



“Blooming in the Gardens”

LIBRARY

2023



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)

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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)

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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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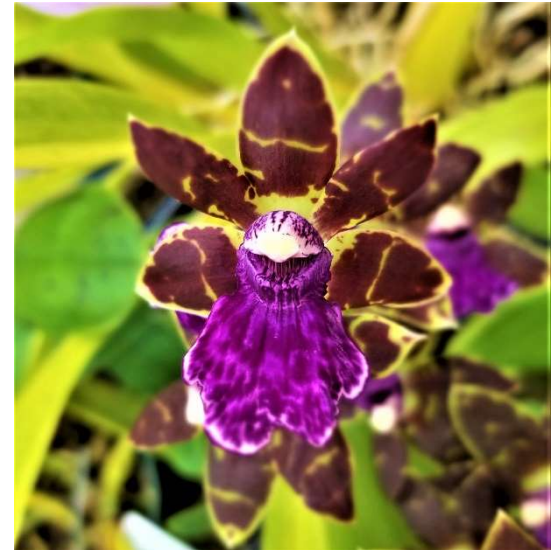
ADVANCE AUSTRALIA ZYGOCLONE ORCHID

(*Zygopetalum*) Advance Australia HOF AM/AOS

This compact orchid is a vigorously growing hybrid of Zymo Titanic & Zymo 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)

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'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)

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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!

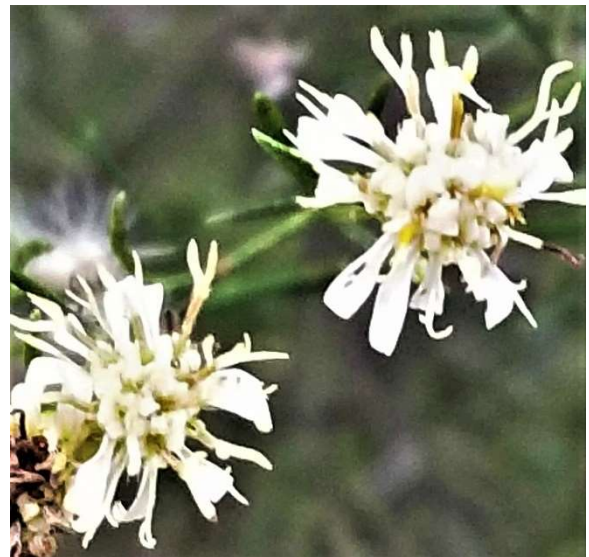


See a large cluster of Coral Aloe hybrids currently blooming in the Arid Garden!

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)

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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)

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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)

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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!

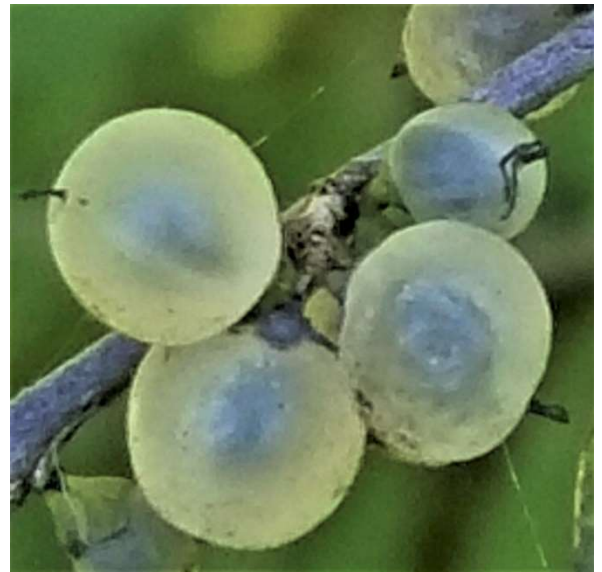


See Irene's Song Montclair in the Samuel Jones Orchid Conservatory. Although fall is prime bloom time for many *Cattleya* in our region, many beautiful orchids still are blooming making a visit rewarding.

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.