its seeds. The ethnobotanical uses are varied & impressive. Native Americans used root tea for worms & colds, made an external wash for sores, snakebites & swelling, while root juice treated earaches.

**See Black-eyed Susan in the Butterfly Garden.**



## BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of December 24, 2023)

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### MR. LINCOLN HYBRID TEA ROSE

Red roses, always in style, can add a bit of elegance to the Christmas season. “Mr. Lincoln” is a dark red hybrid tea rose cultivar, bred by Herbert Swim & Weeks Roses by crossing hybrid tea roses ‘Chrysler Imperial’ & Charles Mallorin. Upon introduction in 1965, it was named an All-American Rose Selection!

Roses do best in South Texas in winter & early spring & Mr. Lincoln agrees, a consistent bloomer preferring warm days & cool nights. It’s large deep red blossoms up to 5” across have classic pointed petals & velvety appearance, being a full double flower with 30-35 petals each. It’s abundant sweet fragrance also earned the 2003 American Rose Society’s Gamble Fragrance Award.



Regularly fertilized, larger bushes can grow 4-6.5’ tall with dark green foliage. Its long, strong stems make a good choice for cut flowers.

**See Mr. Lincoln & other roses back in bloom now through early February when they receive their spring pruning maximizing growth for April/May blooms!**

### WHITE CLOUD SAGE (Leucophyllum frutescens ‘White Cloud’)

Texas Sage is a common Texas native shrub thriving in much of south & west Texas going by a variety of common names-- Cenizo, Purple Sage, Texas Ranger, Texas Barometer Bush & Texas Silverleaf. While purple is the most common form, there are white & dark burgundy flower variations, of which ‘White Cloud’ is one of the most commonly found on the commercial market. Texas Sage is one of the most popular Texas native plants used in water-wise landscapes, commercial & residential.

All forms of Texas Sage bloom after rain, a survival mechanism for our semi-arid conditions, & why it sometimes is called Barometer Bush. Natural stands of purple Texas Sage are visible in the caliche “hills” along I-69 near Mathis, easily identifiable while in bloom.



Texas Sage has silvery foliage due to tiny light-reflecting hairs helping protect it from dense sun. White Cloud has 1” bell-shaped white flowers lasting about a week. Plants typically mature at 4-6’ tall & wide. Pruning in landscapes will produce dense branching, but in nature, they often look scraggly when growing in caliche outcroppings. Newer cultivars have more compact growth.

Homeowners & gardeners should note it does not like “wet feet” requiring good drainage to prevent root rot. Texas Sage also attracts butterflies & moths, both as a nectar plant & as the larval host plant for Calleta silk moth (*Eupackardia calleta*) & the Theona Checkerspot (*Chlosyne theona*) butterfly. Hummingbirds also sip from the flowers when blooming during fall.

**See White Cloud Texas Sage currently blooming in the Arid Garden.**

## BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of December 17, 2023)

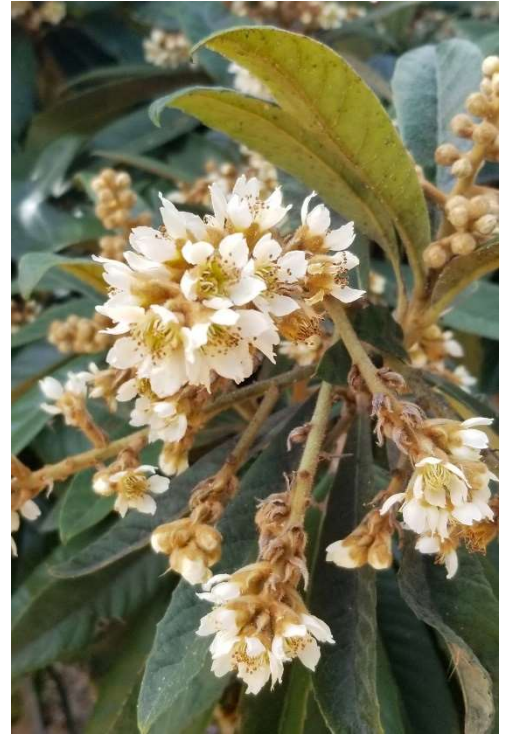
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### LOQUAT OR JAPANESE PLUM

(*Eriobotrya japonica*)

Loquat, or Japanese plum, is a small ornamental tree which consistently performs in South Texas Landscapes, with good freeze tolerance, withstanding temperatures as low as 10°F as a Zone 8 plant. As the common name implies, it is native to Southeast Asia. Loquats can grow to be 20-30' tall, but most stay 15-18' here. Loquat is a member of the Rose Family (Rosaceae) along with several fruits including plums, pears, quince and cherries.

It has spikes of small creamy-white flowers, each blossom about .5" wide. When pollinated by bees or butterflies, edible fruit develops maturing into a 2" sweet golden ball, the size of a fig. Its attractive large dark green leaves have rust-colored fuzz on the underside, serrated edges, 6-9" long & 2-3" wide. These striking leaves provide an attractive alternative to more commonly used small-leaf shrubs & trees in the landscape, also used for floral design.



See a blooming loquat located in the Sensory Garden.

### PADRE ISLAND MISTFLOWER

(*Conoclinium betonicifolium*)

Padre island Mistflower, a.k.a. betony-leaf mistflower in other regions, is a low-growing native groundcover form with tiny light blue flower clusters creating a cloudlike appearance in mass. A member of the Aster/Sunflower Family (Asteraceae), this plant is a butterfly magnet! It flowers throughout the year but is particularly good for pollinators late fall & winter.

This tough perennial mistflower form has a semi-succulent 1" elongated heart shape resembling Texas Betony. However their thick waxy-coating makes them more durable than other mistflower varieties, handling wind & salt spray better than other *Conoclinium* species, an adaption making it durable in sandy, island landscapes & native to most Texas coastal areas.

The sturdy leaves & stems lets it keep growing during mild winters unlike its Central Texas cousin, Gregg's mistflower (*Conoclinium greggii*) which goes dormant & freezes to ground level each year.



See Padre Island Mistflower in the main parking area, but also in large plantings in the Butterfly Garden & on Butterfly Hill behind the Sensory Garden. You will likely see multiple monarch & queen butterflies nectaring on the plant, bringing lots of fluttering life to the Gardens.



# BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of December 3, 2023)

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## 'BLUE BOY' ORCHID (*Cattlianthe* 'Blue Boy')

*Cattlianthe* 'Blue Boy', a consistent winter blooming orchid in the Coastal Bend with clusters of medium-sized blue/lavender blossoms, was registered in 1960 by Bracey. This hybrid was a cross of *Cattlianthe* Ariel × *Cattleya* Elegans (1879) with several variations developed from the plant in the past 60 years.

This orchid has clusters of 4-7 blossoms about 3" wide with pale bluish-lavender petals & sepals with a darker bluish-purple on the protruding "lip" petal, a yellow & white throat with dark purple speckles. Colors appear bluer in person than often shown in photos. Flowers can last a month in cooler conditions.

**See *Cattlianthe* 'Blue Boy' & some of its variations blooming in the Samuel Jones Orchid Conservatory, with its blue hues contrasting with darker purple & white blossoms of other orchid blooms.**



## FALSE RAGWEED (*Parthenium hysterophorus*)

Commonly called "False Ragweed," this small herbaceous plant is a common wildflower seen throughout South Texas. Other common names include Santa Maria, Feverfew & Cicutilla. While many consider it a native due to wide distribution in the Rio Grande Valley & Texas Coastal Plains, there is speculation that it originated in Tropical Americas & steadily moved northward.

Most home gardeners consider this a weed; however, it is an important nectar source for over-wintering butterflies when other blossoms are limited.

Aromatic leaves are deeply lobed with larger leaves up to 8" long forming a rosette near the base & fewer, thinner leaves 1-3" long are found on flower stalks which reach heights of 1-3'. Tiny white flowers, only .25" inch wide resembling tiny unopened cauliflowers cover the plants, opening into white flowers looking like wild baby's breath in South Texas.



**See False Ragweed in bloom along the edges of our butterfly garden next to the Samuel Jones Orchid Conservatory; & in pockets along the Mary Hope Brennecke Nature Trail. Shorter plants with fewer flowers due to periodic mowing also are present in grassy areas between the Arid Garden & Play Area.**

# BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

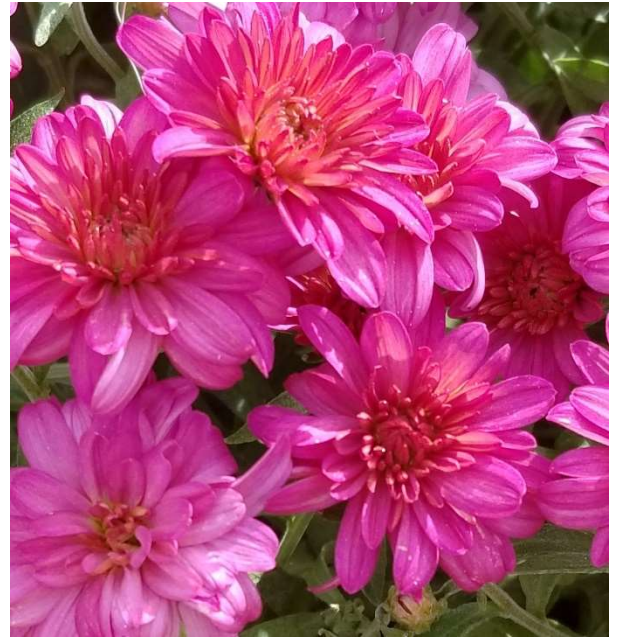
(week of November 19, 2023)

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## GARDEN MUM (*Chrysanthemum morifolium*)

Garden mums refer to wide varieties of Chrysanthemums grown for landscapes & planters. Native to East Asia & Northeastern Europe, this plant is known for uniform flowering & flexible stems. If all but a single bud is removed from a stem, larger flowers will form, but most garden mums are left to form mounds of smaller flowers in clusters that range from white to yellow, bronze & purples. Garden mums are members of the sunflower family Asteraceae along with daisies, asters, cosmos & gaillardia.

Plants typically grow 12-18" but may spread over time to create mounds 16-20" wide. Plants are photoperiodic, blooming naturally in winter months with uninterrupted long nights & short days, preferring full sun in fall to remain compact. Plants left in landscapes as perennials provide green mounds of foliage in spring & summer. Those grown as perennials may benefit from partial shade in heat of summer to prevent foliar damage.



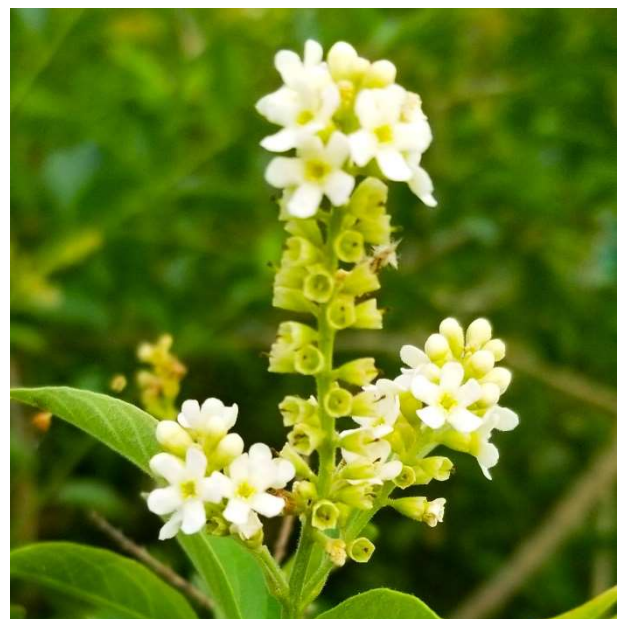
Garden mums usually are used as short-term color in landscapes or planters in fall. Flowers typically last 3-6 weeks. If spent blossoms are removed, then additional flower buds often develop for a second bloom cycle in December or January.

See garden mums primarily in planters near the Botanical Gardens entrance, pathway to the Orchid Conservatory, Butterfly Garden & Sensory Garden, providing lots of fall color in time for Thanksgiving!

## FIDDLEWOOD (*Citharexylum berlandieri*)

Fiddlewood is a woody member of the Verbenaceae Family (Verbenaceae) along with lantana, vervain, frog fruit & vitex. The common name "Fiddlewood" comes from other species of *Citharexylum* used to construct violins!

Fiddlewood, a large drought-tolerant shrub, has dark green glossy leaves about 1.5" wide & 3" long. It blooms long clusters of tiny white, fragrant flowers several times a year February through November, creating a nectar source for butterflies. After pollination, they produce orange-red berries eaten by songbirds. Warm fall temperatures have extended the blooming cycle this year. It grows naturally in well-drained clay & clay loam soils in brush thickets along the Coastal & Rio Grande Plains. While commonly 6-10', tall, it may grow up to 18' in moist conditions. Plants can be trimmed into dense shrubs or small trees, growing in full sun or partial shade.



**See both blooming & berried Fiddlewood between the Butterfly House & Samuel Jones Orchid Conservatory.**



# BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of November 5, 2023)

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## WHITE ANGEL TRUMPET (*Brugmansia* sp.)

White Angel Trumpet is a striking large tropical growing up to 8' tall here. Its tropical nature makes it susceptible to freezing temperatures, although established plants in coastal gardens usually grow back from the base.

Large elegant flowers about 8" long & 6" across form on branch tips, hanging down resembling trumpets from heaven, thus the common name Angel Trumpets. A close cousin in the genus *Datura* have erect, upward pointing blossoms sometimes called "Devil Trumpets."

Angel Trumpet flowers appear 3-4 times a year with plants often covered by multiple large blossoms for 1-3 week bloom cycles. Flowers are extremely fragrant, especially in evening & early morning when winds are still. Besides white, *Brugmansia* varieties also come in pink, peach & yellow tones. Angel Trumpets are part of the night-shade family, Solonaceae, along with many warm-season vegetables like tomatoes, peppers, eggplant & potatoes.



*Brugmansia* species are native to South America from Venezuela to Northern Chile where they were used by shaman for hallucinogenic properties. Though beautiful, all parts of the plant are highly toxic if ingested!

**See White Angel Trumpet in the Tropical Garden.**

## FALL ASTER

(*Symphyotrichum oblongifolium*--formerly *Aster oblongifolius*)

Fall Aster is a Central Texas native producing hundreds of lavender daisy-like blossoms covering the entire mounding plant. Despite the common name, Fall Aster also sporadically blooms in spring, but fall bloom cycle is more consistent. Other common names in different regions include Aromatic Aster, Aromatic American Aster, Wild Blue Aster & Shale Aster.

Plants grow about 20" tall spreading 30-36". When planted in the sun with good drainage, between bloom cycles plants produce a dense mound of moss-green foliage for butterfly & perennial gardens. Adapted to a wide range of soils including sand, loam clay & caliche allows natural distribution from North Carolina to Pennsylvania, west to Montana, down the Great Plains states south through Texas into Tamaulipas, Mexico.



Fall asters are members of the sunflower family Asteraceae along with daisies, chrysanthemums, cosmos & gaillardia. Like other ray-flowers, the daisy-like blossom is actually a collection of tiny nectar-producing flowers forming the distinctive yellow center "eye" of what we view as an individual bloom. The ray-flower design also provides an efficient landing spot for nectaring bees & butterflies.

**See Fall Asters in full bloom in the Butterfly Garden.**

# BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of October 29, 2023)

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## **PLUMERIA: Rhapsody, Ken's White, Karma, Rosy Pink** (*Plumeria rubra*)

Plumeria, also known as frangipani, used in authentic Hawaiian leis, are favorites for semi-tropical climates like ours, although native to tropical Americas.

The Botanical Gardens Plumeria Collection is a seasonal exhibit, with **only 1 week left to see these spectacular tropical treasures before preparations begin for winter storage since plumeria are extremely freeze sensitive**. November 4, the Plumeria Society of South Texas will remove leaves, November 11 removing plants to greenhouse winter protection. (While plumeria can remain outside until temperatures reach upper to mid-30s, the size of our collection requires scheduling volunteers for this major move well in advance.) Plumeria will be replanted in March, re-leafing by April, blossoms beginning to appear in May.



During late November & December, the vacant Plumeria Garden will be transformed into a recycling holiday display with not one, but 5 lit 'Eco Christmas Trees' created from recycled green bottles by local environmental artist Shelia Rogers.

**In the next week you'll want to see 'Rhapsody' a rich pink with yellow centers & slightly curled leaves; 'Ken's White' a prolific bloomer; 'Karma' with blended peach & pink; & 'Rosy Pink' which lives up to its name!**

## **MEXICAN MINT MARIGOLD** (*Tagetes lucida*)

Mexican Mint Marigold, a South Texas native herb, is sometimes called Spanish, Texas, or Mexican Tarragon with use as a spice in Central American cooking & as an alternative to French tarragon. Endemic to Mexico & the Southwest United States, this plant is in the same genus as the traditional French & African marigold varieties used as bedding plants.

Its yellow flowers are approximately .5" wide but appear in clusters providing a burst of color in late summer peaking mid to late fall. Its bloom time & native distribution led to common use in Dia de los Muertos celebrations. Mexican Mint Marigold provides nectar for migrating butterflies and pollen for native honeybees. Its perennial nature and compact form requires little care, being both drought and heat tolerant.



The compact mounding bush 12-18" tall has bright yellow flowers in fall contrasting with narrow inch-long fragrant leaves. Plants spread over time, but respond well to dividing clumps every 2-3 years to encourage new growth.

Its aromatic leaves used in cooking provide a licorice or anise scent & flavoring. It also is used in herbal teas thought to help upset stomach, stimulating the appetite & as a diuretic. Historically, Aztecs reported used it as a flavoring in a cocoa-like drink along with medicinal use as an anesthetic and in ritual sacrificial ceremonies.

**See it blooming in the Butterfly, Sensory & EarthKind Demonstration Gardens.**



## BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of October 22, 2023)

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### MAGIC OF MASHIMA HYBRID ORCHID

(Blc. 'Magic of Mashima' X 'Volcano Queen')

This amazingly elegant orchid produces spectacular large blossoms 4" across with frilly lips & a rich velvety dark red/purple lip often with yellow highlights near the throat. Each stalk typically has 2-3 flowers. Plants remain compact and are about 12-15" tall.

Orchids are 1 of the most widely hybridized plant families with both professional & amateur breeders crossing various flowers to obtain larger or more unusual blossoms. Over time, lines of the genera have blurred as is the case with Blc. 'Magic of Mashima'.

Blc. is an abbreviation of *Brassolaeliocattleya*, the orchid nothogenus for intergeneric hybrids containing at least one ancestor species from each of the three ancestral genera *Brassavola* R.Br., *Cattleya* Lindl. & *Laelia* Lindl., with no other genera. Magic of Mashima hybrid is a cross of Blc. Fred Stewart & Lc. Drumbeat 'Volcano Queen'.



**See Blc. 'Magic of Mashima' hybrid orchid in the Samuel Jones Orchid Conservatory along with other fall blooming orchids. The collection is featured at "Moonlight in the Gardens" fundraiser, this Friday, Oct 27. Reservations (\$200 / \$175 STBGNC members) required by Tuesday. NO WALK-INS. FMI or reservations: 361-852-2100 or [www.stxbot.org](http://www.stxbot.org). (See EVENT, this page.)**

### BLUE MISTFLOWER OR CRUCITA (*Chromolaena odoratum*)

Blue Mistflower or Crucita is a tall mistflower form, closely related to Padre Island Mistflower (*Conoclinium betonifolia*) & Gregg's Mistflower (*Conoclinium greggii*), all in the aster/sunflower family Asteraceae. While all 3 are Texas natives, Crucita is most common in Coastal Bend gardens. Formerly all in the genus *Eupatorium*, they have been divided into new genera.

Blue Mistflower grows naturally from Mexico & Texas through the Southern U.S. into the Caribbean. Its broad range results in a wide variety of common names including Fragrant Mistflower, Crucita, Fall Mistflower, Blue Boneset, Fragrant Boneset, Jack In The Bush, Siam Weed, Common Flossflower, Christmas Bush & Devilweed.

It has clusters of tiny light blue flowers with small thin petals giving a blue misty appearance in masses. Its main bloom cycle is autumn when seeds are disbursed by wind. Plants quickly grow 24-48" tall in sun, taller in shadier spots. A good accent plant in informal garden spaces, it provides dense foliage with bright green pointed leaves about 3" long & an inch across. Leaves have a pungent scent when crushed resulting in the species name "odorata".



**See Blue Mist Flower in the Butterfly Garden, on Butterfly Hill behind the Sensory Garden & in pockets on the Brennecke Nature Trail, all currently blooming this autumn resulting in the other local common name, Fall Mistflower.**

# BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of October 15, 2023)

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## COMPACT YELLOW FIREBUSH (*Hamelia patens* 'Compacta')

Compact Firebush is a subtropical shrub native to Central & South America, & Southern US in Florida. Sometimes called Scarlet Bush, Firecracker Bush, Hummingbird Bush in other areas, it is a member of the Madder Family (Rubiaceae) along with gardenias, ixora & coffee.

Hamelia plants prefer full sun. The leaves on this variety are glossy on top, bright green & arranged in whorls along the stems. While foliage is vibrant green, it contrasts nicely to clusters of narrow tubular inch-long yellow flowers on ends of orange pedicels covering the plant in summer & fall, providing nectar for hummingbirds & butterflies. This plant needs little trimming in order to maintain bloomin warm months.



Despite the common name, this “compact” form still gets large, easily reaching 6-8’ each year. It is differentiated from the traditional Bronze Leaf Firebush by its medium green leaves & yellow tubular flowers instead of usual orange. Both forms of Hamelia are great pollinator plants.

This form of Hamelia is moderately freeze-sensitive, surviving light frosts, but freezing to the base after a hard freeze, but rapidly coming back from the trunk & re-growing even after the hard freeze of February, 2021.

**See Compact Firebush along the path by the Anderson Bromeliad Conservatory, across from the large iguana enclosure & in the Hummingbird Garden.**

## GULF MUHLY GRASS (*Muhlenbergia capillaris*)

This native grass provides a spectacular display of unexpected color each fall, lasting September into January depending on temperature & precipitation. Our specimens are at the start of their long blooming cycle with pink tufts emerging from the clump, starting to expand. By the end of October, they will offer even more stunning displays of delicate seed heads towering 3-5’, creating a shimmering pink/lavender cloud dancing in the wind!



When not in bloom, Gulf Muhly Grass has narrow gray-green leaves 24-30” long creating distinctive clumps in the landscape. Gulf Muhly has adapted to a wide range of soils including sandy, coastal & central prairies, sunny openings & dry, exposed ledges. Indigenous to many Eastern & Central states including Texas, naturally extending south to Guatemala.

Gardeners use it both as an individual grass clump or planted in mass to creating a larger impact in fall. Clumps need to be cut back to 6-10” tall each spring removing dead flower stalks & promoting fresh new leaf growth for the summer. Separating clumps also is recommended every 2-3 years.

**See Gulf Muhly Specimens in front of the Samuel Jones Orchid Conservatory & in the Earthkind Demonstration Garden.**



# BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of October 8, 2023)

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## BOB'S MEXICAN PINK PLUMERIA (*Plumeria rubra* 'Bob's Mexican Pink')

Bob's Mexican Pink Plumeria, a classic large-growing heavy-blooming plant, has multiple clusters of large pink blossoms with yellow throats & citrus fragrance. Although popular due to its rapid growth & intense flowering, it is not an International Plumeria Society registered plant. But this favorite variety has been in the Botanical Gardens collection more than 25 years!

Plumeria, aka frangipani, often used in authentic Hawaiian leis, are favorite flowers for semi-tropical climates, although native to tropical Americas.

They are freeze sensitive, actually below 40F, so the Plumeria Society of South Texas will be stripping leaves November 4, & November 11 digging plants for bareroot storage in greenhouses. Some hardy plumeria can remain outside until temperatures dip to mid-30s; but the size of the collection at the Botanical Gardens requires scheduling volunteers well in advance, & early November freezes caught us off guard in recent years. Plumeria will be replanted in March, re-leafing by late April with blossoms appearing in May.



**October is your last chance this year to see the Plumeria Garden in bloom.**

## FROSTWEED (*Verbesina virginica*)

Frostweed, a little-known native plant, should be more widely grown in South Texas pollinator gardens. This indigenous plant survives up to Zone 6 in Texas' Panhandle.

Frostweed has broad green "crinkled" leaves on straight-growing stems 3-4' tall. It likes well drained soil & dappled shade, with heavy shade making it grow 6-8'.

It produces small white umbel flowers on the tops of branches with clusters frequently a mass of blossoms 3-4" across. Plants typically bloom mid-summer until first frost providing 1-stop recharging stations for fall migrating butterflies. Frostweed was voted as the "Unofficial Pollinator Plant of the Year" by San Antonio's Native Plant Society in 2021. Known as a significant nectar plant for migrating monarch butterflies, it also attracts a variety of other butterfly species along with various bees.

Frostweed gets its common name from a phenomenon known as crystallofolia. When the first freeze hits, Frostweed splits its stems and its phloem oozes from the stalk, creating lovely, unusual ice crystals visible early in the day until the sun warms them.



**See Frostweed on the end of Butterfly Hill behind the Sensory Garden, near the playground, and along the Mary Hope Brennecke Nature Trail.**

# BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of September 17, 2023)

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## RED PINEAPPLE (*Ananas bracteatum*)

Although members of the bromeliad family (Bromeliaceae), Red pineapples--unlike cousins Silver Vase (*Achmea fasciata*), Blushing Bromeliad (*Neoregelia carolinae*) Ball Moss (*Tillandsia recurvata*--are not epiphytes, but terrestrial, requiring soil for growth! They are also the most economically significant. Originating in tropical & subtropical regions of South America, Red pineapples have become popular recently as ornamentals. Earliest written references to pineapple are by Christopher Columbus, Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo y Valdés, & Sir Walter Raleigh, who found pineapple growing in the West Indies used for food & wine making in the New World.

Pineapples have strap-like leaves up to 3' long & 2" wide. The reddish green leaves give ornamental color year-round. Our specimen was bred for smooth leaf margins, while many pineapples have toothed or serrated edges. Like other bromeliads, pineapples will live after initial flowering forming offshoots or "pups" at the base.

Pineapples are considered a "multiple" fruit, growing on ends of flower stalks. Each hexagonal section on the outside of the pineapple is a carpel that had a tiny light purple flower that was fertilized. Multiple carpels attach to a central axis core merging into a single "infructescence" as they mature. The pineapple may need 5-6 months to fully expand & ripen. In wet South American regions, the Red pineapple fruit will expand to an edible size, but often remain tiny ornamental fruit if grown in pots.



**See our Red pineapple specimen in the Anderson Bromeliad Conservatory.**

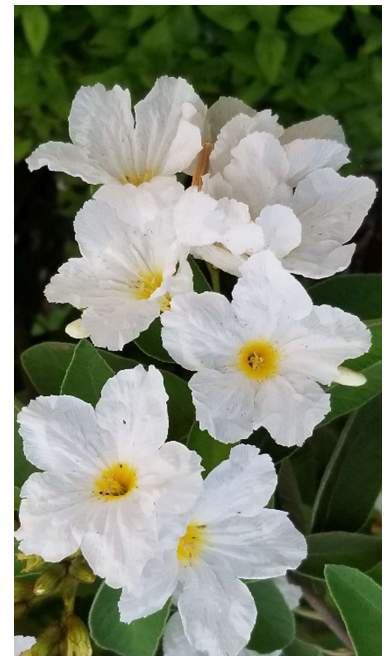
## WILD OLIVE (*Cordia boissieri*)

In full-bloom, Wild Olive is a nectar source to migrating hummingbirds this fall. Native to deep South Texas & Northern Mexico also goes by Mexican Olive, Texas Olive & Anacahuita. The common name "olive" is a visual observation, since this tree is in a completely different family (Boraginaceae) than common edible olives (*Olea europaea*).

Its semi-tropical nature allows survival into the low 20s & even upper teens for short periods, but doesn't like extended cold so you won't see it as much north of Central Texas. Wild Olive is often listed as a water-wise plant, but needs good drainage, standing water quickly will kill the root system.

This small, ornamental tree has large green leaves 4 X 6" with a coarse medium to dark green top & lighter gray-green underside with small "hairs" giving it a smooth soft texture underneath. The tree is noted for its unusual coarse, stringy, gray-brown bark. Wild Olives often grow 12-15' & 15-20' wide at maturity, taller with more water. This tree produces dense shade, sometimes limiting grass growth beneath if clustered with other trees.

Wild Olive can flower most of the year including all summer, producing clusters of 1 ½ to 2-inch white blossoms with deep throats and yellow centers. Blossoms have a high nectar content and are a great hummingbird attractor, providing a natural nectar source. Pollinated flowers develop into an opaque pale green fruit that resembles an olive. It is technically edible, but not very palatable.



**See blooming Wild Olive in the Sensory and Hummingbird Gardens.**



# BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of September 23, 2023)

Expanding its horticulture, environmental education and conservation mission, **BLOOMING IN THE BOTANICAL GARDENS**, each week spotlights a featured tropical and native plant—to enjoy on a visit this week, try in your landscape, or simply increase your horticultural knowledge!

## AUTUMN PIXIE ORCHID (*Cattleya bowringiana*)

*Cattleya bowringiana*, sometimes called Autumn Pixie Orchid, is one of the most consistent fall-blooming orchids--a must have in home orchid collections. Flower stems produce clusters of 10-12 striking purple flowers about 2.5" wide lasting for several weeks September-October. Recent rains & cooler weather have those growing outside in baskets in full bloom. A standard 6-8" pot easily can have 2-5 flower spikes with 5-10 blossom per spike--a stunning display. Like most orchids, this plant will go unnoticed most of the year until it blooms, with pseudobulbs, often thought of as leaves being plain, medium green & erect, usually 2-3" wide 12-18" tall unless growing in large clumps.



Discovered in 1885, this orchid is native to Belize & Guatemala, in a wide range of environments including tropical forests, rocky ravines & occasionally quartz sand. Growers consider it an easy orchid, a great starter plant for the novice. Its consistent bloom makes it widely used in orchid breeding since discovery.

See multiple specimens, including one impressive large Autumn Pixie Orchid basket, in the Samuel Jones Orchid Conservatory.

## CORAL VINE (*Antigonon leptopus*)

Coral Vine is a stunning fall bloomer on Texas fences & arbors, with spectacular displays of small hot pink blossoms appearing in August until frost. In other regions, its common names, Queen's Wreath or Chain of Love, are due to its vining habit & delicate pink blossoms. The striking fuchsia blossoms are modified leaves called bracts that hold color longer for pollinators. Bracts are .5" across produced in large numbers as clusters on the ends of vines. Bracts are typically fuchsia but occasionally lighter pink or white.

Coral Vine has bright green heart-shaped leaves 2-3" across & about 4" long providing shade & fence cover in summer and contrasting backdrop for fuchsia blossoms.



This South Texas/Mexico native is a USDA Zone 9 plant, but grows in slightly colder areas like Central Texas where it freezes to the ground each year, re-sprouting from the base. Even here, it drops leaves in winter, vines going dormant leaving brown stems & leaves until spring. Annual cutbacks to main stems are common in landscapes. It vigorously regrows 8-12' with mature plants reaching 40-50' here. The natural twisting vines wrap around arbors, fences & poles.

Coral vine is a good pollen plant for bees & nectar plant attracting lots of hummingbirds during fall migration through the area. Hummers will pollinate the flowers & seeds may fall, producing a few volunteers the next year.

**See specimens of coral vine on fences in the Botanical Gardens parking lot & Hummingbird Garden.**

# BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of September 17, 2023)

Expanding its horticulture, environmental education and conservation mission, **BLOOMING IN THE BOTANICAL GARDENS**, each week spotlights a featured tropical and native plant—to enjoy on a visit this week, try in your landscape, or simply increase your horticultural knowledge!

## RED PINEAPPLE (*Ananas bracteatum*)

Although members of the bromeliad family (Bromeliaceae), Red pineapples--unlike cousins Silver Vase (*Achmea fasciata*), Blushing Bromeliad (*Neoregelia carolinae*) Ball Moss (*Tillandsia recurvata*--are not epiphytes, but terrestrial, requiring soil for growth! They are also the most economically significant. Originating in tropical & subtropical regions of South America, Red pineapples have become popular recently as ornamentals. Earliest written references to pineapple are by Christopher Columbus, Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo y Valdés, & Sir Walter Raleigh, who found pineapple growing in the West Indies used for food & wine making in the New World.

Pineapples have strap-like leaves up to 3' long & 2" wide. The reddish green leaves give ornamental color year-round. Our specimen was bred for smooth leaf margins, while many pineapples have toothed or serrated edges. Like other bromeliads, pineapples will live after initial flowering forming offshoots or "pups" at the base.

Pineapples are considered a "multiple" fruit, growing on ends of flower stalks. Each hexagonal section on the outside of the pineapple is a carpel that had a tiny light purple flower that was fertilized. Multiple carpels attach to a central axis core merging into a single "infructescence" as they mature. The pineapple may need 5-6 months to fully expand & ripen. In wet South American regions, the Red pineapple fruit will expand to an edible size, but often remain tiny ornamental fruit if grown in pots.



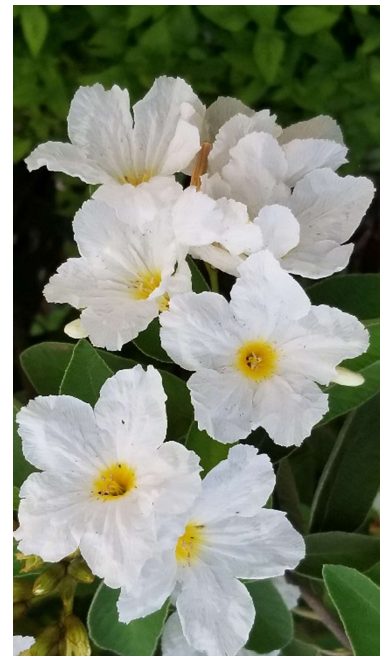
**See our Red pineapple specimen in the Anderson Bromeliad Conservatory.**

## WILD OLIVE (*Cordia boissieri*)

In full-bloom, Wild Olive is a nectar source to migrating hummingbirds this fall. Native to deep South Texas & Northern Mexico also goes by Mexican Olive, Texas Olive & Anacahuita. The common name "olive" is a visual observation, since this tree is in a completely different family (Boraginaceae) than common edible olives (*Olea europaea*).

Its semi-tropical nature allows survival into the low 20s & even upper teens for short periods, but doesn't like extended cold so you won't see it as much north of Central Texas. Wild Olive is often listed as a water-wise plant, but needs good drainage, standing water quickly will kill the root system.

This small, ornamental tree has large green leaves 4 X 6" with a coarse medium to dark green top & lighter gray-green underside with small "hairs" giving it a smooth soft texture underneath. The tree is noted for its unusual coarse, stringy, gray-brown bark. Wild Olives often grow 12-15' & 15-20' wide at maturity, taller with more water. This tree produces dense shade, sometimes limiting grass growth beneath if clustered with other trees.



Wild Olive can flower most of the year including all summer, producing clusters of 1 ½ to 2-inch white blossoms with deep throats and yellow centers. Blossoms have a high nectar content and are a great hummingbird attractor, providing a natural nectar source. Pollinated flowers develop into an opaque pale green fruit that resembles an olive. It is technically edible, but not very palatable.

**See blooming Wild Olive in the Sensory and Hummingbird Gardens.**



# BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of September 10, 2023)

Expanding its horticulture, environmental education and conservation mission, **BLOOMING IN THE BOTANICAL GARDENS**, each week spotlights a featured tropical and native plant—to enjoy on a visit this week, try in your landscape, or simply increase your horticultural knowledge!

## MEDUSA ORCHID (*Bulbophyllum medusae*)

Medusa Orchid is another unusual plant currently blooming in our impressive orchid collection. The 5-6" long stringy white blossom structures were quickly associated with snakes in Greek mythology's hair of Medusa. However, the structures are not technically petals, but sepals that rise above newly formed pseudobulbs. The inflorescence we see as one large structure is actually about 15 flowers grouped together at the end of flower stalks. In North America, they flower fall & early winter, with 6-9 degree night temperature differentials promoting flowering.

The species was originally described by John Lindley in 1861, & named *Cirrhopetalum medusae*. But later that year, Heinrich Gustav Reichenbach changed the genus to *Bulbophyllum*. Medusa Orchid is endemic to lowland forests from sea level to 1300' in the Malay Peninsula, Thailand, Borneo, Lesser Sunda Islands & Sumatra. Like other epiphytic orchids, they grow on trunks & main branches of trees, simply attaching themselves but not extracting nutrients or water from the trees.



**See Medusa Orchid in the front section of the Samuel Jones Orchid Conservatory.**

## ROCK ROSE (*Pavonia laciopetala*)

Rock Rose is the most common name for this species of Pavonia, sometimes called Rose Pavonia or Rose Mallow in other regions. This medium sized perennial member of the Mallow or Hibiscus Family, Malvaceae, naturally grows on the edges of brush in well-drained caliche soils in the Rio Grande Plains extending into Edwards Plateau.

Rock Rose abundantly produces 1-1.5" flowers with 5 light pink petals & tight cluster of bright yellow center stamen, blooming spring until first frost when it drops its leaves going dormant for winter. Early spring pruning encourages dense compact growth & more lowering. It grows 3-4' in height & width. Pavonia is a good nectar plant for butterflies, its pink color also attracting hummingbirds due to consistent flowering including peak migration seasons.



Named a Texas Superstar Plant in 2021 by Texas A&M Agri-Life Extension Service because of drought tolerance & ability to grow in both sun & partial shade in many regions of the state, it's now one of the most popular native plants available in retail nurseries!

**See Pavonia in the Butterfly Garden, Butterfly Hill behind the Sensory Garden, & EarthKind Demonstration Garden.**

# BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of September 3, 2023)

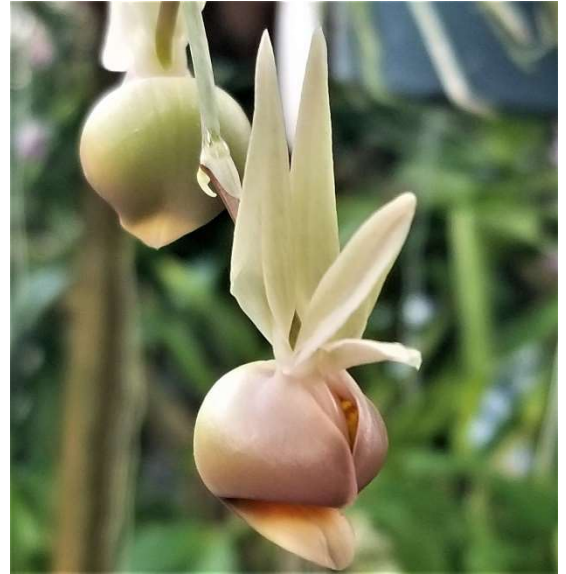
Expanding its horticulture, environmental education and conservation mission, **BLOOMING IN THE BOTANICAL GARDENS**, each week spotlights a featured tropical and native plant—to enjoy on a visit this week, try in your landscape, or simply increase your horticultural knowledge!

## FUCHS CATASETUM ORCHID (*Catasetum fuchsia*)

Fuchs Catasetum Orchid features one of the more unusual orchid flowers in the Botanical Gardens collection. The cream-colored male flowers have a round lower lip with darker tan highlights resembling small birds with flower stalks often producing 10-15 blossoms or more. The thick petaled flowers allow them to last several weeks. Female flowers appear a bit later on separate shorter flower stalks with less striking, greenish blossoms.

This plant is native to Bolivia & Western Brazil, growing in dry forests on rolling countryside, just east of the Bolivian rainforest. To mimic its native environment, this plant blooms in fall needing a winter rest period when not watered or fertilized.

**See this unusual orchid in the Samuel Jones Orchid Conservatory front section.**



## TRUMPET CREEPER (*Campsis radicans*)

Trumpet Creeper, a hardy native woody vine is one of most prominent members of the Catalpa or Trumpet Creeper Family (Bignoniaceae), going by several common names including Common Trumpet Vine, Trumpet Ash, Trumpet-flower, Devil's Shoestring, Foxglove Vine, & Cow-itch Vine depending on location in Southeastern U.S.

Trumpet creeper is a good hummingbird vine with large orange tubular blossoms about 3-4" long and 1.5-2" across mid-summer through November. After pollination, a long bean structure is formed, removal of which will help keep the plant in bloom longer. Trumpet vine is deciduous, dropping its leaves if it freezes. Plants re-leaf mid-spring providing greenery until blossoms return, so early spring pruning produces bushier plants. Bright green compound leaves with serrated margins on leaflets provide shade under arbors & an attractive backdrop for blossoms.

It is drought tolerant once established, but beware of it becoming aggressive with suckers popping up several feet from the main stem. Trumpet creeper can climb trees, arbors, or walls with aerial roots that grip support structures with vines becoming more woody once supported. Vines can be heavy over time requiring substantial support as plants get large.

**See Trumpet Creeper on the arbor at the Hummingbird Garden entrance.**





# BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of August 27, 2023)

Expanding its horticulture, environmental education and conservation mission, **BLOOMING IN THE BOTANICAL GARDENS**, each week spotlights a featured tropical and native plant—to enjoy on a visit this week, try in your landscape, or simply increase your horticultural knowledge!

## 'DESIRE' PERENNIAL HIBISCUS (*Hibiscus moscheutos*)

Dinner Plate Hibiscus (*Hibiscus moscheutos*) is a cold-hardy, herbaceous, flowering perennial plant known for its giant, show-stopping blooms! This week's featured exotic is the cultivar 'Desire', part of the "Head over Heels" collection. 'Desire' has large dark red blossoms, with a maroon tint to the foliage.



These perennial hibiscus also go by other common names including Swamp Rose Mallow, Crimson-eyed Rose Mallow & Eastern Rose Mallow. Herbaceous green stems sprout from the ground late spring, quickly creating a small rounded shrub. It's often considered an heirloom plant because of its popularity in early to mid-1900s from southern to mid-Atlantic states & into much of the Midwest. Its popularity declined after fancy Tropical Hibiscus (*Hibiscus rosa-sinensis*) became abundant. However, interest in hardy perennial plants has breeders introducing a new generation to these old garden favorites.

Flowers, from white to dark red along with shades of pink & purple, are multiple 5-petal blossoms up to 6" across on large plants instantly attracting the eye. Each flower has a protruding fused pistil & stamen like other hibiscus varieties. The shrub grows 4-6' tall & 3-4' wide with fast-growing tender green stems turning light gray-brown at the base as they age. It drops leaves in fall & stems will freeze back in cold winters, but re-sprout from the base with new branches each spring that quickly begin flowering all summer. It is classified as a Zone 6 plant by USDA which means it's root hardy to -10°F easily surviving our mild winters.

**See 'Desire' Perennial Hibiscus in the Tropical Garden, behind the Bromeliad Conservatory.**

## ZEXMENIA (*Wedelia acapulcensis* var. *hispida*)

Zexmenia, a.k.a. Hairy Wedelia or Texas Creeping Ox-Eye in other regions., is a great low-growing native plant for the Coastal Bend. It's a member of the Aster/Sunflower Family (Asteraceae) along with many other ray-flowers that attract butterflies with daisy like structures, actually a collection of small nectar-producing flowers making up the visible center of each yellow blossom.



This native wildflower grows naturally along Rio Grande & Coastal Plains extending into the Edwards Plateau, preferring well-drained soils. Zexmenia provides bursts of yellow flowers from spring until frost, popping up in short native grasses. If grown in shade, it flowers less & may become leggy. Wedelia will freeze back during winter & may appear dead. Don't be hasty to replace it. Once warm weather returns, it quickly regrows into a new dense clump of foliage until it starts shooting up individual golden yellow daisy-like flowers about 1" across. Pointed dark green leaves about .5" across & an inch long have coarse, sandpaper-like foliage forming mounds 10-30" tall. An outstanding plant for butterfly gardens providing nectar for all species, it also serves as host plant for caterpillars of Bordered Patch butterflies (*Chlosyne lacinia*), so expect periodic leaf damage from feeding caterpillars.

Zexmenia is one of the most readily available native plants in retail nurseries. It is extremely drought tolerance and prefers full sun, making it a great landscape plant for South Texas.

**See it in the Butterfly Garden, on Butterfly Hill behind the Sensory Garden & also naturally growing in small patches in native grassland.**

## BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of August 13, 2023)

Expanding its horticulture, environmental education and conservation mission, **BLOOMING IN THE BOTANICAL GARDENS**, each week spotlights a featured tropical and native plant—to enjoy on a visit this week, try in your landscape, or simply increase your horticultural knowledge!

### RANGOON CREEPER (*Quisqualis indica*)

Rangoon creeper is one of the most stunning hummingbird vines available with clusters of color-changing tubular blossoms. Rangoon Creeper is a member of the Indian Almond or White Mangrove Family (Combretaceae) along with about 500 other species native to the South East Asian Islands & East African Coast.

Each flower is 3-4" long, tubular, white when first open changing to pink & eventually maroon over time. This adaptation allows it to attract both moths & hummingbirds, different pollinators increasing its chance of pollination. Dark green leaves appear in opposite arrangement along stems, each 1-2" wide, 4-6" long providing a nice backdrop to blossoms in shades of red. This vigorously growing vine can be aggressive once established wanting some space, easily growing to 20' long. The common name "creeper" describes how it grows attaching to branches or structures for support. Beware that it can overtake & completely cover nearby trees or shrubs if not kept pruned.



While considered tropical, it's root hardy into upper teens, dying back in harsh winters remerging from the base. Once established it's drought tolerant, both beautiful & hardy--a good addition to a large tropical garden.

**See a beautiful Rangoon Creeper specimen in the Hummingbird Garden.**

### FLAME ACANTHUS (*Anisacanthus quadrifidus* var. *wrightii*)

The orange tubular blossoms of Flame Acanthus gave Central Texas settlers a vision of burning bush in hot summers. Part of the Acanthus Family (Acanthaceae), it's a great Xeriscape plant, naturally drought & heat tolerant. Natural distribution extends from the Edwards Plateau & West Texas into Northern Mexico, but the general species goes south to Oaxaca in Southern Mexico. The variety name "Wrightii", was the former species name (*A. wrightii*), given in deference to world-wide botanical collector Charles Wright (1811-1885) who collected extensively in Texas, Cuba & his native state of Connecticut.

Thin bright green inch-long leaves contrast nicely against 1.5-2" dark orange tubular blossoms with 2-lipped petals, present mid-summer through fall, especially after rains. Woody stems allow it to grow 3-4' tall, but spring pruning keeps height in check. Flame acanthus can be deciduous, losing leaves in cold weather, but not in mild South Texas winters. If it goes dormant, be patient, it is slow to re-sprout in the spring.



Called Hummingbird Bush in some areas, since orange blossoms attract the miniature fall migrants. It provides nectar to butterflies & is larval plant of Crimson Patch (*Chlosyne janais*), Texas Crescent (*Junonia coenia*), & Common Buckeye (*Anthanassa texana*) butterflies. So expect caterpillars on these plants in late summer.

**See Flame acanthus in the Butterfly & Hummingbird gardens.**



## BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of August 6, 2023)

Expanding its horticulture, environmental education and conservation mission, **BLOOMING IN THE BOTANICAL GARDENS**, each week spotlights a featured tropical and native plant—to enjoy on a visit this week, try in your landscape, or simply increase your horticultural knowledge!

### CATTLEYA HYBRID BRONZE ORCHID

(*Cattleya* Mrs. Mahler 'Mem. Fred Thompkins' AM/AOS x *Blc.* Chinese Bronze 'E.G.')

This *Cattleya* is a stunning example of hybridization. Orchid breeder Keith Davis crossed *Cattleya* Mrs. Mahler 'Mem. Fred Thompkins' AM/AOS with *Brassolaeliocattleya* Chinese Bronze 'E.G.' creating a unique blossom with best characteristics of both parents! The result is a long-lasting orchid with striking clusters of 5-8 medium olive green/bronze blossoms & maroon markings about 4" across providing a backdrop for a visually striking magenta lip petal & lavender/white petals creating a tube. This hybrid is sought by orchid aficionados because it flowers in summer unlike many cultivated orchids usually fall and spring bloomers.



Like other *Cattleyas*, this plant produces a cluster of medium green pseudobulbs retaining water during dry seasons. Each pseudobulb blossoms once with a new shoot appearing at the base for the next blooming cycle. *Cattleyas* prefer bright but indirect light liking high humidity. The Orchid Family contains more species than any other plant family plus a plethora of hybrids having been actively bred for decades to create new combinations of flower colors & sizes.

**See Cattleya Hybrid Bronze Orchid in the front section of the Samuel Jones Orchid Conservatory near doors leading to the Butterfly House.**

**FALL OBEDIENT PLANT** (*Physostegia virginiana*), aka False Dragonhead or Virginia Lions-heart, with blossoms similar to snapdragons at first glance, is not living up to its name of either season or growing habit! Blooming this summer even though not near calendar autumn or temperature range. But the tubular lavender flowers with dark purple blotches are a nice addition to summer perennials this year. Flowers should continue into September offering nectar for migrating hummers resting here before last leg of a winter trek to Central Mexico. Rarely "obedient" as it slowly creeps from its original spot forming big clumps needing periodical thinning from crowding out nearby plants.



This plant has 3-4' tall single upright square stalks with uniform, medium to dark green, lanceolate leaves 4-6" long on entire stalk. Plants grow in clumps with stems emerging from plant base. Each stem becomes a flower stalk with 5-petaled pinkish lavender tubular flowers, 2 forming an upper lip & 3 a lower lip giving the false-dragonhead common name. If flowers are bent or manipulated along the stem, they stay that way for a while, thus "Obedient Plant."

A member of the Mint Family (Lamiaceae), it is related to many herbs like basil, rosemary, scented geraniums & coleus. It's very adaptable tolerating poor drainage & drought. It naturally grows along river banks, wet thickets, prairies & low lands in much of East & North Texas in a many soils--clay, sand & even limestone. Its indigenous range stretches from Northern Mexico up to Ontario & in many mid-Atlantic states to Florida, along the Gulf Coast to Texas.

**See in Butterfly & Hummingbird Gardens, but most stalks are only 1-2' tall with distinctive lavender flowers on top.**

## BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of July 30, 2023)

Expanding its horticulture, environmental education and conservation mission, **BLOOMING IN THE BOTANICAL GARDENS**, each week spotlights a featured tropical and native plant—to enjoy on a visit this week, try in your landscape, or simply increase your horticultural knowledge!

### DREAMLAND DWARF ZINNIAS (*Zinnia elegans* 'Dreamland')

Zinnias are some of the best performing annuals in hot, sunny South Texas summers! Classic heirloom zinnias are known for their towering stalks with colorful flowers; but often overpower landscapes. So breeders have developed dwarf varieties like Dreamland to offer the same “flower power” at 8-16” heights!

Flowers 2-3” across come in 8 colors--apricot, coral, pink, rose, yellow, ivory, red & scarlet. Zinnias can be planted in individual colors, but groupings of multiple colors give a cheerful vibe. Slightly hairy 1” wide light to medium green leaves provide a backdrop for colorful blossoms. Plants do best with full sun & regular fertilization to keep them healthy and blooming.



Zinnias are a great summer annual here attracting an abundance of butterflies like other ray flowers in the Asteraceae (Sunflower/Aster) family with multiple nectar sources blossom centers.

**See Dreamland Zinnias behind the Visitor Center, in the Butterfly Garden & Butterfly House.**

### PRICKLY PEAR CACTUS (*Opuntia engelmannii* var. *lindheimeri*)

Prickly Pear, a common South Texas cactus, blooms with yellow or peach flowers in spring which, if pollinated, become the purplish-red fruit in summer as they ripen. The immature fruit structures are seen when flowering but expand & swell over time creating the “pear.” Ripe “pears” can be harvested & eaten fresh or used for jams & jellies. Although sweet on the inside, they’re protected by tiny thorns on the outside, so beware when picking & eating.

Pears offer wildlife pollen & nectar in spring. Animals eat fruit & the pears provide water for wildlife with javelinas particularly enjoying juicy pads when hot & dry. Ranchers burn thorns off the pads to provide water & food for cattle in dry summers. Birds also nest in the safety of thorny pads.



Prickly Pear is one of the easiest cacti to grow, naturally found in South Texas on the edge of thorn scrub brush, grasslands & even sand dunes. Pads easily root if bottom edges are planted several inches into well-drained soil. After rooting, additional pads will form on the edges with plants growing 6-8’ tall & 5-7 feet wide over time. The oldest pads often turn from green to thick grayish brown trunk, allowing the cactus to grow taller as “natural” fencing.

**See Prickly Pear in Arid Garden, in front a section of wood fence on S. Staples St., & along Mary Hope Brennecke Nature Trail.**



# BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of July 23, 2023)

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## PLUMERIA 'HURRICANE' (*Plumeria rubra* 'Hurricane')

Plumeria thrive & bloom profusely in heat of summer. This week's featured exotic, "Hurricane," definitely will blow you away! Hurricane has a rosy-red 3" blossom, white streaks, excellent bloom-holding capacity & strong cinnamon scent.

Although commonly called Hawaiian Lei Flower, Plumeria originated in the Caribbean & Tropical Americas. When not threatened by freezing weather, plants become large trees 25-30' tall covered in blossoms at each branch tip. Hurricane is considered a relatively compact form, but can grow up to 15' in tropical regions.

Plumeria are members of the Apocynaceae Family which also includes Desert Rose (*Adenium obesum*), Oleanders (*Nerium oleander*), & annual Vinca (*Catharanthus roseus*).



Curated by the Plumeria Society of South Texas, plants bloom profusely June-September or October in the Botanical Gardens Plumeria Garden, removed in early November & stored bareroot in greenhouses, replanted around March 1.

**Remember the annual Plumeria Society's PLUMERIA SALE, 10 am-1 pm, Saturday, July 29, at the Jewish Community Center, 750 Everhart, free admission. Society members will sell starts & potted plants, benefitting year-round care of the Botanical Gardens collection.**

## MEXICAN HONEYSUCKLE (*Justicia spicigira*)

Desert Honeysuckle, a.k.a. Mexican Honeysuckle, is a profuse bloomer & great hummingbird & butterfly plant! Native to Mexico, it performs well blossoming almost year-round in South Texas gardens, even in this record-setting hot-dry summer.

Its thin orange tubular blossoms reminded early European settlers of vining European honeysuckle (*Lonicera* sp.), but this shrubby semi-tropical perennial bush is definitely not a vine. A member of the Acanthus (Acanthaceae) Family, it is closely related to another pollinator favorite, Shrimp Plant (*Justicia brandegeana*) in the same genus.



This plant easily grows 4-6' tall but periodically can be pruned to keep shorter. Bright green, slightly hairy leaves provide a nice contrast to the brilliant orange tubular blossoms. It appears as clumps as new stems emerge near the base of the plant, allowing the bush to slowly increase in width while not becoming invasive.

As the common name implies, Desert Honeysuckle is an excellent drought-tolerant plant once established making a great addition to water-wise landscapes. Plants grow in full sun to partial shade with taller plants found in shadier areas.

**See Mexican Honeysuckle in the Visitors Center Gateway entrance, Hummingbird Garden & in front of Education Station.**

# BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of July 16, 2023)

Expanding its horticulture, environmental education and conservation mission, **BLOOMING IN THE BOTANICAL GARDENS**, each week spotlights a featured tropical and native plant—to enjoy on a visit this week, try in your landscape, or simply increase your horticultural knowledge!

## PINK PIXIE BOUGAINVILLEA (*Bougainvillea glabra* 'Pink Pixie')

Bougainvillea, a.k.a. “Paper Flower” is a great tropical shrub providing long-lasting color in hot, sunny landscapes. Bougainvillea is a member of the Four O’Clock Family, Nictaginaceae, with most members found in tropical areas.

Colorful paper-like bougainvillea blossoms are technically bracts, colorful modified leaves attracting pollinators for extended periods. The actual flower is the thin white tube inside the bract & surrounding stamen often blending with the bract color. While some consider bougainvillea as vines, they aren’t since they don’t wind around structures or have tendrils attaching to structures.

Pink Pixie is considered a dwarf form by some horticulturists. It has shorter, straight branches like fingers extending up from the base with colorful fingernails. Deep glowing magenta blooms are tight to the stem with tips of leaves sometimes visible between blossoms. While it doesn’t grow to be 20’ tall requiring fencing or arbors for support, its relative dwarfness easily can produce a 5-8’ shrub.



See “Pink Pixie” in front of the Orchid Conservatory next to the butterfly topiary.

## TEXAS EBONY (*Ebenopsis ebano*)

Texas Ebony is a thorny indigenous native tree known for its dark green foliage & hard wood characteristics. Plants grow into small shrubs or multi-trunk trees up to 30’ tall forming a round dense crown. It has spiny branches with dark green, twice-pinnate compound leaves & small rounded leaflets. White frilly blossoms appear June-August followed by 4-6” seed pods 1-1.5” wide remaining on the tree through winter. Large seed pods frequently curl as they extend, resulting in the common name, Ape’s Earrings. It also may be called Black-Bead Ebony or Ebano.

Ebony grows from South Texas, along Eastern Mexico into the Yucatan. It may be seen up to San Antonio, but it is moderately freeze sensitive when exposed to temperatures below 20°F for extended periods as experienced in 1989 & 2021 when they froze to the ground, but established plants regrew from the base.



A member of the Pea (Fabaceae) Family, it not only is related to sweet peas, green beans & peanuts, but also native Honey Mesquite (*Prosopis glandulosa*), Retama (*Parkinsonia aculeata*) and Huisache (*Vachellia farnesiana*) trees. It’s a larval plant for Coyote Cloudwing Butterfly.

See Texas Ebony in bloom along the Brennecke Nature Trail & Oso Loop Trail.



# BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of July 9, 2023)

Expanding its horticulture, environmental education and conservation mission, **BLOOMING IN THE BOTANICAL GARDENS**, each week spotlights a featured tropical and native plant—to enjoy on a visit this week, try in your landscape, or simply increase your horticultural knowledge!

## PRIDE OF BARBADOS (*Caesalpinia pulcherima*)

Pride of Barbados is a fast-growing tropical shrub with showy orange & yellow blossoms on flower spikes above fine textured foliage. Also called Peacock flower for the showy, frilly appearance of extended stamen & pistils, blossoms open as yellow & orange turning solid orange after a few days. Bloom start usually is late May or June continuing through October.

Foliage appears dainty with compound leaves & many tiny leaflets on each individual leaf attached to main stems. The full compound leaf may be 6" wide & 12" or more long, but individual leaflets typically measure a third to half inch.

Part of the Pea/Legume Family (Fabaceae) along with native mesquite trees, if flowers are pollinated by butterflies or hummingbirds, it produces flattened seed pods, which if removed can extend the bloom cycle.



While Pride of Barbados makes a spectacular summer specimen plant in landscapes, it is deciduous, leaving barren branches in winter. Homeowners should consider planting it near evergreen plants to keep landscape full in colder months. Native to West Indies & Tropical Americas, Pride of Barbados will freeze to the ground in cold winters, but comes back from the base here, considered root hardy to Zone 8 in Central Texas. Spring regrowth is slow, with leaves reappearing mid-April. Give this plant space as it often reaches 8-12' once established. Superior performance statewide earned it Texas Superstar designation by Texas A&M Agri-Life Extension Service.

**A great nectar plant for both hummingbirds and butterflies, see a spectacular Pride of Barbados example currently in full bloom on Butterfly Hill behind the Sensory Garden, in Hummingbird and EarthKind Demonstration Gardens. Plants are in bud but not yet blooming in our main parking area.**

## COMMON DAY FLOWER (*Commelina erecta*)

Common Day Flower or Common Spiderwort is a wildflower most consider a weed often springing up where neither expected nor wanted. However, it blooms nearly year-round making it a native groundcover option for landscapes & butterfly gardens. A member of the Commelinaceae (Spiderwort) family, it is a close cousin to common hanging basket plants Wandering Jews.

The 3-petal flowers consist of 2 upper blue petals & a lower white "lip" resulting in another common name, White Mouth Dayflower. The slightly fuzzy green leaves resemble wide grass blades .75-1" wide & several inches long.



Common Day Flower is perennial found in most of the continental U.S., particularly in the South. Because of vigorous growth, it is considered a weed, but if growing in an unwanted area, it needs to be dug, removing the growing point from which all branches radiate.

**See Day Flower along the nature trail, in the Butterfly Garden, as well as a few unwanted spaces amongst tropical plants nears the Visitor Center.**

# BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of July 2, 2023)

Expanding its horticulture, environmental education and conservation mission, **BLOOMING IN THE BOTANICAL GARDENS**, each week spotlights a featured tropical and native plant—to enjoy on a visit this week, try in your landscape, or simply increase your horticultural knowledge!

## PLUMERIA 'KARMA' (*Plumeria rubra* 'Karma')

Plumeria are abundant in their native Tropical Americas; but we are lucky to enjoy them in full bloom during summer heat, thanks to the Plumeria Society of South Texas, whose members established & have curated the 100-plant Plumeria Garden since the Botanical Gardens 1996 opening. The Society also provided the ramp & Willoughby Viewing Platform for birds-eye views of blooms & fantastic visitor photos.

'Karma' is a standout in our collection! Plumeria are members of the Apocynaceae Family also including Desert Rose (*Adenium obesum*), Oleanders (*Nerium oleander*), & annual Vinca (*Catharanthus roseus*).



'Jungle Jack', internationally-known plumeria breeder & retailer for 20-plus years, considers 'Karma' in his top 2-3 varieties, & is one of the early showstoppers in our Plumeria Garden. It has some of the largest individual blossoms, 4-5" across. Flowers are a blend of blood-orange/mango colors with extensive veins radiating from a deep red center. Several large blossoms of different ages are seen in clusters with heat, sunlight & blossom age creating color variations. Blossoms have an intoxicating tropical fruit scent.

Unlike fast growing varieties with long, gangly branches, 'Karma' are semi-compact & do well in pots if fertilized. Plumeria are tropical so must be protected from freezes, actually below 40F, making potted specimens an easy-move option, particularly for coveted, expensive varieties.

**Our Plumerias' peak blooming season runs June-September slowing a bit in October. Early November, leaves are stripped for storage in greenhouses until safe weather returns in March.**

## GOLD STAR ESPERANZA (*Tecoma stans* 'Gold Star')

Gold Star Esperanza, a.k.a. Yellow Bells, is one of our best-performing South Texas summer landscape plants! In neighborhoods you're likely to see showy elegant yellow, bell-shaped tubular flowers attracting hummers & butterflies. One of the first plants named Texas Superstar by Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service for outstanding growth & flowering in gardens across Texas, it still lives up to that title, prolifically flowering despite soaring summer temperatures & drought.

'Gold Star' Esperanza was a sport of the native yellow Esperanza found in Northern Mexico & West Texas. The true native has slightly smaller flowers & thinner, pointed leaves. 'Gold Star' typically grow 6-7' tall, but can stay 3-5' with spring pruning. It likes good drainage growing in clay or sandy soils. It forms bean-shaped seed pods which if removed promote more flowering. Esperanza plants are deciduous, going dormant & dropping leaves in winter, needing to be planted with evergreen shrubs & perennials to prevent barren winter landscapes.



**See 'Gold Star' Esperanza in the parking area, Butterfly, Hummingbird & Earth-Kind Demonstration Gardens.**



## BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of June 25, 2023)

Expanding its horticulture, environmental education and conservation mission, **BLOOMING IN THE BOTANICAL GARDENS**, each week spotlights a featured tropical and native plant—to enjoy on a visit this week, try in your landscape, or simply increase your horticultural knowledge!

### DAISY ORCHID (*Bulbophyllum makoyanum*)

Daisy Orchid (*Bulbophyllum makoyanum*) is a dainty orchid with pale pink/peach petal-like structures fanning out to look like half of a daisy flower, very different than most commonly known orchids. Close inspection shows each of the pseudo-petals reveals a tiny individual orchid flower! Daisy Orchids are native to lowland forests of South East Asian Islands of Singapore, Malaysia & Philippines.

This species flowers intermittently throughout the year producing a 1-1.5" inflorescence on the end of a thin 6-10" flower stalk, raising the flower above the 4-8" pseudobulb foliage.



**See this unusual orchid specimen in a hanging basket in the front section of the Samuel Jones Orchid Conservatory.**

### MEXICAN ORCHID TREE (*Bauhinia Mexicana*)

Mexican Orchid Tree, a native of Mexico & Deep South Texas, is a vigorous growing, multi-trunked shrub or small tree that can reach 8-12' tall & similar width. Unlike other tropical Bauhinia species growing here, this one is uniquely identifiable by its 2-2.5" leaves with 2 distinctive points.

This small tree blooms several times throughout warm months with 4-5" clusters of white flowers with long narrow petals & frilly looking stamen. Flowers provide an excellent nectar source attracting an array of butterfly species & hummingbirds. Flowers are easily pollinated forming small beans which ripen & break open letting seeds fall to the ground with seedlings easily propagated. Unfortunately, this form is not widely seen in retail garden centers.



There are 2 native orchid trees in Texas. Mexican Orchid Tree's far West Texas cousin, Anaconcho Orchid Tree (*Bauhinia congesta*), is much shorter with smaller, rounded leaves & dwarf white flowers with rounded petals. Both are in the same genus as the more popular and larger growing Hong Kong Orchid Tree (*Bauhinia purpurea*). Bauhinias are members of the Pea Family (Fabaceae) which also include local natives like mesquite, retama and many other bean-producing native trees.

**See Mexican Orchid Tree past the Sensory Garden across from Tree House entrance.**

## BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of June 18, 2023)

Expanding its horticulture, environmental education and conservation mission, **BLOOMING IN THE BOTANICAL GARDENS**, each week spotlights a featured tropical and native plant—to enjoy on a visit this week, try in your landscape, or simply increase your horticultural knowledge!

### Golden Thryallis (*Galphimia glauca*)

Golden Thryallis is a semi-tropical shrub with dense bright green foliage & short spikes of golden flowers. Individual yellow flowers are only about .5" wide with distinctive red stamen, but multiple flowers on each flower stalk result in abundant golden color for months.

Thryallis is a member of the family Malpighiaceae which also includes its Texas native cousin, Dwarf Barbados Cherry (*Malpighia glabra*). Native to Mexico & Central America, it is well adapted to Gulf States.

Unlike many other tropicals, Thryallis typically keeps its leaves during our mild winters, but North & Central Texas gardeners consider it deciduous, as it drops leaves in the lower 20s. Here, it blooms nearly year-round, & also is one of the easiest landscape shrubs to maintain once established, needing little fertilizing or pruning. It produces a dense, multi-branched informal shrub look, typically 5-6' tall & 3-4' wide if left unchecked, making it a good option for a tall hedge creating a visual block. It has a subtle scent often overpowered by more fragrant flowers in many gardens.



**See Golden Thryallis in the Sensory and EarthKind Demonstration Gardens.**

### MEXICAN FEATHERGRASS (*Nassella tenuissima*)

Mexican feather grass is a low-growing ornamental grass revered for its fine texture & distinctive clumping nature. Its thin, pale green leaves contrast with dainty beige seed heads.

Feather-like flower stalks dance in the wind giving movement to xeric landscapes including cactus & succulent plantings. Unlike many other ornamental grasses in grass family (Poaceae), Mexican Feather Grass only stands 18-24" tall.

Native to West Texas & New Mexico, Mexican Feathergrass prefers dry, well-drained soils, dying out if it stays too wet. In other regions, it may be called Mexican Wiregrass, Finestem Needlegrass, Ponytail Grass & Texas Tussock.

**See Mexican Feathergrass in the Sensory Garden.**





## BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of June 11, 2023)

Expanding its horticulture, environmental education and conservation mission, **BLOOMING IN THE BOTANICAL GARDENS**, each week spotlights a featured tropical and native plant—to enjoy on a visit this week, try in your landscape, or simply increase your horticultural knowledge!

### PLUMERIA 'CALIFORNIA SUNSET' (*Plumeria rubra* 'California Sunset')

Plumeria are showy favorite flowers for semi-tropical areas like ours, with heat of summer bringing them into full bloom. June through September is Coastal Bend's peak plumeria blooming season as they thrive in hot, sunny conditions. Our plumeria collection already is putting on a show for visitors including this week's FEATURED EXOTIC, 'California Sunset.'

This variety, a seedling from 'Penang Peach', was introduced by Jungle Jack's Plumeria and is among plumeria collectors' favorites with vibrant sunset colors and thick petals. Each flower is 2-4" across, frequently in a huge 6-9" cluster all blooming at once turning heads. It attracts noses with a ripe peachy fragrance! In early spring flowers start out yellow, turning shades of dark orange to red as summer heats up. This plumeria has a semi-compact growth habit, but is fast growing with an incredibly long bloom season compared to others.



Plumeria are members of the Apocynaceae Family also including Desert Rose (*Adenium obesum*), Oleanders (*Nerium oleander*), and annual Vinca (*Catharanthus roseus*).

**See California Sunset, and many other varieties in the Plumeria Garden with Willoughby Viewing Platform. Saturday, June 22, is the annual Plumeria class, with Plumeria Sale a week later, July 29, 10am-1pm, at Jewish Community Center.**

### TEXAS KIDNEYWOOD (*Eysenhardtia texana*)

Texas Kidneywood is a great but not well-known Texas native shrub providing a show with tiny white flowers in long spikes 3.5-4.5" long, that open over a period of a couple of weeks May through October especially after rain events.

Kidneywood is deciduous, dropping leaves in winter. During warm seasons, this 3-10' multi-trunked shrub is covered in narrow compound light green leaves about 3.5" long with multiple leaflets often only .5" long creating a dainty, texture in South Texas brushlands.

Getting its common name from pioneers for treating bladder ailments, Texas Kidneywood is a large shrubby member of the Pea Family (Fabaceae) along with other native cousins like Retama (*Parkinsonia aculeata*), Huisache (*Acacia farnesiana*), and Mesquite (*Prosopis glandulosa*). It grows from Central Texas south into Central Mexico where it may be called White Brush, Vara Dulce & Palo Dulce. It is often called Bee Brush, a favorite of these beneficial pollinators & also serves as a great butterfly nectar plant.



**Texas Kidneywood can be found on Butterfly Hill pollinator garden behind the Sensory Garden and in the Butterfly Garden by the Samuel Jones Orchid Conservatory.**

## BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of June 4, 2023)

Expanding its horticulture, environmental education and conservation mission, **BLOOMING IN THE BOTANICAL GARDENS**, each week spotlights a featured tropical and native plant—to enjoy on a visit this week, try in your landscape, or simply increase your horticultural knowledge!

### BLACK & BLOOM SALVIA (*Salvia guaranitica* 'Black & Bloom')

Black & Bloom Salvia is a cultivar of Anise Sage (*Salvia guaranitica*) revered for its dark, true blue blossoms on even darker flower stalks, hence 'Black & Bloom', aka Anise-scented Sage or Brazilian Anise Sage. A member of the square-stemmed Mint Family (Lamiaceae) along with other salvias, many herbs & also coleus, it grows 3-4' tall & similar width, has elongated spade shaped leaves with slight rounded edge serrations.

Native to Brazil, Paraguay & Northern Argentina, this salvia is medicinally used in Latin America as a sedative due to the presence of cirsiol.

Black & Bloom Salvia has been called "tough as nails" withstanding summer heat & staying evergreen in our area during winter except after hard freezes. But as a Zone 8 plant, it will regrow even after 15°F cold snaps in much of Central Texas. This favorite in pollinator gardens attracts butterflies, hummingbirds & bees & is deer resistant!



**See Black & Bloom Salvia at the Sensory Garden entrance, thriving with morning sun and a little afternoon shade.**

### COMMON SUNFLOWER (*Helianthus annuus*)

Common sunflower is one native plant whose benefits may be overlooked due to abundance & familiarity. While large flowering hybrids are sought for abundance of seeds, smaller flowering forms growing wild are important for wildlife.

The golden yellow petals & dark brown centers appear to be a single flower; however, butterflies see the dark center of sunflowers & relatives in the Asteraceae Family that have this ray-flower configuration as hundreds of individual flowers available for nectar at one landing site, making it an efficient butterfly feeding site.

When water is plentiful, plants quickly grow 6-8' tall, making them a nuisance in the wrong place. However, dedicating a corner to them will provide nectar for adult butterflies, leaves for caterpillars, pollen for bees & eventually seeds for migratory songbirds. In South Texas, it's a larval plant for Bordered Patch (*Chlosyne lacinia*), American Lady (*Vanessa virginiensis*) & Painted Lady (*Vanessa cardui*) caterpillars.



**See Sunflowers in the Butterfly Garden & Butterfly Hill, plus periodic specimens along the lower Oso Loop Nature Trail.**



# BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of May 28, 2023)

Expanding its horticulture, environmental education and conservation mission, **BLOOMING IN THE BOTANICAL GARDENS**, each week spotlights a featured tropical and native plant—to enjoy on a visit this week, try in your landscape, or simply increase your horticultural knowledge!

## PENTAS (*Pentas lanceolata*)

Pentas are a great perennial for South Texas landscapes, lasting several years in flowerbeds or pots if regularly fertilized. Although commonly grown here, they originate in the Arabian peninsula, Eastern Africa & Madagascar, sometimes called Egyptian Star Cluster. Pentas need good drainage & regular watering, especially in summer; but will not live standing in water.

Pentas come in a variety of colors, including pink, violet, white, cranberry & red. Most commercially grown Pentas mature at 12-24" depending on varieties. Some of the older varieties may grow taller, especially when grown in shade, but newer varieties are bred for compact form, flower color & prolific blooming. Individual flowers are approximately .25" across but clusters can be 2-4" wide making an impressive display in the garden. Individual flowers open over time making each cluster last months. If flowering diminishes, deadheading old blossoms & regular fertilization will encourage new flowers to form. Although Pentas are perennial, they typically only last 2-3 years if we have mild winters. Replacing them every few years will provide more vigor and flowering.



Pentas are a good nectar source for butterflies & hummingbirds & are the larval plant for Tersa sphinx moth (*Xylophanes tersa*).

**See a variety of colorful Graffiti series Pentas in the EarthKind Demonstration Gardens, Butterfly Garden/House & Sensory Garden.**

## WINECUP (*Callirhoe involucrata*)

Winecup is a spring wildflower getting its name from the simple magenta flower with 5 broad petals forming a cup shape, standing about 12-16" above low-growing foliage, each on its own individual stem. It also is known as "purple poppy mallow."

A member of the mallow family (Malvaceae), it is cousin to hibiscus, cotton, okra, hollyhock & native Turk's cap. It is an important pollen source for bees and is the larval plant for gray hairstreak butterflies. This plant may go unnoticed due to its vining nature along the ground, creeping along hillsides & edges of meadows until blossoms emerge above the foliage. Simple gray-green leaves are palmate & highly serrated resulting in a frilling-fingerlike shape.

Although best known for spring blossoms in Texas, it sporadically can bloom throughout warm months. It is found through the southern U.S. & up through the Great Plains into Minnesota & Michigan.



**See Winecups amongst the wildflowers near the Botanical Gardens Staples Street entrance & along the path on the north end of the Oso Loop Trail.**

# BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of May 21, 2023)

Expanding its horticulture, environmental education and conservation mission, **BLOOMING IN THE BOTANICAL GARDENS**, each week spotlights a featured tropical and native plant—to enjoy on a visit this week, try in your landscape, or simply increase your horticultural knowledge!

## 'TOMLINSON' PLUMERIA (*Plumeria rubra* 'Tomlinson')

We are seeing first blossoms in the Plumeria Garden! One of the first strong bloomers this season is Tomlinson! This older cross, known for its wide pink-white petals with rounded tips, has striking white areas & a distinctive yellow center of each blossom which can be up to 3" wide. Flowers fade to a pale pink with age. Blossoms are lightly scented with good keeping quality once picked, making it a favorite for Hawaiian leis.

Plumeria are members of the Dogbane Family (Apocynaceae) which includes Desert Rose (*Adenium obesum*), Oleanders (*Nerium oleander*), Madagascar Palm (*Pachypodium lamerei*) & annual Vinca (*Catharanthus roseus*). While best known as the Hawaiian lei flower, plumeria are native to the Caribbean & Tropical Americas from Brazil into Southern Mexico.

Plumeria collection at the Botanical Gardens is greenhouse-stored bareroot each winter, replanted in March. Recent rains helped them quickly produce leaves & multiple varieties start to flower with peak flowering season July through September in the Coastal Bend, as these plants thrive in hot, sunny conditions.



**The Plumeria Garden is curated by the Plumeria Society of South Texas & includes a ramp to the elevated covered Willoughby Viewing Platform.**

## HORSEMINT (*Monarda citriodora*)

Horsemint is a cool season annual typically flowering in early spring, seeds & dies back in heat of summer. Recent rains provided both moisture & mild May temperatures for a spectacular floral display from this Texas native wildflower. Also commonly called Beebalm, it has 12 to 20" flower stalks with whorls of purple to pink & white tubular flowers putting on a spectacular lavender show, while attracting a number of pollinators. Multiple flower stalks emerge from the base of the plant which has lance-shaped leaves in pairs along the stem.

When leaves are crushed, Horsemint has a distinctive lemon or citrus aroma from which the species name "citriodora" is derived. This aromatic native mint has a plethora of common names & regionally may be known as Lemon Beebalm, Purple Horsemint, Lemon Mint, Plains Horsemint, Lemon Horsemint, or Purple Lemon Mint.

As the common name implies, it is a member of the Mint Family, Lamiaceae, along with numerous culinary herbs, salvias & coleus. Carl Linnaeus, the father of modern scientific nomenclature, named the genus *Monarda* in honor of a 16th century Spanish physician & botanist, Nicolas Bautista Monardes (1493-1588) who studied medicinal plants brought back to Spain from the New World.



**See Horsemint in the wildflower patches at the main entrance on S. Staples St., in the Butterfly Garden, native wildflower plantings between playground & Arid Garden & along the Oso Creek Loop Trail on the far side of the Wetlands Awareness Boardwalk.**



## BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of May 14, 2023)

Expanding its horticulture, environmental education and conservation mission, **BLOOMING IN THE BOTANICAL GARDENS**, each week spotlights a featured tropical and native plant—to enjoy on a visit this week, try in your landscape, or simply increase your horticultural knowledge!

### **BROGA TIGER ORCHID** (*Grammatophyllum* 'Broga Tiger')

*Grammatophyllum* 'Broga Tiger' was hybridized by Serdang Orchid Nursery in Malaysia in 2009 by crossing *G. measuresianum* X *G. 'Tiger's Paw.'* It is known for its spectacular inflorescences frequently 3' long, blooming for up to 3 months due to numerous smaller fragrant flowers. Individual flowers are .75-1" across with gold & bronze striping resembling tiger stripes.

'Broga Tiger' Orchid is an impressive specimen plant nearly 3' tall & wide. *Grammatophyllum* orchids are commonly known as "Queen of Orchids" because of enormous size. Plants are fast growing. The broad leaves about 3" wide & 18-24" long have been compared to sugar cane leaves, thus another common name, "sugar cane orchids."



**This specimen was donated to the Botanical Gardens in 2022 by local orchid aficionado Richard Schmidt wanting orchid lovers around the area to enjoy this spectacular plant located in the front section of the Samuel Jones Orchid Conservatory.**

### **AMERICAN BEAUTYBERRY** (*Callicarpa Americana*)

American Beautyberry is an understory shrub that commonly grows 4-7' tall & 3-4' wide. Large slightly hairy pointed leaves have serrated edges, measuring 2-3" wide & 3-6" long.

Native in Texas and much of the Southeast U.S., American Beautyberry usually is recognized by its striking bright purple fruit in fall & winter. But plants now in blossom stage, have clusters of tiny pale lavender-pink flowers with bright yellow stamen create a misty appearance along the stems, with clusters forming above each leaf.

Once these tiny flowers are pollinated by bees, butterflies or wind, they transform into small green berries ripening over time expanding into the familiar reddish purple berry clusters for which the plant is admired, providing necessary fall & winter food sources for migratory songbirds.



**See Beautyberries in the Sensory Garden & on Butterfly Hill.**



# BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of May 7, 2023)

Expanding its horticulture, environmental education and conservation mission, **BLOOMING IN THE BOTANICAL GARDENS**, each week spotlights a featured tropical and native plant—to enjoy on a visit this week, try in your landscape, or simply increase your horticultural knowledge!

## DESERT ROSE (*Adenium obesum*)

Desert Rose has become increasingly popular in recent years due to its easy care & drought tolerance! Indigenous to the Sahara, subtropical eastern Africa & Arabian Peninsula, it likes full sun & can tolerate occasional dry periods. It is tropical & must be protected from freezes—even night temperatures in the 40s will trigger winter dormancy.

Desert Rose bi-color form is one of the most common, but also come in solid white & red. Breeders have introduced a wide range of hybrids including doubles, orange shades & even purples! These more exotic forms usually are grafted onto the more common pink/white root stock demanding a premium price.

These succulents are revered not only for beautiful flowers, but also a fattened trunk or “codex” storing water & nutrients.

Desert Rose’ sticky latex sap can be a skin & eye irritant. Plants are toxic if ingested as are other close relatives in the Dogbane Family (Apocynaceae) such as plumeria, oleander, vinca (periwinkles), allamandas & butterfly milkweed (*Asclepias* sp.).

**This large specimen of Desert Rose is located in the rock beds in front of the Samuel Jones Orchid Conservatory.**



## GOLDEN TICKSEED (*Coreopsis tinctoria*)

Golden tickseed, an annual, grows 1-2' tall with narrow, compound green leaves close to the ground while flowers extend well above foliage. Although plants can bloom February-December in our area, most prolific flowering is in Spring. Varieties of this showy annual naturally are found throughout plains of the central U.S. into Canada, naturalizing in most other states.

Golden tickseed commonly are found in low, moist soils in prairies, swales & ditches, particularly showy in large patches with golden flowers moving in the wind, resulting another common name, “Golden Wave.” It also may be called Plains Coreopsis or Calliopsis. Although local coreopsis blossoms are primarily yellow, variations in other regions have visible maroon coloration near center of the flower.



Like other members of the Aster/Sunflower Family (Asteraceae), individual blossoms we see are ray flowers, smaller true flowers making up the center portion. This configuration is beneficial for nectaring butterflies & also provides pollen for bees.

**See Golden Tickseed in many naturalized areas including around Butterfly Hill behind Sensory Garden, along ditches starting near our parking lot, & throughout nature trail areas.**



## BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of April 30, 2023)

Expanding its horticulture, environmental education and conservation mission, **BLOOMING IN THE BOTANICAL GARDENS**, each week spotlights a featured tropical and native plant—to enjoy on a visit this week, try in your landscape, or simply increase your horticultural knowledge!

### CINCO DE MAYO' FLORIBUNDA ROSE (*Rosa hybrida* 'Cinco de Mayo')

'Cinco de Mayo' is a prolific flowering floribunda rose, with flowers described as a "blending of smoked lavender & rusty red-orange." Blooms open fully to 3.5" wide, 20-25 petals each, & 3-5 blossoms on each stem. This floribunda grows to 3-4' tall with glossy green foliage & rounded, bushy growth habit.

Cinco de Mayo was introduced by Weeks Roses in 2009, a hybrid between red/white *Topsy Turvy* & bright yellow *Julia Child* floribundas. It was a 2009 All-American Rose Selection (AARS) Winner, an award bestowed annually upon roses outperforming all others in American gardens & vases.

"Cinco de Mayo" (Fifth of May) is an annual celebration of the 1862 victory of the Mexican army over France, at the Battle of Puebla during the Franco-Mexican War, making it fitting to feature this rose as many South Texans prepare for the holiday this week! March-May is prime bloom season for South Texas roses, with fewer blossoms present during summer heat.



**See two groupings of 'Cinco de Mayo' in raised beds in the Rose Garden.**

### TEXAS DANDELION (*Pyrrhopappus pauciflorus*)

The Texas Dandelion aka Small Flower Desert Chicory & False Dandelion, is a member of the Aster (Asteraceae) Family along with daisies, sunflowers & mist flowers, & native to southern states from Arizona to Florida. They hug the ground & considered a broadleaf "weed" in cultivated turf areas.

In spring, flower stalks stand 6-8" tall providing a blanket of .75" pale yellow flowers each morning, closing late afternoon. After pollination, the traditional dandelion seed head appears distributed by winds, & fun for kids of all ages as they make wishes & blow away the seeds!

Foraging Texas notes Dandelion leaves, roots & flowers as edible, with young leaves used in salad or boiled, & flowers sometimes used in wine, & roots roasted for a coffee substitute. It is rich in Vitamins A, B, thiamine, riboflavin along with minerals & protein. Medicinally, the flower is used as wound healer in a salve or infused oil. Roots & leaves reportedly are used for diuretic, antibacterial, laxative, sedative or appetite stimulant.



**See Texas Dandelion in less formal grass areas & fields near the EarthKind Garden, between Treehouse playground, Arid Garden & lawn in front of Education Station. Our mowing specialist has been careful to mow around wildflower areas.**

## BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of April 23, 2023)

Expanding its horticulture, environmental education and conservation mission, **BLOOMING IN THE BOTANICAL GARDENS**, each week spotlights a featured tropical and native plant—to enjoy on a visit this week, try in your landscape, or simply increase your horticultural knowledge!

### COCONUT ORCHID (*Maxillaria tenuifolia*)

*Maxillaria tenuifolia* has a distinct scent earning the common name “Coconut Orchid.” Discovered near Veracruz, Mexico, by Karl Theodore Hartweg & described by Lindley in 1837 in the Botanical Register, it naturally grows in elevations up to 5000’ from Mexico to Costa Rica.

Maroon & white spotted blossoms about .75” across open consistently through April & May in the Orchid Conservatory. Each flower spike typically has 10-12 blossoms with a plant easily having 50-60 blooms (5-6 spikes) during each bloom cycle.

Coconut orchid has grass-like foliage that stays fairly compact making it a good potted plant even when not in bloom. Being an epiphytic orchid, however, it needs good drainage to prevent rotting, so should be planted in orchid bark or similar medium.

**See Coconut Orchid in the rear section of the Samuel Jones Orchid Conservatory.**



### PRICKLY PEAR CACTUS (*Opuntia phaeacantha* Engelman)

Prickly Pear, a common South Texas cactus, blooms with yellow or peach colored flowers typically opening as early as March, blooming through April into May. Each flower is found on top of a green oval structure attached to the main cactus pad. That structure is the ovary which will eventually develop into “fruit” after pollination by bees, butterflies or other insects.

Ripening, pear fruit turns from green to a dark purple, & can be harvested, eaten fresh or used for jams & jellies. Although sweet on the inside, they are protected by tiny thorns on the outside of the fruit, so beware when picking & eating!



One of the easiest cacti to grow, Prickly Pear naturally is found in South Texas on the edge of thorn scrub brush, grasslands & even sand dunes. The iconic round pads are specialized water-storing stems, a favorite food for javelina.

Pads easily root when bottom edges are planted several inches into well-drained soil. After rooting, additional pads form on the edges, with plants growing 6-8’ tall & 5-7’ wide over time. The oldest pads often turn from green to a thick grayish brown trunk, allowing the cactus to easily grow taller for “natural” fencing.

**See Prickly Pear in the Arid Garden, on a section of our S. Staples St. fence, & along the Mary Hope Brennecke Nature Trail.**



## BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of April 16, 2023)

Expanding its horticulture, environmental education and conservation mission, **BLOOMING IN THE BOTANICAL GARDENS**, each week spotlights a featured tropical and native plant—to enjoy on a visit this week, try in your landscape, or simply increase your horticultural knowledge!

### ARCTIC BLUE FLORIBUNDA ROSE (*Rosa hybrida* 'Arctic Blue')

'Arctic Blue' is an exceptionally drought tolerant floribunda rose, producing fully double, lilac pink blooms with a creamy white reverse, a moderate citrus fragrance, & holding up well in heat! Flowers open fully to a width of 3-4" per bloom, with multiple buds on a branch often open at once. This floribunda rose grows 3-4' tall with medium green foliage.

Arctic Blue was hybridized by Christian Bedard, released in 2017. March-May is prime bloom season for roses in South Texas, with fewer blossoms present during heat of summer.

**See a grouping of 'Arctic Blue' floribunda roses in the center raised bed, approaching the Rose Garden from the Plumeria Garden.**



### HEARTLEAF SKULLCAP (*Scutellaria ovata*)

Despite the common name, this member of the mint family (Lamiaceae) does not have a traditional heart-shaped leaf. Instead, the fuzzy blue-gray leaves are more oval shaped as the species name 'ovata' indicates, & have serrated edges. The velvety leaves provide not only a color contrast to green gardens, but also an added sensory factor.

A low-growing, spreading perennial, the plants typically growing 6-10" tall creating a groundcover for flowerbeds or butterfly gardens. Flower stalks featuring individual tiny blue blossoms with white throats less than .5" wide, emerge above the velvety foliage, similar to its salvia cousins. Plants typically bloom April through mid-summer.

Heartleaf Skullcap is super-easy to grow & can be separated & moved to other areas of the garden once established.

**See Heartleaf skullcap blooming in our Butterfly Garden across from the Butterfly House entrance, serving as a perennial butterfly nectar plant.**



# BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of April 9, 2023)

Expanding its horticulture, environmental education and conservation mission, **BLOOMING IN THE BOTANICAL GARDENS**, each week spotlights a featured tropical and native plant—to enjoy on a visit this week, try in your landscape, or simply increase your horticultural knowledge!

## LITTLE JOHN DWARF BOTTLEBRUSH

(*Callistemon viminalis* 'Little John')

"Little John" is a compact bottlebrush 3-5' tall at maturity & similar width. Thin, pointed, gray-green leaves about 2" long surround branches with red flowers emerging from tips of branches between leaves. While we think of one branch having a single flower, it is really a combination of multiple flower buds with thin, dark-red petals, pistils and stamen synchronously opening to resemble bristles, thus resulting in the common name "Bottlebrush."

An excellent nectar plant for hummingbirds & butterflies, flower blossoms last several weeks during each of its 2-3 annual bloom cycles. Bottlebrush are native to Australia but are grown throughout much of the world. Most varieties are Zone 9 plants tolerating temperatures in the mid-20s.



'Little John' can be trimmed into hedge or medium sized shrub. Infrequent pruning is recommended between bloom cycles to prevent removal of flower buds on the ends of branches.

**See 'Little John' along the walkway by the Anderson Bromeliad Conservatory, in front of Education Station, in the Sensory Garden & entrance to Hummingbird Garden.**

## RETAMA TREE (*Parkinsonia aculeate*)

Retama is a small, native tree known for its vibrant green trunk & long thin leaves providing dappled shade for plants below. Retama blooms profusely from late spring through fall in mildly-fragrant, delicate yellow blossoms with hints of red/orange at the throats.

This fast-growing tree quickly can reach 15-20' tall & 12-15' wide. However, its rapid growth produces weak wood that frequently breaks in high winds, making it a marginal tree for urban landscapes. It works better in rural landscapes needing fast-growing, drought-tolerant tree options. Its compound leaves are often over 12" long with a central axis & .25" long leaflets on each side. The small leaflets result in the dappled shade beneath its canopy. Pollinated flowers result in bean pods hanging from the branches.



Retama was adopted as one of the city trees of Corpus Christi, October 2, 1957. It's a member of the legume family (Fabaceae) along with mesquite, peas & common green beans. Retama also may be called Mexican Paloverde or Jerusalem Thorn. It is extremely drought tolerant, easy to grow, often found along drainage ditches withstanding dry & wet locations & wide range of soil conditions.

**See Retama in full bloom around town. including the backside of the Butterfly Garden and multiple areas on the Brennecke Nature Trail. Look for bright green leaves and sweet-scented yellow flowers.**



## BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of April 2, 2023)

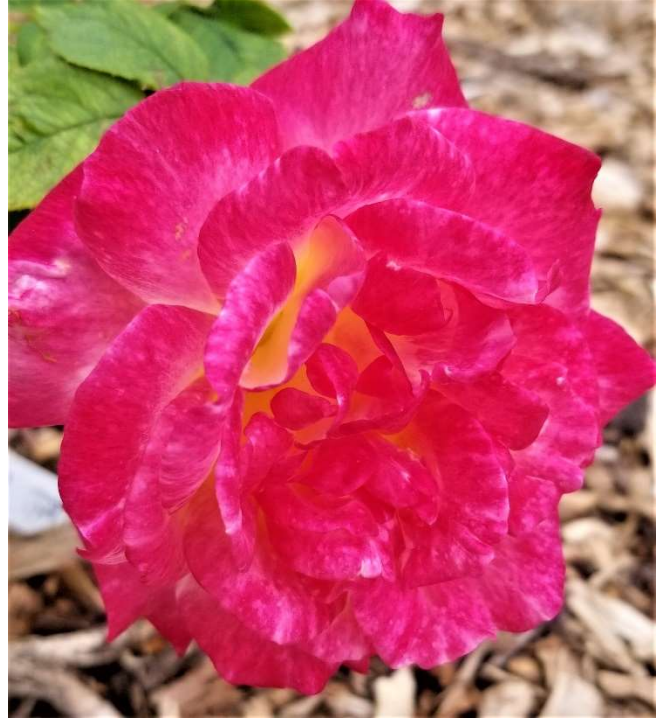
Expanding its horticulture, environmental education and conservation mission, **BLOOMING IN THE BOTANICAL GARDENS**, each week spotlights a featured tropical and native plant—to enjoy on a visit this week, try in your landscape, or simply increase your horticultural knowledge!

### DOUBLE DELIGHT HYBRID TEA ROSE (*Rosa* X 'Double Delight')

Double Delight is an award-winning Hybrid Tea Rose bred by Swim and Ellis, crossing red & yellow 'Granada' Hybrid Tea with ivory flowering 'Garden Party,' resulting in a large-flowering, red blend fragrant rose, a favorite in gardens since its 1977 introduction when it was an All-American Rose Selection! Double Delight also is a Gamble Fragrance Award Winner, & inducted into the Rose Hall of Fame in 1985.

Hybrid Tea Roses are great options for those wanting to grow cut flowers for their long stems & large individual blossoms. Flowers should be regularly dead-headed as they start to fade to promote more bud formation.

**See Double Delight currently blooming in Rose Garden raised beds turning heads & noses. All Botanical Gardens roses will be in peak bloom in April & May before they slow in heat of summer.**



### ANACONCHO ORCHID TREE (*Bauhinia lunaroides*)

Anacondito Orchid Tree is the West Texas native form of orchid tree, & a cousin of the popular purple flowering Hong Kong Orchid Tree (*Bauhinia purpurea*). Clusters of small white fragrant flowers resembling orchids appear from spring through fall, providing nectar for butterflies & bees in arid regions. This multi-trunk shrub also is revered for its silvery bark contrasting with double round lobed leaves 1-1.5" long. dark green leaves.

It is a member of the Pea Family (Fabaceae) producing flat beans when flowers are pollinated. This small tree reaches only 8-12', smaller than the exotic form or its Mexican counterpart (*Bauhinia mexicana*), another Texas native.

**See Anacondito Orchid Tree blooming in the Butterfly Garden near the Orchid House Bridge.**



## BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of March 26, 2023)

Expanding its horticulture, environmental education and conservation mission, **BLOOMING IN THE BOTANICAL GARDENS**, each week spotlights a featured tropical and native plant—to enjoy on a visit this week, try in your landscape, or simply increase your horticultural knowledge!

### HYBRID WHITE LADY SLIPPER ORCHID

(*Paphiopedilum fowii* v *album* X sib)

(For the first time in many years, these lady slippers will be available at our BIG BLOOM Orchid Sale on Saturday, April 1.)

This week, we are featuring hybrid *Paphiopedilum fowii* v *album* X sib, known for its white petals with distinctive green stripes.

*Paphiopedilum* orchids, commonly called “lady slipper orchids,” have a unique pouch on the tongue petal with flowers soaring on a stalk above the vegetative plant. Dark green, often speckled strap-like leaves provide more attractive foliage than many other orchid genera.

*Paphiopedilums* are native to South East Asia & more terrestrial than many other varieties, tending to prefer more moisture. Also, they are low-light orchids which is why the American Orchid Society considers them well adapted as a houseplant treated similarly to African violets.



**See this variety & other *Paphiopedilums* blooming in the Samuel Jones Orchid Conservatory.**

### MEXICAN BUSH SAGE (*Salvia leucantha*)

(This plant will be available at our BIG BLOOM Plant Sale, Saturday, April 1!)

Mexican Bush Sage is native to Mexico but considered a South Texas native. Available in most nurseries, it's one of the most popular “native plants” in the state for its consistent growth & performance in landscapes, plus water-wise designation. Preferring full sun for maximum blooming, the plant has long narrow gray-green leaves & grows about 3' tall, but flower spikes sometimes extend another 12" above that late in the season.

Purple & white flowers open from bottom to top of flower spikes, providing blossoms for several months. As flowers die at the bottom of the flower spike, removing the stalk will promote new flowers in a few weeks. This true perennial needs to be cut back each spring to keep it compact & full. If overgrowing its space in late summer, it can easily handle a light pruning or shaping late summer to remove stray branches. Severe summer pruning may delay fall flowering.



**See Mexican Bush Sage--both a hummingbird & butterfly attractor-- currently blooming in the Butterfly Garden, in bud in the Hummingbird Garden, “Butterfly Hill” behind the Sensory Garden, & with other Texas A&M Agrilife “Texas Superstars” in the EarthKind Demonstration Garden.**



## BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of March 19, 2023)

Expanding its horticulture, environmental education and conservation mission, **BLOOMING IN THE BOTANICAL GARDENS**, each week spotlights a featured tropical and native plant—to enjoy on a visit this week, try in your landscape, or simply increase your horticultural knowledge!

### GIANT CROWN OF THORNS (*Euphorbia milii*)

You'll find Crown of Thorns in several sizes from dwarf at only 8-12" tall, to this "giant" form typically growing 3-4' tall in a pot. It has larger leaves & blossoms than the small, more common forms of this plant.

The plant produces simple flowers with 4 round petals surrounding a small yellow center of stamen & pistil. Breeding has allowed more flower colors from traditional red to oranges, yellows, whites, along with marbled or splotched combinations colors. Flowers of this giant form are .75-1" across in small clusters.

The species name "mili" honors Governor Baron Milius of the island of Bourbon after he introduced the species in France in 1821 from its homeland, Madagascar. The common name, "Crown of Thorns" references the thorny plant woven into a crown placed on the head of Jesus prior to his crucifixion; while the tiny flowers, most commonly red, symbolizes drops of blood. (While this plant may have then existed in the Middle East, it is not thought to be the type of plant actually used.)

Crown of Thorns are members of the spurge or euphorbia family with over 1600 other plants including poinsettias & pencil cactus. But be aware of Euphorbias milky white latex sap, an irritant to skin & eyes, in all parts of the plant.

**See Giant Crown of Thorns featured as you enter the Visitors Center with other potted forms scattered throughout nearby patio spaces.**



### ENGLEMAN'S DAISY (*Engelmannia peristenia*)

Engelmann's Daisy, sometimes called "cut-leaf daisy," is a hardy perennial 18-24" tall with multiple branches emerging from a central crown. While it may die back during a cold winter, it always comes back.

Serrated light green leaves provide a backdrop for pale yellow daisy flowers 1-1.5" across that fully open in late afternoon, but have slightly curled petals earlier in the day. Engelmann's Daisy naturally grows from Texas to Arizona & Southeast Mexico up to Kansas & Missouri. It is more common in western parts of Texas & Hill Country, preferring dry clay & calcareous soils. It blooms frequently in late spring & early summer along roadsides even in drought conditions due to its prominent taproot.



Engelmann's Daisy is a member of the aster/daisy family Asteraceae, but is a monotypic genus—a genus with only one species. The genus was named after German-born botanist George Engelmann who immigrated & settled in St. Louis, becoming a leader in plant identification throughout the Central U.S. in the 1800s.

**See Engelmann's Daisy on Butterfly Hill, a monarch waystation planting behind our Sensory Garden, adjacent to the Butterfly Garden.**

## BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of March 12, 2023)

Expanding its horticulture, environmental education and conservation mission, **BLOOMING IN THE BOTANICAL GARDENS**, each week spotlights a featured tropical and native plant—to enjoy on a visit this week, try in your landscape, or simply increase your horticultural knowledge!

### LINDLEY'S DENDROBIUM (*Dendrobium aggregatum*)

*Dendrobium aggregatum* is a species indigenous to mountainous areas of Thailand, China & India, sometimes referred to as *D. lindleyi* in older publications & orchid circles. This spring-flowering species provides a bright burst of bold yellow among more common white & purple orchid blossoms.

Unlike many tall-growing Dendrobiums, this species has compact growth with wide dark green leaves about 3" wide & 6" long hugging the pot. However, flower spikes soar from the rosette of leaves with showers of golden round blossoms about .5" across often cascading past the pot, making hanging plants best display options. Spikes may be 12-18" long with 50 or more individual blossoms per spike.

These orchids like bright indirect light, good air circulation & high humidity. Pots may be placed under trees much of the year in our area naturally providing these conditions.

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



### TEXAS VERVAIN (*Verbena halei*)

Texas Vervain is one of the earliest native wildflowers to show color along Texas hillsides. This plant has slender flower stalks typically 12-18" tall standing above other low-growing wildflowers. Each plant may have multiple flower stalks, each stalk featuring small 5-petal lavender/blue blossoms with 4-5 open on each flower stalk simultaneously, with the lowest on the stalk opening first & continuing to bloom throughout spring with open blossoms progressively higher on the flower stalk.

Texas Vervain blooms March–June, found in many areas of the Southern US stretching from North Carolina down to Florida, & west as far as Arizona up to Missouri.

The delicate flowers on thin stalks dance above other wildflowers in the wind, resulting in other common names including Slender Verbena, Texas Verbena, Slender Vervain. It is a member of the Verbena Family (Verbenaceae) along with lantana (*Lantana* sp.), frog fruit (*Phyla nodiflora*) & Vitex or Chaste Tree (*Vitex agnus-castus*), besides traditional trailing verbena varieties.

Texas Vervain is an important butterfly nectar source. While the plant is considered deer resistant, leaves are edible & may be used in salads along with delicate flowers to garnish a natural salad.

**See Texas Vervain blooming in patches along the Brennecke Nature Trail, and larger natural grassland areas, prominent between the playground & Arid Garden.**





## BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of March 5, 2023)

Expanding its horticulture, environmental education and conservation mission, **BLOOMING IN THE BOTANICAL GARDENS**, each week spotlights a featured tropical and native plant—to enjoy on a visit this week, try in your landscape, or simply increase your horticultural knowledge!

### RINGO 2000® DEEP SCARLET GERANIUM

(*Pelargonium hortorum* 'Deep Scarlet')

Geraniums are favorites among spring flowers; & Ringo 2000® series is a top performer with early flowering & compact nature, a great combo for container gardens! Developed by Syngenta Flowers, Ringo 2000® Deep Scarlet has vibrant scarlet-orange flower heads, almost neon in tone. While somewhat heat tolerant, most gardeners use them for spring color in pots until early summer.



Ringo series creates uniform mounding plants 12-18" high. Flower stalks rise above foliage with 3-5" round clusters of showy blossoms lasting 1-2 weeks. Geraniums perform best if regularly dead-headed, removing old blossoms, to promote new flower stalk formation through the season. Flowers attract bees, butterflies, hummingbirds & other pollinators.

Fragrant, rounded leaves with dark purplish rings have short petioles creating compact form, & rich backdrop for colorful blooms. Plants grow best in large pots or hanging baskets allowing better water control & less disease from soil splashing on lower leaves.

Geraniums are heavy feeders doing best fertilized every 1-2 weeks while blooming. While this is a seed geranium, Ringo 2000® series have larger flowers similar in size to their zonal geranium cousins. Geraniums are susceptible to fungus & bacteria causing premature leaf drop if not addressed quickly. But Ringo 2000® series is more disease tolerant than fancy zonal geraniums. If you do see foliar fungal issues, remove dying or yellowing leaves when dead-heading blossoms.

**See Ringo 2000® Deep Scarlet Geraniums in the Sensory & Butterfly Gardens & at the stairs to Education Station deck.**

### TEXAS MOUNTAIN LAUREL (*Sophora secundiflora*)

Texas Mountain Laurel, or Mescal, is a member of the Pea Family (Fabaceae) along with Mesquite & Retama. Naturally growing in caliche outcroppings around Mathis, it's native from central Texas west to New Mexico, south to San Luis Potosi, Mexico.

Its shiny dark, evergreen compound leaves provide a nice shrub base to native plant landscape. In spring, clusters of attractive lavender/blue flowers resembling grapes bloom for several weeks, with a surprisingly strong grape soda scent!

This slow-growing shrub can be shaped into small, ornamental, multi-trunked trees commonly 10-15' tall, occasionally reaching 25-30'. Slow growth habit make large plants expensive when purchased.

Being in the Pea Family (Fabaceae), after bees & butterflies pollinate flowers, pollinated flowers create long seed pods possibly lasting a year or more on the bush. However, bright red seeds are poisonous.



**See specimen trees in the Sensory Garden, at Hummingbird Garden by the Brennecke Nature Trail entrance, & Arid Garden. Flowers last only a couple of weeks, so visit soon to be intoxicated with the sweet grape fragrance!**

## BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of February 26, 2023)

Expanding its horticulture, environmental education and conservation mission, **BLOOMING IN THE BOTANICAL GARDENS**, each week spotlights a featured tropical and native plant—to enjoy on a visit this week, try in your landscape, or simply increase your horticultural knowledge!

### HYBRID GREEN LADY SLIPPER ORCHID

(*Paphiopedilum* Spring Wolf 'Green Glamor' X Oriental Spring 'Radiating Dorsal')

*Paphiopedilum* orchids, commonly called lady slipper orchids, are known for the unique pouch on the tongue petal resembling women's slippers, with flowers soaring on a stalk above the vegetative plant. Dark green, often speckled strap-like leaves provide more attractive foliage than many other orchid genera.

We are spotlighting hybrid *Paphiopedilum* Spring Wolf 'Green Glamor' X Oriental Spring 'Radiating Dorsal' featuring a large greenish-yellow "slipper" & rear sepals, with a large white & yellow fused petal above the slipper, much wider than most *Paphiopedilums*.

*Paphiopedilums*, native to Southeast Asia, are more terrestrial than many other orchid genera, tending to prefer more moisture than other orchid varieties. They are low-light orchids which the American Orchid Society considers well adapted as a houseplant, similar to African violets.



**See several *Paphiopedilum* varieties blooming now in the Samuel Jones Orchid Conservatory!**

### BLACKBRUSH ACACIA (*Vachellia rigidula*)

Blackbrush Acacia is a large native shrub/small tree found in South Texas Thorn Scrub chaparral from Rio Grande Plains up to Austin, hugging the Mexican border from Corpus Christi west to Big Bend. Common names include Blackbrush, Chaparro Prieto, & Gavia.

Blackbrush is one of the first native plants to bloom in South Texas featuring numerous 2" long spikes of pale yellow frilly flowers, often appearing on bare branches before spring flush of leaves. Pollenated flowers form small brown beans later in spring. Bees use Blackbrush as an early pollen source. Butterflies nectar on flowers, & granivorous birds feed on dropped seeds.



This plant has spiny stiff branches 4-12' tall creating a dense thicket, white/gray bark contrasting with tiny dark green compound leaves. Stems are covered in short thick thorns protecting plants from browsing mammals. It is very drought tolerant & good Xeriscape shrub, easily incorporated into arid landscapes & rock gardens, but is rarely found in nurseries.

This shrubby tree is a member of the Bean Family (Fabaceae) along with native woody cousins Mesquite, Ebony, Huisache & Retama. It formerly was classified in genus *Acacia* with older literature referring to it by scientific names *Acacia amentacea* & *Acacia rigidula*.

**See Blackbrush Acacia along the Brennecke Nature Trail, with large populations near the Palapa Grande & behind the Arid Garden.**



## BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of February 19, 2023)

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### CRYSTAL PALACE LOBELIA (*Lobelia erinus* 'Crystal Palace')

Lobelia grows to 6" tall & 12" wide, making it a great short-term groundcover. Delicate dark green leaves have a burgundy tint, with stalks of tiny brilliant blue-violet flowers emerging above giving a show for months without removing old blossoms! Pictures don't do this color justice! This cool-season annual typically is seen in Coastal Bend landscapes November through May. It's more common in northern U.S. & Canada where it grows throughout summer. As temperatures rise, this plant starts to thin; but more heat-tolerant varieties are being developed in the Proven Winners program.



Lobelia is in the Bellflower (Campanulaceae) Family. The leaves, stems & flowers reportedly are used to make medicine, with some herbal remedies claiming benefits combatting asthma, bronchitis, whooping cough & assistance in smoking cessation. However, insufficient scientific evidence supports these claims. Lobelia may be unsafe if ingested, so do not grow it for home remedy use.

**See Lobelia in multiple flower beds between the Visitor Center & Orchid Conservatory. You also may find it as supplemental plantings in pots with larger tropicals, & in mixed floral planters.**

### PINK EVENING PRIMROSE (*Oenothera speciosa*)

Pink Evening Primrose, a low-growing sprawling native wildflower, is found in abundance throughout much of Texas. They are native to grasslands from Northern Mexico up through Texas, Oklahoma, Missouri & Nebraska.

Individual light pink 4-petaled flowers about 1.5" across create a cuplike appearance with distinctive pink veins, white centers & vibrant yellow stamen emerging from the center. Colors may range from darker pink to white. Simple leaves can be harvested for use as salad greens, but best flavor occurs with young plants before flowering. Seed capsules attract birds, especially finches.



Each flower lasts just 1 day, but plants consistently bloom February through July, one of the first wildflowers in bloom this spring before verbenas, pimpernel, dandelions & of course bluebonnets!

It goes by multiple common names including Pink Ladies, Showy Evening Primrose, Mexican Primrose, Amapola & even Buttercups due to their yellow centers. Despite the common name, southern populations of this flower open in the morning & close at night. However, plants in northern regions open in evening & close in morning creating a lot of confusion around a good common name.

**See early flowering Pink Evening Primrose along native grassy areas, particularly between the Play Area & Arid Garden.**

## BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of February 12, 2023)

Expanding its horticulture, environmental education and conservation mission, **BLOOMING IN THE BOTANICAL GARDENS**, each week spotlights a featured tropical and native plant—to enjoy on a visit this week, try in your landscape, or simply increase your horticultural knowledge!

### JEWEL ORCHID (*Ludisia discolor*)

Jewel orchid (*Ludisia discolor*) is unusual because it is terrestrial, growing naturally on forest floors of Southeast Asia instead of on trees like many other more common Cattleyas & Phalaenopsis. Jewel orchids are easy to grow, preferring well-drained soil with a mixture of orchid bark, peat moss & perlite. They also like indirect light, so home orchid growers can utilize shady spots.

This orchid has a cascading nature, but plants rarely grow beyond 12" high or wide because the fragile pseudo-bulbs of this species easily break off if mis-handled. Jewel orchids are best known for their velvet-like dark maroon leaves highlighted by thin pink veins producing an elegant pinstripe effect. Flower stalks 4-6" long tower above sprawling foliage in winter. Each stalk sports tiny white flowers less than .5" across with a distinctive yellow throat, contrasting nicely with the dark velvety foliage resembling velvet lining of a jewelry box.



**See multiple examples of this unusual orchid in bloom in the Samuel Jones Orchid Conservatory.**

### YELLOW GROUND SORREL (*Oxalis stricta*)

You might know this plant as the weed-labeled common clover; but to those who appreciate native plants it is Yellow Wood-Sorrel or False Shamrocks. It is classified as either an annual or weak perennial with stems that are erect to creeping, sometimes even forming a mat.

While many gardeners hate this plant creeping into their beds, coming back year after year due to the small underground bulb, if embraced as a low groundcover, it provides a mat of greenery under the edge of shrubs and plants all winter long and small yellow flowers for winter butterflies when very few plants are blooming. Small flowers about .5" across have 5 yellow petals. If pollinated, the capsule-shaped fruit are covered with fine white or gray hairs. It also has a traditional clover leaf, each palmately compound with 3 heart-shaped leaflets, providing an appropriate groundcover in bloom for March St. Patrick's Day, different from true clovers with 3 oval-shaped leaflets.



The plant is edible, so consider tossing it into a salad instead of the compost bin if you want to try a sustainable salad option. Some foragers say it has a bright, citrusy flavor, while others consider it a bit sour possibly similar to rhubarb. Just rinse it well before ingesting; but don't eat it if you use pesticides in that area.

**See Yellow Ground Sorrel in Butterfly Garden, Sensory Garden and likely other beds if you look closely.**



## BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of February 5, 2023)

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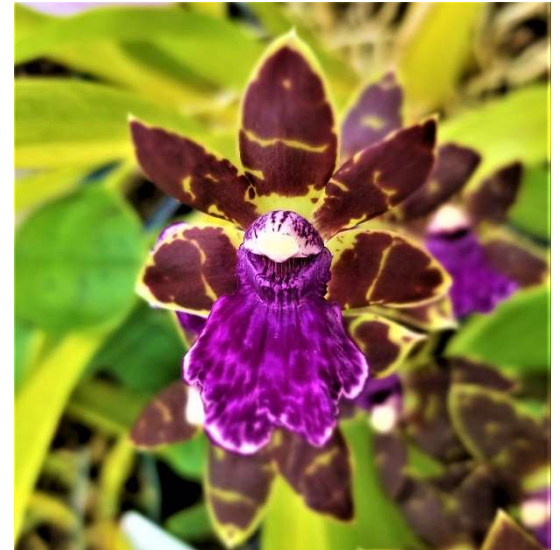
### ADVANCE AUSTRALIA ZYGOCLONE ORCHID

(*Zygopetalum*) Advance Australia HOF AM/AOS

This compact orchid is a vigorously growing hybrid of Zygo Titanic & Zygo Helen-Ku, producing fragrant flowers reminiscent of hyacinth but with sweeter overtones. It is considered “free-flowering” often blooming twice annually with 2-3” flowers lasting up to 3 months.

Each stalk has 4-5 blooms. Blossoms have primarily a deep purple/maroon marbled look with light green mixed in the rear sepals & petals with a purple/white forward lip.

This orchid prefers cool to intermediate temperatures performing well in South Texas winters. It thrives in medium light liking a little more moisture than other species.



**See a nice specimen blooming in the Samuel Jones Orchid Conservatory’s rear greenhouse.**

### RED MULBERRY (*Morus rubra* Moraceae) (Mulberry Family)

Red Mulberry, a native fruit tree, is found in the eastern two-thirds of Texas east to Florida & up into Ontario! This deciduous tree already has started producing new leaf growth & flowers. The native Red Mulberry is often confused with its Asian cousin, White Mulberry since both have heart-shaped green leaves. However, leaves of the red form are coarse while the white is glossy green at maturity.

Tiny white flowers, appearing early spring on 1-2” long stems called peduncles, create a multiple fruit we eat as a single mulberry, but is really a combination of many tiny berries, one from each fertilized flower.

Red mulberry fruit begin as pink, turning dark red/purple at maturity, while fruit on its white cousin start as light green. Conflicting information suggests unripe fruit may or may not have toxic compounds; so it’s best to wait until ripe as chemical changes occur during the ripening process making them more flavorful & definitely safe to eat.



Fruit sustain birds & mammals in wooded areas. Red Mulberry is the larval host of *Nymphalis antiopa* “Mourning Cloak” butterflies with leaves sustaining the caterpillars of these butterflies.

**See our most notable mulberry on the edge of the berm between Rose Garden & Plumeria Garden, near the parking area fence.**

## BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of January 29, 2023)

Expanding its horticulture, environmental education and conservation mission, **BLOOMING IN THE BOTANICAL GARDENS**, each week spotlights a featured tropical and native plant—to enjoy on a visit this week, try in your landscape, or simply increase your horticultural knowledge!

### 'PINK LADY' LADY SLIPPER ORCHID (*Paphiopedilum* Elim X 'Pink Lady')

This week, we are featuring hybrid *Paphiopedilum* Elim X 'Pink Lady', known for its elongated pinkish white petals with purple striped pink-purple slipper pouch, introduced in 2013 as a cross between *Paphiopedilum* Ho Chi Minh × *Paphiopedilum* Lady Isabel.



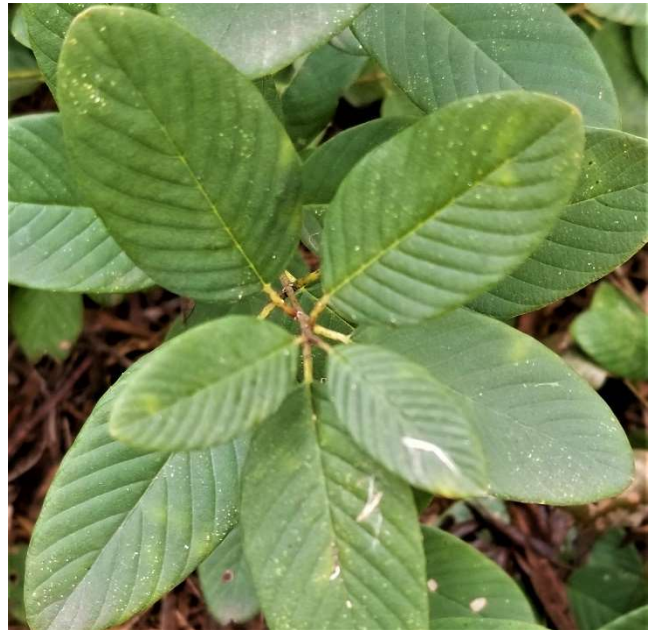
*Paphiopedilum* orchids, commonly called "lady slipper orchids," have a unique pouch on the tongue petal with flowers soaring on a stalk above the vegetative plant. Dark green, often speckled strap-like leaves provide more attractive foliage than many other orchid genera.

*Paphiopedilums*, native to South East Asia, are more terrestrial than many other genera, therefore preferring more moisture than other orchid varieties. They are low-light orchids which the American Orchid Society considers well-adapted as a houseplant, treated similarly to African violets.

***Paphiopedilum* varieties now are in bloom in the Samuel Jones Orchid Conservatory.**

### COYOTILLO (*Karwinskia Humboldtiana* Rhamnaceae) (Buckthorn Family)

Coyotillo (a.k.a. Humboldt's Coyotillo, or Tullidora in Spanish) is a small thornless evergreen shrub identified by simple oval green leaves with distinctive underside ribbing. Although not in bloom this month, this usually unnoticed plant is visible now in native brushlands due to its evergreen nature, holding leaves when many other larger brush line plants are leafless. It grows 3-6' tall & 3-4' wide. This member of the Buckthorn Family (Rhamnaceae) can be found growing along arroyos, canyons, hills, ridges, prairies, pasturelands & savannahs from arid South Texas regions into Mexico, west to southern California.



This plant has insignificant greenish white flowers near the base of leaves in summer & fall that can produce a small dark red, brown or black berry technically called a drupe. The seeds in the fruit are poisonous to humans & livestock, causing paralysis of limbs due to nervous system damage, but also can affect lung & kidney function. However, some indigenous wildlife, like coyotes & chachalacas, do eat the fruit.

**See a few coyotillo specimens on the Brennecke Nature Trail & Oso Loop Trail.**



## BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of January 22, 2023)

Expanding its horticulture, environmental education and conservation mission, **BLOOMING IN THE BOTANICAL GARDENS**, each week spotlights a featured tropical and native plant—to enjoy on a visit this week, try in your landscape, or simply increase your horticultural knowledge!

### CORAL ALOE HYBRID (*Aloe X hybrida*)

Coral Aloe Hybrid, native to Southern Africa, sometimes is sold as *Aloe striata*; but the true *A. striata* has smooth-edged or spineless leaves. This form is a cross between *Aloe striata* (True Coral Aloe) & *Aloe maculata* (Soap Aloe). Plants form clusters with fewer, softer marginal leaf spines than many other aloes.

Like other aloes, its leaves are succulent, filled with gelatinous material. Leaves can grow 10-16" long & 3-4" wide with soft edge spines & gray-green leaves lacking significant spotting, another identifying characteristic. Plants are 12-18" tall & frequent off-shooting can produce clusters of attractive rosette plants.

Narrow coral tubular flowers roughly an inch-long appear in winter months on stalks 18-24" above the leaf rosette. Flower stalks provide a striking display of winter color as this plant is photoperiod & blooms when plants are exposed to long, uninterrupted dark nights. Coral Aloe Hybrid surprisingly flowered even after December's drop into the low 20's, making it one of the more resilient aloe varieties!



**See a large cluster of Coral Aloe hybrids currently blooming in the Arid Garden!**

### FALSE BROOMWEED (*Gutierrezia sarothrae* Asteraceae)

False Broomweed, part of the Sunflower Family (Asteraceae), is a common short-lived perennial wildflower in South Texas scrub-brush chaparral. It naturally occurs in arid regions from South Texas to Southern California & Mexico north to Idaho. It has a number of common names including Perennial Broomweed & Broom Snakeweed, and considered toxic to grazing livestock if ingesting significant quantities.

Unlike single-stalked annual broomweed, this perennial form has multiple sprawling branches 6-24" long emerging from a woody base. Narrow, threadlike leaves produce a lacy effect for this short bush. Small pale yellow to white flowers are clustered at branch tops mainly from June to December. Usually going dormant in cooler weather, this warm January has False Broomweed budding out early with a sprinkling of flowers!



**See Perennial Broomweed along the Mary Hope Brennecke Nature Trail.**

## BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of January 15, 2023)

Expanding its horticulture, environmental education and conservation mission, **BLOOMING IN THE BOTANICAL GARDENS**, each week spotlights a featured tropical and native plant—to enjoy on a visit this week, try in your landscape, or simply increase your horticultural knowledge!

### MONA LAVENDER PLECTRANTHUS

(*Plectranthus X hybrida* 'Mona Lavender')

Mona Lavender Plectranthus is a hybrid developed at Kirstenbosch Botanical Garden, Cape Town, by crossing 2 South African perennials. Stoep Spurflower (*Plectranthus saccatus*) provided very large lavender blooms, while Candle Plant (*Plectranthus hilliardiae*) is known for dark green leaves with purple backs. The resulting is a favorite in garden centers!

Light lavender half-inch tubular flowers with darker purple speckles appear on 4-6" stalks. Plants grow 10-14" tall, have hairy dark green leaves with dark purple undersides--an attractive backdrop for flowers along with foliage color when blooms are not present. It is usually used as a container plant, but also can be planted in an annual bed. They are freeze sensitive however, so use them as short-term color, similar to coleus.



Plectranthus are in the Mint Family (Lamiaceae) with a variety of mints, along with salvias, coleus & many culinary herbs. The name "Plectranthus" comes from Greek words "plectron," meaning spur, & "anthos," meaning flower. 'Mona Lavender' has a spur at the base of the blossom like other members of this genus including popular Swedish Ivy (*Plectranthus australis*).

**See Mona Lavender hanging baskets now blooming in the Butterfly House.**

### BLACKFOOT DAISY (*Melampodium leucanthum*)

Blackfoot Daisy is a low-growing native wildflower thriving in calcareous soils from Oklahoma & Colorado to Mexico & west into Arizona. This member of the Aster/Sunflower Family, Asteraceae, is also called Rock Daisy, Plains Blackfoot, or Arnica in other regions.

Blackfoot daisy closely resembles the White Desert Zinnia (*Zinnia acerosa*) or white classic zinnia (*Zinnia angustifolius*). It has 8-13 ray petals with toothed terminal edges surrounding a yellow center disc, while the zinnias have fewer petals. Solitary flowers are about 1" inch across & may have a slight honey scent. Plants grow as small mounds 6-12" tall with narrow linear green leaves about an inch long. Plants are commonly used for color in arid gardens & require good drainage & sunshine to thrive.



**Blackfoot Daisy now is blooming in the Butterfly Garden & Butterfly House.**



## BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of January 8, 2023)

Expanding its horticulture, environmental education and conservation mission, **BLOOMING IN THE BOTANICAL GARDENS**, each week spotlights a featured tropical and native plant—to enjoy on a visit this week, try in your landscape, or simply increase your horticultural knowledge!

### **GUARIANTHE HAIL STORM ORCHID** (*Guarianthe* Hail Storm)

(formerly *Cattleya* Hail Storm)

This orchid hybrid, formerly known as genus *Cattleya* is now classified as *Guarianthe*, along with its parentage, *Guarianthe bowringiana* × *Guarianthe skinneri*. Considered a primary hybrid it is a cross between 2 species in 1961 by Mrs. A. Ainsworth.

*Guarianthe* Hail Storm is a consistent, heavy bloomer like *G. bowringiana* (a.k.a. Autumn Pixie) known for clusters of light purple flowers each fall; with the other parent, *G. skinneri* providing striking white in the lip petal. This plant commonly produces clusters of 5-7 blossoms on each flower spike & multiple spikes per pot offering an impressive floral display when blooming. Each individual flower is 2-2.5" across, but clusters often span 8" or more!



**See Guarianthe Hail Storm in Samuel Jones Orchid Conservatory. Though fall is prime bloom season for many *Cattleyas* in our region, many are still in bloom, for a worthwhile photo visit!**

### **DRUMMOND'S PINK MINT** (*Stachys drummondii*)

Pink Mint or Drummond's Hedge-nettle, is found only in Texas according to Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center. It was named after noted Scottish naturalist Thomas Drummond who identified & collected plant samples in the Southwest U.S. & Northern Mexico in the 1830s, collecting more than 750 plant samples, & identifying more than 150 birds!

Despite recent freezing weather, Pink Mint already is back in bloom, consistently one of the first wildflowers to bloom even before spring weather returns! A member of the Mint Family (Lamiaceae) along with many common culinary herbs & salvia, this variety produces multiple flower stalks featuring small lavender-pink tubular blossoms with white throats & lavender speckles, resembling many of the tubular flowers in genus *Salvia*. At a distance, plants appear to be short mounds of light green foliage with lavender/pink flowers. Closer inspection shows simple, alternate oval-heart-shaped leaves 1-2" long with slight edge serrations.



This annual only grows in cooler temperatures, providing an important nectar source for winter hummingbirds & butterflies, dying out with summer heat, returning each November from seeds. After bloom which can linger through May, allow flowers to die back, and leave on plant to produce next-year's seeds.

**See Pink Mint is most prominently in Butterfly Garden, Butterfly Hill & Hummingbird Gardens; but also naturally occurring in smaller populations in other gardens & sunny spots along the Brennecke Nature Trail & other natural areas.**

## BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of January 1, 2023)

Expanding its horticulture, environmental education and conservation mission, **BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS**, each week spotlights a featured tropical and native plant—to enjoy on a visit this week, or try in your landscape!

### CATTLEYA IRENE'S SONG MONTCLAIR

(*Laeliocattleya* 'Irene's Song Montclair')

This orchid hybrid originated in 1999 by Norman's Orchids as a cross between *C. Mari's Song* and *C. Irene Finley*. This plant produces 1 or 2 striking blossoms 3.5-4" across on each new pseudobulb. Rear sepals are lavender, but larger forward petals are a lavender & white combination with dark purple near the fancy ruffled tips. The lip is primarily a golden yellow but trimmed along the edge with white & a touch of dark purple!

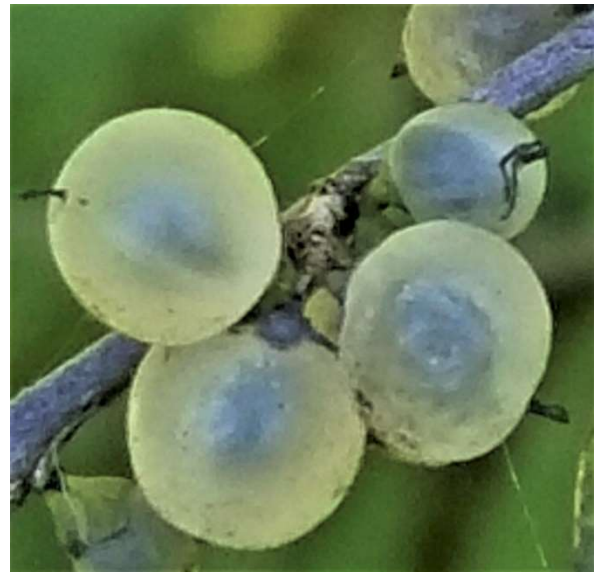


**See Irene's Song Montclair in the Samuel Jones Orchid Conservatory. Although fall is prime bloom time for many *Cattleya* in our region, many beautiful orchids still are blooming making a visit rewarding.**

### SNAKE EYES (*Phaulothamnus spinescens*)

The dense native shrub Snake Eyes can grow 6-12' tall but has no apparent thorns; only sharp, pointed branch tips to protect it from browsing animals. It has .75-1" long simple smooth or slightly fuzzy gray-green leaves.

This dioecious plant is unlike most in that it has male & female flowers on different plants. Tiny yellow flowers which usually go unnoticed appear April-October. Pollinated female flowers form translucent white fruit with visible black seeds which resemble tiny eyeballs, resulting in the common name Snake Eyes or *Ojo de Vibora* in Spanish. Other regional names may include Putea or Devil Queen. A female plant may have hundreds of individual berries scattered on branches. It can produce multiple times annually.



This dense native shrub is actually a member of the Pokeweed Family (Phytolaccaceae) according to the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center making it kin to American Pokeweed (*Phytolacca americana*) & Pigeonberry (*Rivina humilis*). The Wildflower Center notes its native habitat from southern Texas & along the northern Mexico border to Baja, California, including provinces of Tamaulipas, Nueva Leon & Sonora. Unfortunately, it's rarely seen at retail nurseries.

**See the current crop of "snake eyes" visible on plants along the Brennecke Nature Trail, having survived the recent freeze.**