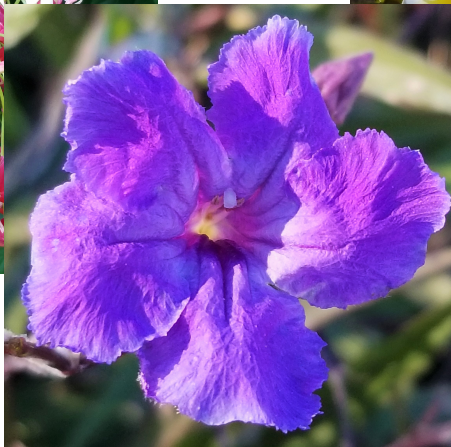
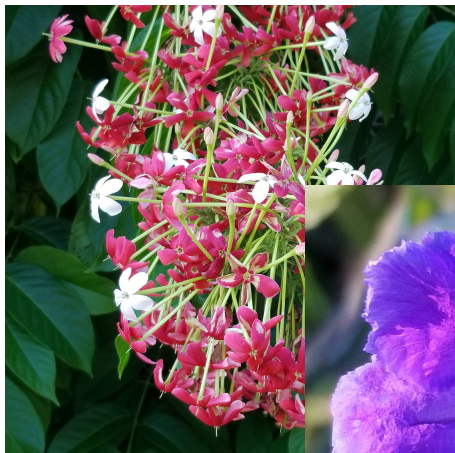




# “Blooming in the Gardens” LIBRARY 2024



## BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of Dec 29, 2024)

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!

### FIRECRACKER PLANT

(*Russelia equisetiformis*)

If you're distraught over fireworks & burn bans due to drought, get your fireworks from your landscape. Firecracker Plant is a landscape superstar! While often associated with July bloom, this plant flowers nearly year-round. Blossoming branches can be cut & used as filler flowers or greenery in holiday floral designs.

Its clusters of tubular inch-long blossoms look like small firecrackers burst open on 1 end. They often cover the weeping bright green branches that have few true leaves. Firecracker Plant works well potted or in the ground, thriving in full sun or partial shade. Mature landscape forms produce stems 3-5' in the air. Severe annual pruning in early spring helps clean out dead branches & keeps plants shorter.



This adapted plant grows in a wide range of conditions. It's an excellent hummingbird plant, blooming from spring migration through summer past fall hummer migration. A larval plant for Common Buckeye butterfly, expect caterpillars to periodically feed on the leaves.

**Notice the hedge of firecracker plant as you enter the botanical gardens with additional plants in Hummingbird Garden, Butterfly Hill and Butterfly House.**

### BLACKFOOT DAISY

(*Melampodium leucanthum*)

Blackfoot Daisy is a low-growing native wildflower often found in calcareous soils from Oklahoma & Colorado south into Mexico & west into Arizona. Blackfoot Daisy has a solitary flower about 1" across with 8-13 ray petals & toothed terminal edges surrounding a yellow center disc, with a slight honey scent. It resembles White Desert Zinnia (*Zinnia acerosa*) or white classic zinnia (*Zinnia angustifolius*) which have fewer petals. This member of the Aster/Sunflower Family, Asteraceae is called Rock Daisy, Plains Blackfoot or Arnica in other regions.

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 with high heat tolerance & low water requirements able to thrive in full sun. They do require good drainage. They are important nectar sources for bees & butterflies in dry regions.



**Find Blackfoot Daisy blooming in raised beds of the Earthkind Garden, in Butterfly Garden & Butterfly House.**

## BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of Dec 22, 2024)

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### PAINTED LADY HIBISCUS

(*Hibiscus rosa-sinensis* 'Painted Lady')

Painted Lady, an outstanding exotic hibiscus variety, definitely turns heads of guests **in our Tropical Garden!** Our unusually warm weather has many of our tropical hibiscus varieties still in bloom, especially single varieties. 'Painted Lady' blossoms have 5 hot pink petals with white & dark pink/red markings in the throat. Like other hibiscus, prominent fused pistil & stamen emerge from the center of these showy flowers typically about 4" across.

Like other hibiscus, Painted Lady can grow 3-6' tall, preferring full sun & good drainage maximizing summer flowers. Hibiscus do best if cut back in early spring with organic fertilizers added to promote new growth & more flowers later in the season.



### MEXICAN BUSH SAGE 'SANTA BARBARA'

(*Salvia leucantha* 'Santa Barbara')

Mexican Bush Sage is considered a South Texas native although primarily indigenous to Mexico. The traditional form has velvety purple flower stalks with white tubular flowers emerging starting at the bottom. The plant has long narrow gray-green leaves & grows to about 3' tall, but flower spikes sometimes extend another 12" higher late in the season. This salvia blooms several months as new buds form opening over time. As flower spikes mature, an number of dead flowers may require removal of elongated stalks, with 'deadheading' promoting new flower spikes. One 'nativar'—a cultivated native variety—of Mexican Bush Sage is **Santa Barbara** which has both purple velvety flower stalks & emerging flowers.



Mexican Bush Sage prefers full sun for maximum bloom, but can grow in partial shade, possibly a little leggy at times. This true perennial needs to be cut back each spring to keep it compact & full. Vigorous summer growth may require light pruning prior to fall hummingbird migration to encourage a new flush of flowers.

Mexican Bush Sage varieties are available in most nurseries, one of the most popular "native plants" due to its drought tolerance coupled with consistent growth & performance in hot, sunny Texas landscapes.

**See 'Santa Barbara' Mexican Bush Sage, both a hummingbird & butterfly attractor, currently in full bloom in the Earthkind Demonstration Garden along with other Texas A&M Agrilife Texas Superstars.®**

## BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of Dec 15, 2024)

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!

### RLC. GEORGE KING 'SERENDIPITY' HYBRID ORCHID

(*Rhyncholaeliocattleya* George King 'Serendipity') George King 'Serendipity' is considered a "must have" hybrid orchid with large salmon-pink blooms 5" across, a yellow throat & touch of purple on the lip. This hybrid has 1-3 large blossoms at a time on a 12-18" tall pseudobulb. But size, shape & color of the blossom definitely makes up for the smaller number. Flowers open a soft pink, over the first few days progressing toward salmon or apricot-peach. It also has a light, sweet citrus fragrance to gain attention. 'Serendipity' is a cross between Rlc. Buttercup x Cattleya Bob Betts, & was registered by G.A. King in 1970.



FACTOID: *Rhyncholaeliocattleya*, abbreviated Rlc. in the horticultural trade, is the orchid nothogenus for intergeneric hybrid greges containing at least one ancestor species from each of the two ancestral genera *Rhyncholaelia* Schltr. & *Cattleya* Lindl., & from no other genera.

**See George King 'Serendipity', usually a winter bloomer, in the Samuel Jones Orchid Conservatory along with other Cattleya blooming hybrids.**

### WHITE TURK'S CAP (*Malvaviscus aroreus* var. *drummondii*)

Turk's Cap is one of the best-known Texas natives in the Cotton/Hibiscus family (Malvaceae). Usually red, it comes in other colors, white being newest. While red Turk's Cap naturally grows throughout much of South Texas, white is rarely seen in natural settings. The white flower gene is most likely recessive.

Like its red counterpart, white Turk's Cap has flowers 1-2" long emerging from branch tips, but petals never fully unfurl appearing like rolled paper. Yellow pollen on fused stamen & pistil are seen protruding past the petals. Pollinated flowers produce 1" round green fruit eventually turning red when ripe. Turk's Cap is an understory plant frequently found in light shade, but it can grow in full sun, reaching 3-5' tall & about 3 feet wide. Growing best in well drained soils, organic matter helps it adapt to poorer soils. It is an excellent wildlife food source, providing nectar for hummingbirds, butterflies, moths & other insects. The fruit are also eaten by mammals including humans. It reportedly has a faint apple taste, can be eaten cooked or raw according the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center ([www.wildflower.org](http://www.wildflower.org)).



Named a Texas Superstar Plant by Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service for its successful survival throughout the state, it has a wide range of common names including Drummond Turk's Cap, Drummond's Wax Mallow, Red Mallow, Texas Mallow, Mexican Apple, Sleeping Hibiscus, Bleeding Hearts. A Spanish name is Manzanita which means "little apple," referring to its small fruit.

**See White Turk's Cap in the Butterfly Garden by the bridge leading to the Samuel Jones Orchid Conservatory.**

## BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of Dec 8, 2024)

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### POINSETTIA (*Euphorbia pulcherrima*)

Poinsettias are native to Southern Mexico & Central America, where naturally occurring plants may reach 10' tall. But plant breeding & use of plant growth regulators have reduced sizes of plants in commercial outlets. Poinsettias can be planted in the ground in the Coastal Bend if protected from cold weather, wind and night lighting in fall.

The actual poinsettia flower are tiny yellow centers called *cyathia*. The colorful bracts we consider blooms are actually colorful leaves which attract pollinators to the small flower. Bracts change from green to colors in late fall & winter due to extended, uninterrupted nights. But most horticulturists simply call them "short-day" plants since they naturally bloom in winter in the Northern hemisphere when days are short & necessary dark periods are long.



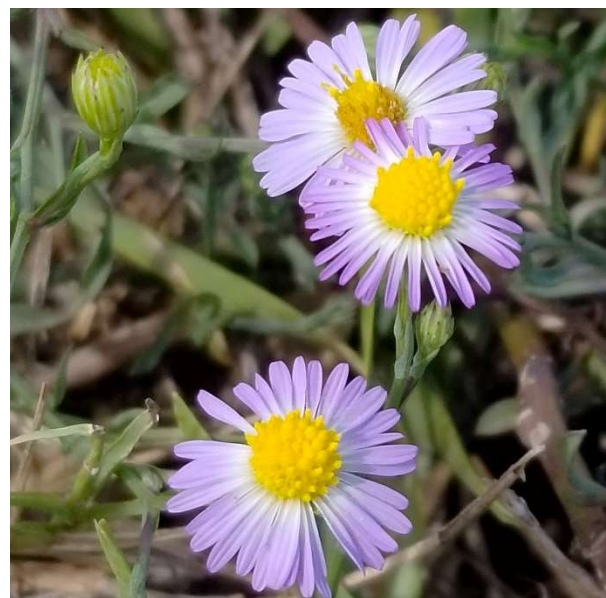
Poinsettias are members of the spurge or euphorbia family (Euphorbiaceae) & in the same genus (Euphorbia) as familiar succulents pencil cactus & crown of thorns. Euphorbias have a milky white latex sap that is an irritant to skin & eyes.

**Be sure to see traditional red poinsettias in the poinsettia tree in the Anderson Bromeliad Conservatory, thanks to our friends at H-E-B. But don't miss more than 100 others including red, white, pink, bicolor yellow-pink marbled, & red with white speckles among bromeliads.**

### PRAIRIE ASTER (*Aster subulatus*)

Prairie Aster, a.k.a. Hierba Del Marrano in Mexico, an annual flower, can be overlooked in mowed lawns & fields where it becomes a 2-4" plant with small daisy-shaped pale lavender petals fading to nearly white. When left unpruned by mowers, it can mature 3-4' tall. Mowed or not, this plant is a survivor through harsh conditions including drought due to a deep taproot.

Prairie Aster grows in swales, ditches & other poorly-drained areas in our Coastal Prairies & Rio Grande Plains. Cattle & white-tail deer browse on simple, narrow leaves keeping it shorter in fields even unmowed. Butterflies nectar in winter on small daisy-like flowers about .75" across with pale lavender petals & yellow center which are abundant in late fall, winter & early spring. After blooming, a dandelion-type seed head appears which disperses in the wind.



**See Prairie Aster in mowed areas around the EarthKind Demonstration Garden & between the play area & Arid Garden. Larger specimens are blooming along the Brennecke Nature Trail and on Butterfly Hill behind the Sensory Garden.**

## BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of Dec 1, 2024)

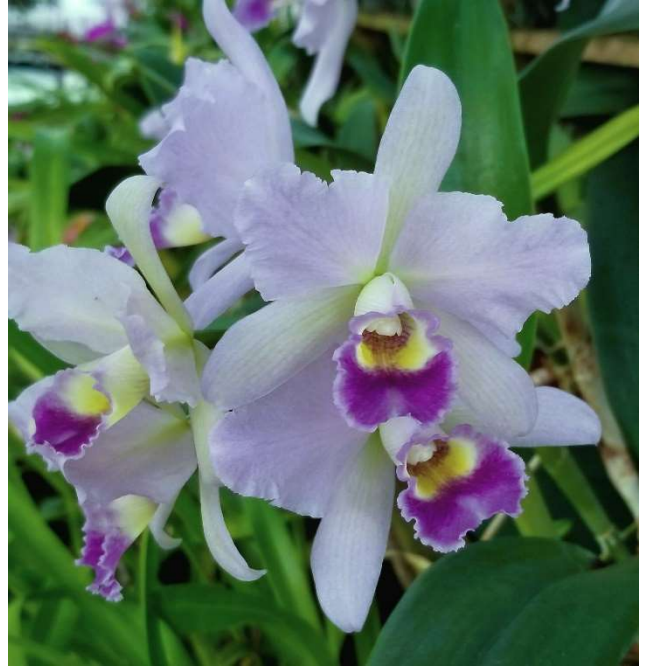
Expanding its horticulture, environmental education and conservation mission, **BLOOMING IN THE BOTANICAL GARDENS**, each week spotlights a featured tropical and native plant—to enjoy on a visit this week, try in your landscape, or simply increase your horticultural knowledge!

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

*Cattlianthe* 'Blue Boy' is a consistent Coastal Bend winter blooming orchid with clusters of 4-7 pale blue/lavender blossoms about 3" wide, and sepals with a darker bluish-purple on the protruding "lip" petal, a yellow & white throat with dark purple speckles. Colors appear a truer blue color in person than in photos. Flowers can last a month in cooler conditions.

Registered in 1960 by Bracey, this hybrid was a cross of *Cattlianthe* Ariel × *Cattleya* Elegans (1879), with several variations developed in the past 60 years.

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

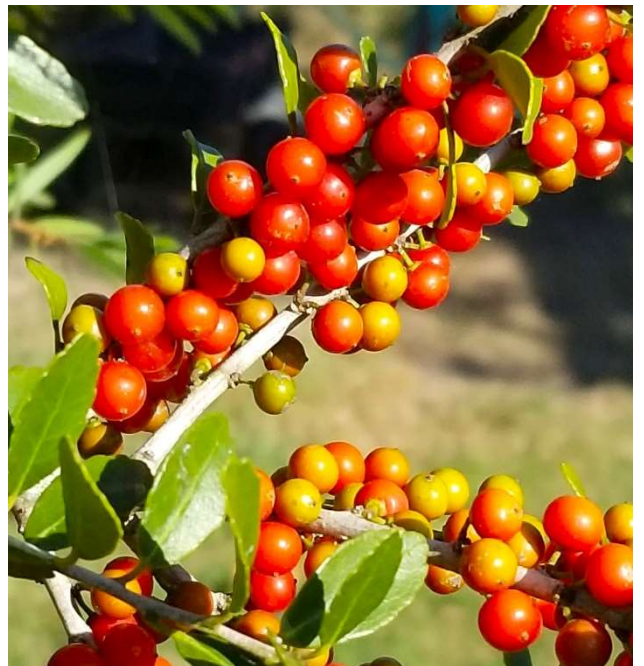


### YAUPON HOLLY (*Ilex vomitoria*)

Yaupon Holly is a native Texas member of the holly family (Aquifoliaceae). Unlike the traditional Chinese Holly (*Ilex cornuta*) which has multi-pointed leaves we often associate with Christmas, this native is evergreen retaining dark green, simple round leaves about 1-2" long with slightly rounded edge serrations. Leaves may grow larger with more rainfall reportedly reaching 2-4".

Yaupon Holly has male & female plants. The females produce inconspicuous flowers in fall which become individual berries along the branches maturing to a bright red. Berries are most common in winter months, a significant food source for overwintering songbirds.

It naturally is found in much of East & South Texas including Pineywoods, Gulf Prairies & Marshes, Post Oak Savannah, Blackland Prairies, Edwards Plateau & South Texas Plains. Unfortunately, many natural stands in the Coastal Bend have been choked out by invasive species like Brazilian Pepper (*Schinus terebinthifolia*), or cleared during construction.



While we don't have any natural stands of yaupon at the Botanical Gardens, we do have several specimens planted near the Monkey Mansion Playground.

## BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of Nov 24, 2024)

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### BRAZILIAN BUTTON FLOWER

(*Centratherum punctatum*)

Brazilian Button Flower, a fast-growing tender perennial, has become a staple nectar plant in butterfly gardens. Plants grow 18-24" tall spreading 2-4'. Leaves are elliptical, coarsely-toothed, medium green contrasting with 1" bluish-purple flowers appearing at branch tips. The blossom looks like a flattened globe with lots of tiny petals making it appear prickly, resulting in the name porcupine flower in some regions. In fact, the genus name (*Centratherum*) comes from the Greek *kentron* meaning a spur & *antheros* meaning barb or spine, both describing appearance of the flower. It is a member of the Aster/Sunflower Family (*Asteraceae*). Plants flower late spring through fall in our area. It readily reseeds, so may appear in unexpected places. If unchecked, it may become a nuisance in warm climates.



Originally described as native to the Philippines & Australia, it's now recognized as the same plant found in Central America & Columbia where it's also known as *Manaus Beauty*, named after the capital of the Brazilian state, Amazonas. It is commonly called Brazilian Batchelor Buttons, Lark Daisy & Porcupine Flower in other regions.

**See Brazilian Button Flower in both Butterfly & Hummingbird Gardens.**

### CHILE PEQUIN (*Capiscum annuum*)

Chile Pequin is a native hot pepper naturally found on the Eastern U.S. seaboard from Maryland to Florida, west to Arizona & Utah and south into Central America. Compact plants grow 1-3' tall with 1" spade-shape bright green leaves. Plants typically remain evergreen in our area due to mild winter temperatures, but are deciduous in colder locations, going dormant & dropping leaves. Chili Pequin prefers moist soil but can survive drier conditions once established. It grows in a wide range of soils, including clay, sand, loams & caliche mixes, but good drainage is critical.



Plant forms individual tiny flowers less than 1" wide, which after pollinated form the .5" round or slightly elongated edible peppers that turn red when mature. Fruit is very hot with high concentrations of capsaicinoid, the pharmacologically active compound that give hot peppers their spice. Chile Pequin has a rating of 30,000 to 50,000 Scoville Units, making them 5-8 times hotter than jalapenos. You don't have to ingest them to experience the burn, so wash hands thoroughly after picking & avoid rubbing eyes to prevent severe burning or irritation.

It is a critical fall/winter food source for birds including wild turkeys which digest the hot fruit and deposit seeds to nearby locations leading to alternative common names of Turkey Pepper or Bird Pepper along the East Coast.

**See Chile Pequin on Butterfly Hill behind the Sensory Garden, & along the Mary Hope Brennecke Nature Trail.**

## BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of Nov 10, 2024)

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### BLUE BUTTERFLY BUSH

(*Clerodendrum ugandense*)

While it doesn't attract butterflies, Butterfly Bush's dainty blue & white flowers, about an inch across, resemble them. Petal arrangement resembles butterfly wings. Extended stamen looks like antennae. They display a true light blue color unlike many plants which are often more violet-blue.

This shrubby tropical will grow up to 10' tall & 5-6' wide. A Zone 8 plant, it's a tropical shrub & freezes back in extreme cold, but is root hardy to at least 20°F.

Blue Butterfly Bush is a member of the Mint Family (Lamiaceae) along with coleus, sages & many herbs. Native to tropical regions of East Africa, particularly Kenya & Uganda, it grows best in full sun or partial shade requiring well-drained soils. It's a close cousin of other clerodendrum species like Bleeding Heart Vine (*Clerodendrum thomsoniae*) & Pagoda Plant (*C. paniculatum*).



**See Blue Butterfly Bush in the Sensory Garden.**

### CAMPHOR DAISY (*Rayjacksonia phyllocephala*)

Camphor Daisy, bright yellow daisy-shaped flowers with yellow centers about 1" across, bloom much of the year, but particularly September-December. Pollinated flowers produce a small white fruit containing a single seed with hair-like extensions similar to a dandelion seed, which helps it disperse to nearby areas. Camphor Daisy appears either upright or somewhat sprawling, growing 12-24" tall. Recognized by its light-medium green, serrated leaves which may become more succulent as they age, both stems & leaves appear to be hairy. Crushed leaves produce a camphor scent.

An emergent annual wildflower, it commonly is found in poor soil areas along with its cousin, Sea Ox-Eye Daisy (*Borrchia frutescens*). It grows along sand dunes, wet salt flats, in pinelands & dry fields in Texas, Louisiana, Florida and Colorado. Sometimes called Golden Aster, it's a member of the Aster/Sunflower Family, Asteraceae.



**See Camphor Daisy blooming at the edge of wetland areas along the Mary Hope Brennecke Nature Trail.**



## BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of Nov 10, 2024)

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### CONFEDERATE ROSE (*Hibiscus mutabilis*)

Confederate Rose (*Hibiscus mutabilis*) is a cold-hardy, semi-woody flowering perennial plant known for its large, semi-double light pink flowers on towering stems often trimmed into small ornamental trees reaching 7-15'. Large medium green palmate leaves 4-6" wide provide shade to companion plantings in summer & backdrop to the showy, pink mounding blossoms. Flowers may appear as singles or doubles on the same plant with colors ranging from pale pink to deep fuschia. This hardy perennial may freeze back in extreme extended cold weather, but will re sprout in our region even after coldest winters.



Although native to Southern China and Taiwan, Confederate Rose is considered an heirloom plant in the Southern U.S., popular in past decades in southern gardens & a "pass-along" plant sharing cutting with neighbors. Common names include Dixie Rose Mallow, Cotton Rose, Cotton Rose Mallow & Hardy Hibiscus. Confederate Rose is in the Mallow Family (Malvaceae) & is a close relative of Texas natives Swamp Mallow a.k.a. Texas Star Hibiscus (*Hibiscus coccineus*) & Turk's Cap (*Malvaviscus arboreus* var. *drummondii*) along with tropical hibiscus (*Hibiscus rosa-sinensis*), okra (*Abelmoschus esculentus*) & cotton (*Gossypium* sp.).

**See Confederate Rose behind the Butterfly House.**

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

Blue Mistflower or Crucita is a tall-growing mistflower, 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 the most common local native in Coastal Bend gardens. All of these plants used to be in the genus *Eupatorium*, but recently were divided into new genera.



Blue Mistflower has clusters of tiny light blue flowers with small thin petals giving a blue misty appearance in mass, with main bloom cycle in fall when seeds are disbursed by wind. Plants quickly can grow 24-48" tall in full or partial sun, taller in shady spots. A good accent plant in informal garden spaces it provides dense foliage with bright green pointed leaves about 3" long & 1.5" across. Leaves have a pungent scent when crushed giving it the species name "odorata". Considered an annual dying out in colder climates, it sometimes is cultivated as a perennial here when we have mild winters & is cutback in spring. Seeds sprout nearby each year & can produce a large plant quickly.

Blue mistflower grows naturally from Mexico & Texas along the Southern U.S. into the Caribbean. Its broad range also has resulted 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.

**See Blue Mistflower in the Butterfly & Hummingbird Gardens, on Butterfly Hill behind the Sensory Garden & in pockets along the Brennecke Nature Trail.**

## BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

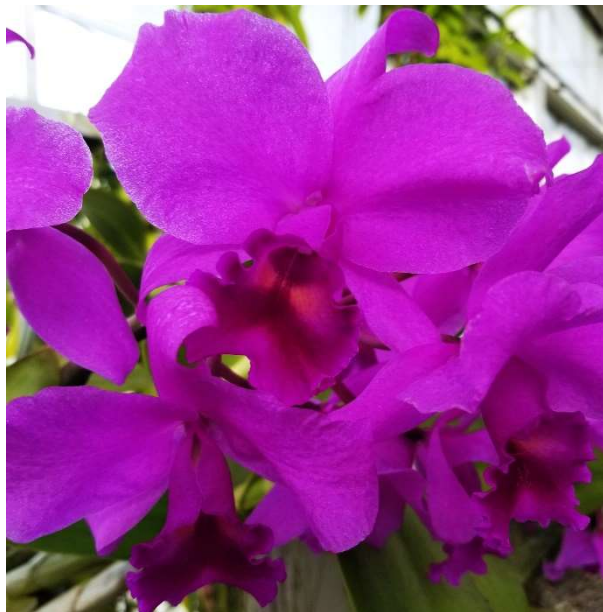
(week of Nov 3, 2024)

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!

### MOLLY TYLER ORCHID (*Lc. 'Molly Tyler'*)

*Lc. 'Molly Tyler'* is a consistent winter bloomer in South Texas beginning as early as late October continuing through Christmas. The 4" flowers have a dark purple lip & "velvety" throat featuring golden-orange highlights with brighter purple petals & sepals serving as a backdrop, often found in clusters of 6-10 flowers rising above the leaves. Being such an early hybrid, this plant has large pseudobulbs compared to the 4" flowers with plants reaching 24-30" tall.

*Laeliocattleyanthe 'Molly Tyler,'* (abbreviated *Lc. 'Molly Tyler'*), formerly known as *Cattleya 'Molly Tyler,'* is considered a "very old second-generation hybrid" by the American Orchid Society (AOS). Registered in 1930 by Mr. & Mrs. F. Dixon, according to an AOS post, it was a hybrid of *Lc. Mrs. W.N. Elkins (Laelia purpurata x Cattleya bowringiana)*, & *Cattleya Leda (Cattleya dowiana x Cattleya percivaliana)*.



**See many 'Molly Tyler' examples, including large specimens in hanging baskets, now blooming in the Samuel Jones Orchid Conservatory, joined in November & December by many blooming Cattleya hybrids, greeting guests with an explosion of color.**

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

Mexican Mint Marigold's bright yellow flowers are approximately .5" wide appearing in clusters for a burst of color starting late summer, peaking mid to late fall. Bloom time & native distribution led to common use in *Dia de los Muertos* celebrations. It's a compact mounding bush 12-18" tall contrasting with narrow 1" fragrant leaves. Plants will spread over time, but respond well to dividing clumps every 2-3 years to encourage new growth. It provides nectar for migrating butterflies & pollen for native honeybees, requiring little care as a perennial, compact form & both heat & drought resistant.

Mexican Mint Marigold is a South Texas native herb sometimes also called Spanish, Texas or Mexican Tarragon, used as a spice in Central American cooking & a French tarragon alternative. Endemic to Mexico & Southwest United States, this plant is the same genus as traditional French & African marigold bedding plant varieties. Its aromatic leaves used in cooking providing a licorice or anise scent & flavoring. It is also used in herbal teas which may help with upset stomach, stimulating the appetite & also is a diuretic. Historically, Aztecs reportedly used it as flavoring in a cocoa-like drink along with medicinal use as an anesthetic & in ritual sacrificial ceremonies.



**See it in bloom in Butterfly, Sensory and EarthKind Demonstration Gardens.**

## BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of October 27, 2024)

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!

### TAISHAN YELLOW AFRICAN MARIGOLD (*Tagetes erecta* 'Taishan Yellow')

Despite the name, “African” marigolds are native to Southern Mexico & Central America along with other members of the genus *Tagetes* including its more familiar native cousin, Mexican Mint Marigold (*Tagetes lucida*). In native areas, they bloom naturally October & November, thus their wide use in *Dia de los Muertos* celebrations.

The “Taishan” variety name came from being developed & trialed in 2007 for use at the 2008 Beijing Olympics, then released elsewhere in 2010. The Chinese name translates to “stability”; & these compact forms definitely are more sturdy, semi-dwarf marigolds growing 8-12” tall with large pompom style blossoms 2-3” across. Marigolds provide long-lasting blossoms attracting a variety of pollinators including butterflies & bees. All marigolds are extremely aromatic, often used to repel unwanted pests.



**See the yellow variety in our Butterfly & EarthKind Trial Garden; but orange also is available.**

### GULF MUHLY GRASS (*Muhlenbergia capillaris*)

This native grass provides a spectacular display of unexpected color each fall, lasting from September through January depending on temperature & precipitation. Our specimens are beginning their long bloom cycle with pinkish tufts emerging from the grass clump & starting to expand. As we approach November, these grasses will feature even more stunning displays of delicate seed heads that can reach 3-5', creating a shimmering pinkish-lavender cloud dancing back & forth in the wind.

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



Gardeners use it both as individual grass clumps or planted mass to create a larger impact in fall. Clumps need to be cut back to 6-10” each spring to remove dead flower stalks & promote fresh new leaf growth for summer months. Separating clumps also is suggested every 2-3 years.

**See Gulf Muhly specimens in front of the Samuel Jones Orchid Conservatory, in Earthkind & Sensory Gardens.**

## BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of October 20, 2024)

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!

### 'TEXAS FIESTA' PLUMERIA (*Plumeria rubra* 'Texas Fiesta')

Our Plumeria Garden is still blooming; & 1 of the our most floriferous varieties is "Texas Fiesta," a cultivar from classic Elizabeth Thornton variety. Texas Fiesta is a plumeria party animal, with consistent easy blooming, producing clusters of medium pink blossoms with yellow/orange centers, resembling swirling Folklorico dresses full of color & fun. The 3-3.5" flowers have a sweet & spicy fragrance, adding to their delight.

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



Visit soon if you want to see the Plumeria Garden in bloom! Plants will be stripped of leaves November 2 in preparation for winter greenhouse hibernation. They are stored bareroot each winter, replanted in March. Timely rains let plumeria quickly produce leaves & multiple varieties start to flower with peak bloom season from July-September in the Coastal Bend. They love heat & sun.

**The plumeria collection is curated by the Plumeria Society of South Texas.**

### FALL ASTER (*Symphyotrichum oblongifolium*, formerly *Aster oblongifolius*)

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

It is well adapted to a wide range of soils including sand, loam clay & caliche allowing wide natural distribution from North Carolina to Pennsylvania, west to Montana, then down the Great Plains states south through Texas into Tamaulipas, Mexico.

Plants usually grow about 20' tall & may spread 30-36". Large moss-green mounds of foliage remain in butterfly & perennial gardens between bloom cycles. For best growth & flowering, choose sunny areas with good drainage.



Fall asters are members of the sunflower family Asteraceae--with daisies, chrysanthemums, cosmos & gaillardia. Like other ray-flowers, the daisy-like blossom is a collection of tiny nectar-producing blooms resulting in a distinctive yellow center "eye" of what we view as an individual bloom. The ray-flower design offers 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 13, 2024)

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 MILKWEED (*Calotropis gigantea*)

Giant Milkweed, a.k.a. Crown Flower, is native to India, southern China, Malaysia & Indonesia. This fast-growing perennial shrub grows in tropical & subtropical regions, classified as a Zone 9 plant, freezing back, but typically re-sprouting from the base.

The plant has large leaves 4-5" wide, up to 10" long. Leaves appear gray-green due to small hair-like structures on the leaf surface. The plant can grow 6-10' tall & similar width. It has clusters of pale purple or white flowers with 5 thick, waxy petals resembling a crown resulting in the alternate common name Crown Flower. Its name milkweed comes from milky white sap that can irritate skin or eyes.



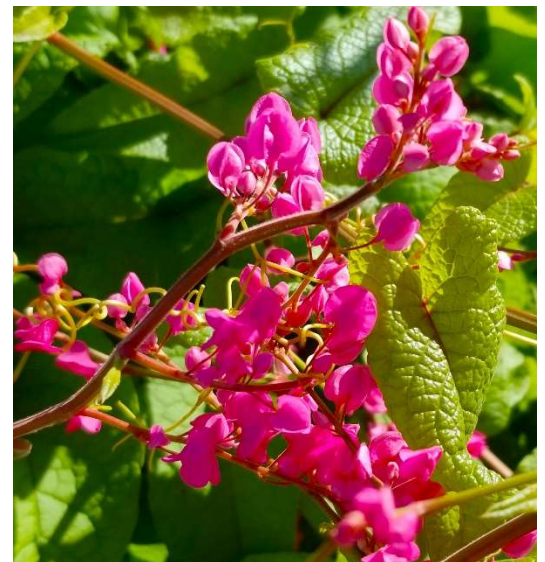
Giant Milkweed is a host plant for both queen & monarch butterflies, but is in a different genus than our native milkweeds (genus *Asclepias*). However both are in the Dogbane Family (Apocynaceae) also including oleanders (*Nerium oleander*), plumeria (*Plumeria rubra*), Desert Rose (*Adenium obesum*) & Vinca/Madagascar Periwinkle (*Catharanthus roseus*).

**See giant milkweed specimens in the Tropical Garden & Butterfly House.**

### CORAL VINE (*Antigonon leptopus*)

Coral Vine is a stunning fall bloomer on Texas fences & arbors, with spectacular displays of small hot pink blossoms first appearing in August remaining until frost. Coral vine is a good pollen plant for bees, & nectar plant, attracting lots of hummingbirds during fall migration through the area. Hummers will pollinate flowers & seeds may fall, producing a few volunteer seedlings the next year.

In other regions, it goes by the common names Queen's Wreath or Chain of Love due to its vining habit & delicate pink blossoms. The striking fuchsia blossoms are actually modified leaves called bracts, that hold color longer for pollinators. Bracts are about .5" across but produced in large numbers in clusters on the ends of vines. Bracts are typically fuchsia but also can be pale pink or white.



Coral vine has bright green heart-shaped leaves 2-3" across & approximately 4" long providing shade & fence cover in summer & great contrasting backdrop for its fuchsia blossoms.

This South Texas/Mexico native is recognized by USDA as a Zone 9 plant, but does grow in slightly colder areas like Central Texas where it freezes to the ground each year, but re-sprouts from the base. Even in the Coastal Bend, it drops leaves in winter, but vines remain alive & dormant covered in brown leaves until spring. Spring pruning will clean up the look & encourage vigorously regrowth 8-12' or more in our area. The natural twisting nature of the vines let it wrap around arbors, fences & poles for support.

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

## BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

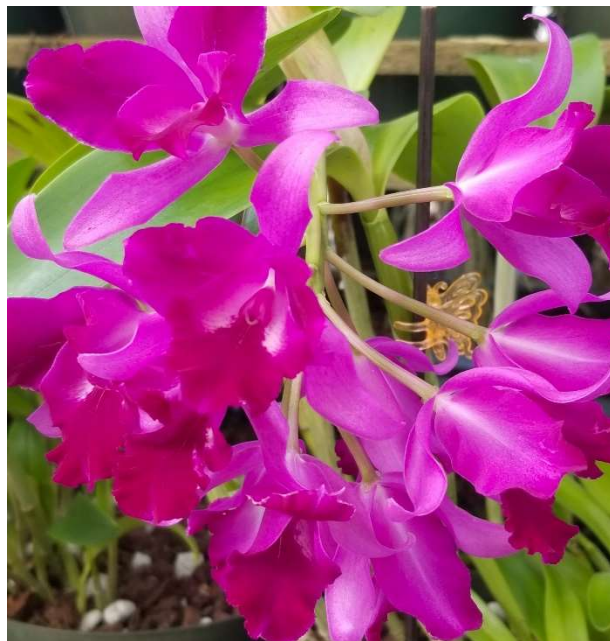
(week of October 6, 2024)

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!

### 'TRISTAR BOUQUET HAWAII' ORCHID

(*Laeliocattleya 'Tristar Bouquet Hawaii'*)

'Tristar Bouquet Hawaii' orchid is a beautiful medium-sized orchid that has Cattleya-like bright green pseudobulbs about 10-12" tall currently starting to bloom. The plant makes a lovely bouquet of 4-7 flowers, but some blossoms may look disoriented, turning sideways or upside down at times as they compete for space when opening. Although not be advantageous for an orchid show, it still makes a full, colorful bouquet for the novice orchid grower. Individual blossoms 2.5-3" across are shades of medium to dark purple with slight white highlights in the dark purple throat.



**See Lc 'Tristar Bouquet Hawaii' & other variations of traditional corsage orchids (Cattleya) which have begun their fall bloom cycle in the Samuel Jones Orchid Conservatory.**

### TALL GOLDENROD (*Solidago altissima*)

Goldenrod is a tall perennial wildflower which shows its glory each autumn in moist areas throughout eastern & central Texas. Its common names include Canada Goldenrod, Late Goldenrod, Canadian Goldenrod. Tall Goldenrod is a member of the Sunflower/Daisy Family, Asteraceae. Two other forms look similar—Giant Goldenrod (*Solidago gigantea*) & true Canada Goldenrod (*S. canadensis*), but Tall Goldenrod has leaves with distinctive smooth edges, similar to tropical milkweed.

Most of the year, narrow simple green leaves grow on stems 1-3' tall. In late summer & early fall, they begin to form fast-growing flowering stalks 3-6' tall resembling a golden plume in full bloom, commonly seen along roadsides. Individual flowers are only .5" across, but make spectacular displays for several weeks.



As a deciduous perennial, it drops leaves in fall going dormant in winter, re-sprouting from the base in spring with new, fresh growth. Goldenrod is a great butterfly plant, providing nectar for fall migrating pollinators.

**See a Goldenrod specimen in bloom in the Butterfly Garden near the Orchid Conservatory.**

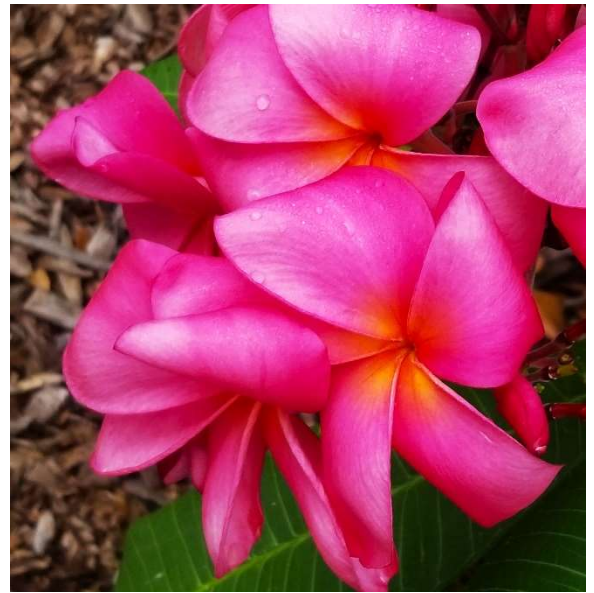
## BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of September 24, 2024)

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 'CHARLOTTE EBERT' (*Plumeria rubra* 'Charlotte Ebert')

'Charlotte Ebert' Plumeria has vibrant pink overlapping flowers with wide petals creating large bouquets of blossoms in each flower head. Its enormous pink blossoms with orange centers are more than 4" across making a statement in any garden, with a unique coconut-jasmine fragrance & hint of almond. It grows quickly into a large plant, but lanky growth may need staking. Charlotte Ebert originally was known as Giant Plastic Pink & J.L. Giant Pink, but was renamed Charlotte Ebert for contributions to preserve the Hawaiian traditions culture.

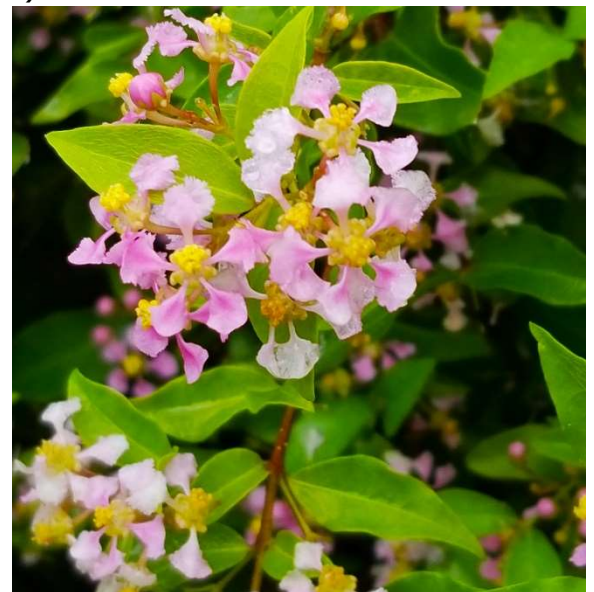


Best known as the Hawaiian lei flower, plumeria actually originated in the Caribbean & Tropical Americas. They are members of the Dogbane Family (Apocynaceae) which also includes Desert Rose (*Adenium obesum*), Oleanders (*Nerium oleander*) & annual Vinca (*Catharanthus roseus*).

We highlight this plumeria this week as the Botanical Gardens & CITGO present *Moonlight LUAU in the Gardens*, our annual signature fundraiser, October 4 (reservations required). (See [article this page](#).) If you miss the outdoor gala, **experience 'Charlotte Ebert' & the Plumeria Garden through October before the collection moves to greenhouses for winter hibernation.**

### DWARF BARBADOS CHERRY (*Malpighia glabra*)

Dwarf Barbados Cherry is a great native shrub that needs to be incorporated into more local landscapes! This upright shrub creates rounded dense growth of delicate foliage and readily can be trimmed into a traditional shrub form in the landscape with plants typically growing 3-6' tall & about 3-4' wide. Dainty pink flowers appear from March through November. Petals begin narrow but expand with frilly edges giving a lacey appearance similar to crepe myrtle flowers.



About a month after flowering, bright red, tart-tasting, 1" fruits appear, high in vitamin C. Butterflies nectar on flowers while small birds feed on the fruit.

It is the most recognized member of the Malpighiaceae Family, commonly the Barbados Cherry Family. It grows naturally in thickets, brushland & palm groves from South Texas through Mexico, Central America & the Caribbean to South America as far as Peru & Brazil. It also goes by common names Wild Crepe Myrtle, Acerola or Manzanita.

**See Dwarf Barbados Cherry in the Butterfly Garden near the caterpillar topiary.**

## BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of September 22, 2024)

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### 'INCENSE' PASSION FLOWER (*Passiflora X 'Incense'*)

'Incense' Passion Vine, or Passion Flower, is a vigorous growing vine producing elegant purple blossoms contrasting with large-lobed leaves alternating along the stem.

'Incense' has brilliant purple petals & a lighter crown with creamy stigma in the center. Twirling tendrils along the stem cling to wood (etc) for support. If you plant it, expect suckers to spring up nearby after the plant is established. Passion Vine freezes back in winter, but comes back from older stems or roots, even after severe freezes.



Passion flowers have their own family, Passifloraceae, with over 400 different species & many more hybrid crosses. Roman Catholic priests gave it the common name in the late 1500s because parts of the flowers symbolized the Passion of Jesus. Fused pistils look like spikes used in crucifixion. A circle of hair-like rays above the petals suggested the crown of thorns Jesus wore the day of His death. The five petals & five petal-like sepals represent the 10 apostles that remained faithful to Jesus throughout the Passion (excluding Judas Iscariot & Simon Peter).

Passion Flowers are a host plant for local Gulf Fritillary (*Agraulis vanillae*) butterflies & less frequently seen Zebra Longwings (*Heliconius charithonia*). Caterpillars will devour large number of leaves leaving bare vines at times, but new leaves and flower will appear.

**See 'Incense' Passion Flower trellised near caterpillar topiary in the Butterfly Garden.**

### TEXAS KIDNEYWOOD (*Eysenhardtia texana*)

Texas Kidneywood is a good Texas native shrub, not very well known, that provides a great show of tiny white flowers in long spikes at the ends of branches from May through October, especially after rains. Kidneywood is deciduous, dropping leaves in winter. During warm seasons, this 3-10' multitrunked shrub is covered in thin light green narrow compound leaves about 3" long with multiple leaflets only a half-inch long creating a dainty, texture in the South Texas brushlands.



Flower spikes are 3.5-4.5" long with tiny white flowers about .25" across opening over a two-week period after rain events.

Kidneywood gets its common name from pioneer use 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*) & Mesquite (*Prosopis glandulosa*). Texas Kidneywood grows from Central Texas south into Central Mexico where it's also called White Brush, Vara Dulce or Palo Dulce. It also may be called Bee Brush because it's a favorite of these beneficial pollinators, & also serves as a great butterfly nectar plant.

**See Texas Kidneywood on Butterfly Hill pollinator garden behind the Sensory Garden.**



## BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of September 15, 2024)

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!

### 'AZTEC GOLD' PLUMERIA (*Plumeria rubra* 'Aztec Gold')

Plumeria are still blooming & the bold golden yellow blossoms of Aztec Gold will welcome guests until Plumeria are green housed in Early November to protect from freezes. Aztec Gold, a variety originating in Mexico, is a large-flowering consistent bloomer with blossoms up to 4" across with large rounded petals featuring slight pink edges, striking orange centers & a strong peach scent. It's very adaptable to different climates, often growing rapidly with thick branches, creating a large plant.



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

Plumeria are in-ground from March through October. In early November, the Plumeria Society of South Texas removes leaves & digs plants to store bareroot in greenhouses through winter.

**To see these tropical beauties this growing season, plan a visit before the end of October; or attend *Moonlight LUAU in the Gardens*, Friday, October 4 (presale tickets required).**

### TROPICAL SAGE (*Salvia coccinea*)

Native Tropical Sage, a member of the Mint Family (Lamiaceae), is one of the easiest plants to grow, coming back year after year as an important butterfly & hummingbird nectar source. Considered an annual, it can grow perennially during mild winters. Naturally, it grows primarily in sandy coastal regions from Texas east to Florida, up into South Carolina.

In other regions, it's known by common names Scarlet Sage, Blood Sage or Indian Fire. Compact or semi-dwarf commercial varieties cultivars such as 'Forest Fire Red' & 'Lady in Red' have been developed, growing only 18-30" tall, in addition to pink & white varieties.

This plant has distinctive square stems, bright green simple spade-shaped leaves, but the real show comes from stalks of tubular scarlet flowers towering above the foliage. The native form many grow tall & leggy, reaching 4-5' in shady areas under mesquite trees; but is shorter in sunny areas. If they get too tall, just cut them back to 4-6' and new branches will grow.



Plants flower almost continuously in warm weather, but be aware they also are heavy seeders which not only provide new "volunteer" plants next year in that spot but often in nearby beds & even in concrete seams providing unexpected pockets of color.

**See Tropical Sage in the Earthkind Demonstration Garden, Hummingbird & Butterfly Gardens & occasionally in small pockets along the Mary Hope Brennecke Nature Trail.**

## BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of September 8, 2024)

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### AUTUMN PIXIE ORCHID (*Cattleya bowringiana*)

*Cattleya bowringiana*, often called Autumn Pixie Orchid, is one of the most consistent fall-blooming orchids, a must-have in home collections! This year, fall seems a little early with these pixies already dancing in the Samuel Jones Orchid Conservatory. Orchid growers consider it one of the easiest orchids--a great starter plant for the novice grower!

Flower stems produce clusters of 10-12 striking purple flowers about 2.5" wide lasting for several weeks in September & October. Recent rains & cooler temps have those growing outside in baskets in full bloom. A standard 6-8" pot easily can have 2-5 flower spikes with 5-10 blossoms per spike—a stunning display. Like most orchids, this plant goes unnoticed most of the year blooming, with pseudobulbs, often thought of as the leaves, being plain, medium green & erect, usually 2-3" wide & 12-18" tall unless growing in large clumps.

Discovered in 1885, *Cattleya bowringiana* is native to Belize & Guatemala, growing in a range of environments including tropical forests, rocky ravines & even quartz sand. Its consistent blooming promoted wide use in orchid breeding since its discovery.

**See Autumn Pixie in the Samuel Jones Orchid Conservatory.**

### WILD OLIVE (*Cordia boissieri*)

Wild Olive—also called Texas Olive, Mexican Olive or Anachuita—is a great native ornamental tree known for its water-wise characteristics. Native to deep South Texas & Northern Mexico, it can survive into Central Texas, with hard freezes limiting its expansion further north.

Wild Olive is also a hummingbird attractor, providing natural nectar sources in time for fall migration. With no traditional orange flowers thought to attract hummers, its bountiful clusters of 1.5 – 2" white blossoms with deep throats & yellow centers are packed with natural nectar.

Pollinated flowers develop into opaque pale green fruit resembling olives. Technically edible, it's not very tasty.

The common name "olive" is just visual, with this tree in a different family (Boraginaceae) than common edible olives (*Olea europaea*) used in cooking.

Wild Olive trees have large green leaves approximately 4" X 6" with a coarse medium to dark green top & lighter gray-green underside due to small "hairs" that give it a smooth soft texture underneath. Its bark is coarse & stringy, different from most other trees. Wild Olives typically grow 12-15' tall & 15-20' wide at maturity, possibly taller depending on water availability. This tree produces dense shade that may limit grass growth beneath if clustered with other trees.

**See blooming specimens of Wild Olive in the Sensory & Hummingbird Gardens.**



## BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of August 25, 2024)

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### **FIREBUSH** (*Hamelia patens*)

Known for its bronze foliage when grown in full sun, 'Firebush' is its best-known common name. But it's also called Hummingbird Bush, Scarlet Bush & Redhead. Slightly hairy leaves can be 3-6" long, arranged in whorls or a circular pattern on stems. With vibrant foliage, *Hamelia* produces orange clusters of narrow tubular inch-long flowers on branch tips in summer & fall, providing nectar for hummingbirds & butterflies. Little trimming is needed to stay in bloom in warm months.

Firebush, like most *Hamelia*, is a good perennial for Texas, an early Texas Superstar designee by Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service. Somewhat freeze sensitive, it survives light frosts, but freezes to the base in a hard freeze, rapidly coming back from the trunk re-growing to 6-8'. Compact or dwarf varieties with smaller leaves & flowers, growing 4-5' tall, have become more readily available.



Firebush, a subtropical shrub native to central & South America, Southern U.S. & Florida, should be classified an exotic tropical. But some nurseries consider it native since it's found in the southern part of Tamaulipan Biotic Province which includes South Texas.

**See Firebush in Butterfly, Hummingbird & EarthKind Demonstration Gardens.**

### **SPINY HACKBERRY** (*Celtis pallida*)

Spiny hackberry, also called Desert Hackberry, Chaparral & Grajeno is one of the most common native shrubs in local brushland. This prickly cousin of the Common Hackberry (*Celtis laevigata*) is native to South Texas & Chihuahuan Desert, growing 8-20' tall with a multi-stemmed trunk. It produces tiny yellow flowers after summer rains followed by small edible orange berries currently present.

Fruit feeds a variety of birds & mammals including white-tailed deer browsing stems & foliage. It also is larval host plant for American Snout butterfly (*Libytheana carinenta*); & other butterfly species nectar on it when in bloom.

Hackberry trees are actually part of the Cannabaceae (Cannabis) Family along with hemp, but these berries are non-hallucinogenic. The shrubby trees, which grow in poor soils in full sun or partial shade as an understory shrub, are important for erosion control & can be used as native "green screen" due to dense growth and thorny branches.



**See many specimens of Spiny Hackberry in the thorn scrub chaparral lining the Mary Hope Brennecke Nature Trail & other brushy areas.**

## BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of August 18, 2024)

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### **BROWN BUD ALLAMANDA** (*Allamanda cathartica* 'Hendersonii')

Brown Bud Allamanda is a tropical shrub producing bright yellow trumpet flowers with deep throats but flared petal ends. "Brown bud" refers to bronze color on the underside of petals creating a "brown" tone for tight flower buds until petals unfurl to reveal golden yellow interior. Buds begin about 3" long opening to impressive 4-5" diameter. Common names include Golden Trumpet or Yellow Allamanda.

Brown Bud Allamanda can grow 6-8' a year once established. Semi-woody branches elongate often needing support with fence or trellis. It's sometimes considered a vine due to extra support needed; but technically isn't since it lacks natural support mechanism including twisting growth habit or tendrils to cling to structures.

Allamanda need full sun to limit natural elongated stem growth. Its bright green, glossy leaves have a whorled attachment pattern, occurring in 4s along the stem. Needing regular fertilizing to maintain leaves, infertility results in leaf drop & barren stems except for a few leaves & flowers at the tip. If Allamanda becomes too leggy, cut it back & new branches emerge near the base. Originating in Tropical America, Allamanda grows well in pots in our area so it can be brought in during freezing weather. Southern coastal gardens may allow planting in the ground if protected from north winds. It is a member of the Dogbane Family (Apocynaceae) along with oleanders, plumeria, and desert roses.

**See Brown Bud Allamanda in pots in the Butterfly House.**



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

Mexican Orchid Tree is a shrubby small tree blooming several times throughout warm months with 4-5" clusters of white flowers, long narrow petals & frilly looking stamen. It's a vigorous growing, multi-trunked shrub or small tree that can reach 8-12' tall & with similar width. Unlike other tropical Bauhinia species growing here, this one is uniquely identifiable by its 2-2.5" leaves with 2 distinctive points. Mexican Orchid Tree is native to Mexico & deep South Texas.

Flowers provide excellent nectar source thus attracting wide arrays of butterfly species & hummingbirds. Like other legumes, pollinated flowers produce small beans which ripen & break open dropping seeds. Seedlings easily can be propagated. Bauhinias are members of the Pea Family (Fabaceae) which also includes local natives like mesquite, retama & many other bean-producing native trees.



There are two native orchid trees in Texas. Besides the Mexican Orchid Tree, its far West Texas cousin, Anaconcho Orchid Tree (*Bauhinia congesta*) is much shorter with significantly smaller, rounded leaves & dwarf white flowers with rounded petals. Both are in the same genus as the more popular & larger growing Hong Kong Orchid Tree (*Bauhinia purpurea*). Unfortunately, Mexican Orchid Tree is not widely available in retail garden centers.

**See Mexican Orchid Tree past the Sensory Garden, across from Monkey Mansion Treehouse entrance.**

## BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of August 11, 2024)

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### BELINDA'S DREAM SHRUB ROSE (*Rosa X 'Belinda's Dream'*)

"Belinda's Dream" is a medium-sized shrub rose, one of the most consistent performers in South Texas. Released in 1992, the stunning medium pink rose quickly was named an Earth-Kind Rose by Texas A&M Agri-Life Extension Service for its disease resistance, heat performance, easy care & good blooming. It did so well in statewide trials that it was the first rose to get the prestigious Texas Superstar designation in 2002.

Bred by Texas A&M mathematics professor, Dr. Robert Basye, it's a cross between climber (a.k.a. rambling rose) 'Jersey Beauty' x hybrid tea rose 'Tiffany'. Belinda's Dream can grow up to 5' tall & wide, but typically stays closer to 3'. Unlike many old roses given the Earth-Kind designation, Belinda's Dream is a "very-double" blossom with more than 100 petals, re-flushing with new growth, reblooming throughout the year.

Although disease resistant, some Black Spot fungus may appear in cool, damp weather; but won't affect plant vigor & bloom. Light pruning improves appearance & bloom frequency.



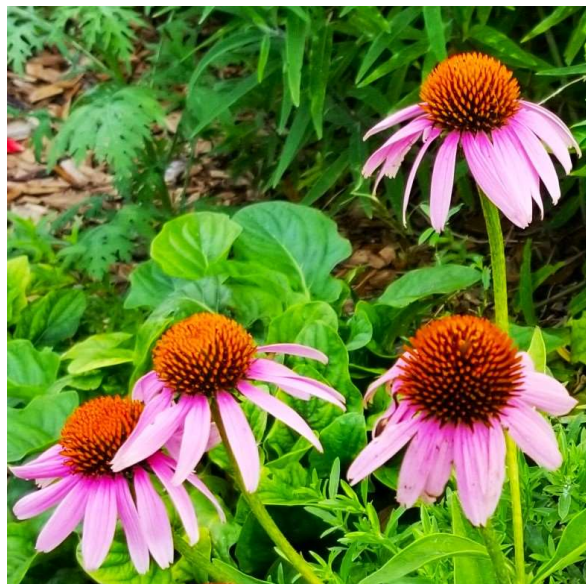
**See Belinda's Dream Rose planted in beds on front and back of Rose Pavilion in our Rose Garden blooming year-round.**

### EASTERN PURPLE CONEFLOWER (*Echinacea purpurea*)

Purple Coneflower not only is a popular medicinal herb for teas, but also an East Texas native flower naturally growing along edges of oak savannahs or prairies, from Texas up to Illinois & east to Florida & North Carolina.

"Echinacea" comes from the Greek work *echinos* meaning "hedgehog," referring to the brown spiny disc at the center of its striking flower. It commonly is called Purple Coneflower, Hedgehog Coneflower, or simply Echinacea which is its genus. Long-lasting flowers have a distinctive cone center with lavender petals extending out or slightly downward, each about 3" across.

Plants have medium green, wide foliage, most leaves about 12" tall; but flower stalks can rise to 24 or 30", towering above a dense base of foliage. In our area, Echinacea goes dormant in winter & leaves disappear, but returns in spring, emerging from hidden underground tubers.



Echinacea/Coneflower is a member of the Aster Family (Asteraceae) along with daisies, sunflowers, coreopsis, zinnias, marigolds & even lettuce. Coneflowers are great additions to garden spaces with good drainage, attracting butterflies when blooming. Traditionally used externally for burns, wounds & insect bites, some native American tribes used it for cold symptoms, coughs, sore throats and pain relief.

**See specimens blooming in the Butterfly Garden.**

## BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of August 4, 2024)

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!

### CRIMSON STAR DESERT ROSE (*Adenium obesum* X *A. swazicum*)

Desert Rose has become increasingly popular in recent years due to easy care & drought tolerance. It is 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.

Crimson Star Velvet Leaf Desert Rose is actually a cross between common desert rose (*Adenium obesum*) & a rare velvet leaf dwarf variety (*A. swazicum*). It has velvety-textured gray-green leaves, & the dark crimson flowers have narrower petals than common desert rose.

These succulents are revered for not only beautiful flowers, but also a fattened trunk or “codex” storing water & nutrients. Keeping them in smaller pots helps keep the base enlarged.

Desert Roses have sticky latex sap which can be a skin & eye irritant. Plants are toxic if ingested as are other close relatives in the Dogbane Family (Apocynaceae) such as plumeria (*Plumeria rubra*), oleander (*Nerium oleander*), vinca or Madagascar periwinkles (*Catharanthus roseus*), & milkweeds (*Asclepias* sp.).

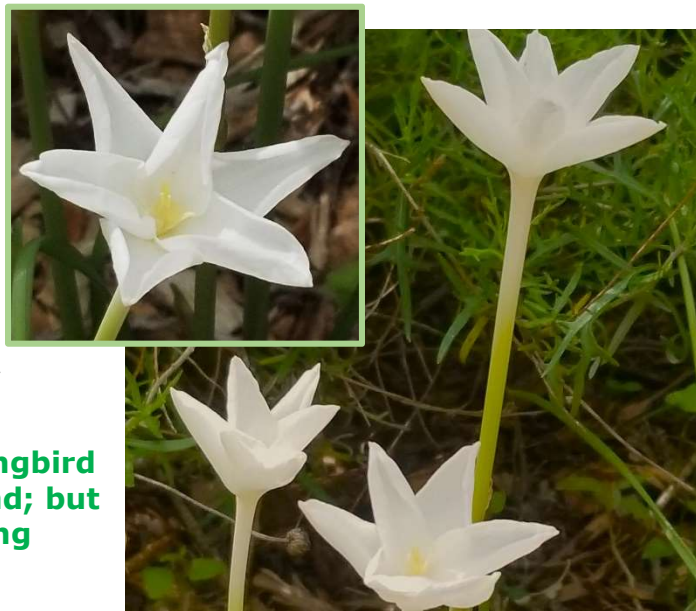
**See a large potted specimen of Crimson Star Desert Rose in the rock beds in front of the Samuel Jones Orchid Conservatory.**

### COOPER'S WHITE RAINLILY (*Cooperi drummondii*)

Cooper's White Rain Lilies are recognized by vibrant white flowers “magically” appearing after rain. Each flower has 6 petals on the end of a 12” leafless stem emerging from an otherwise unnoticed bulb. Flowers last only a few days. If pollinated, a three-lobed seed pod forms at the tip with a black paper-like seed inside. Smooth green grass-like leaves also appear after flowering. This wildflower native to Texas & Louisiana provides a welcome surprise to fields & flowerbeds after strong precipitation.

Otherwise, the plant has a couple of thin, strap like leaves blending in with grass blades unnoticed like the leafless bulb lying dormant under soil. Heavy rain triggers flowering, an adaptation matching higher chance of pollinator activity after rains. Variations include a pale pink tint on petals, plus a yellow-flowering cousin, Showy Zephyrlily (*Zephyranthes pulchella*).

**See Cooper's White Rainlily near the Hummingbird Garden & around Monkey Mansion Playground; but visit soon since this plant's post-rain blooming cycle is short!**



## BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of July 28, 2024)

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!

### 'PINOT ROUGE' PLUMERIA (*Plumeria rubra* 'Pinot Rouge')

Plumeria 'Pinot Rouge' consistently has been blooming all summer, rare for a dark pink/red plumeria! The thick wide petals extend individual blossom life despite summer heat. Each flower stalk has up to 30 blossoms, forming a cluster 8-10" across. Our specimen blooms summer through fall until removed for winter protection early November. This plumeria is an eye-catcher, but also turns heads with a sweet vanilla-jasmine scent.

Plumeria are members of the Dogbane (Apocynaceae) Family which includes Desert Rose (*Adenium obesum*), Oleanders (*Nerium oleander*) & annual Vinca (*Catharanthus roseus*). Here, plumeria thrive in hot sunny conditions, peak bloom July through September with fewer blossoms moving into cooler autumn temperatures.



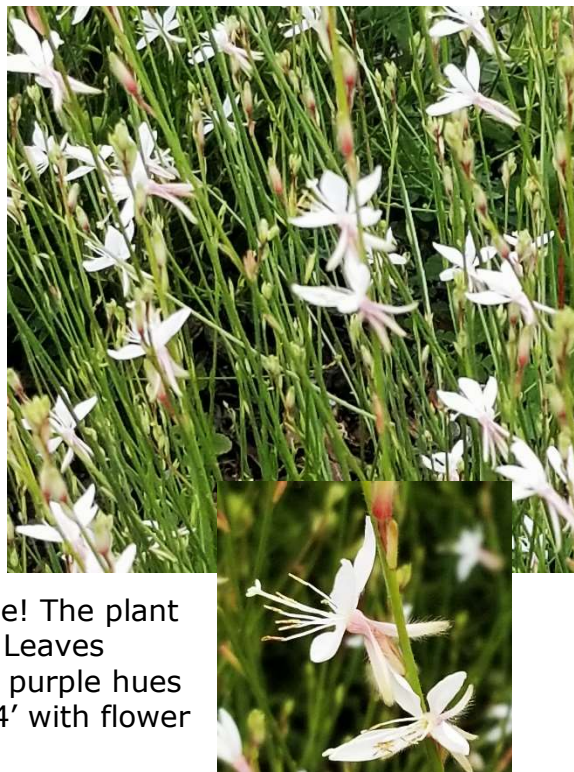
**Plan to visit the 'Plumeria Grove' before the end of October when plants will be removed for their long winter nap under guidance of the Plumeria Society of South Texas.**

### WHITE BUTTERFLY GUARA (*Oenothera lindheimeri*)

Butterfly Guara is an excellent but underused native landscape plant with a range from Louisiana & Texas into Mexico. It gets its common name from the dainty white blossoms less than an inch across opening in the morning on tall thin stalks that, as petals fold back, look like butterflies dancing in the wind. It also has pale & dark pink varieties. Although dainty & attractive, don't smell them, since some compare the scent to cat urine!

Other common names include Butterfly Gaura, Whirling Butterflies, Wandflower, Lindheimer's Beeblossom, and Lindheimer's Gaura. It is a member of the Evening Primrose Family (Onagraceae) & a cousin to the common pink Mexican Primrose, a wildflower seen throughout South Texas.

Guara actually prefers semi-dry conditions & full sun like here in the Coastal Bend, making sure it has good drainage! The plant has an open-vase shape, branching in multiple directions. Leaves change from dark green in summer & going to red, gold & purple hues in autumn. Plants typically grow 12-24" but may reach 3-4' with flower stalks.



**See White Butterfly Guara in the Butterfly Garden near the Rose Garden lawn.**

## BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of July 21, 2024)

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!

### CROSSANDRA ORANGE MARMALADE

(*Crossandra infundibuliformis* 'Orange Marmalade')

Crossandra 'Orange Marmalade' is a stunning tropical known for its apricot-orange flower spikes contrasting with glossy dark green foliage. It will freeze so in our area must be used as a landscape annual or container plant. It can withstand heat, but should be grown in shade or partial shade for best results with our intense South Texas summer sun.

Crossandra is part of the Acanthus Family (Acanthaceae) including common landscape plants like Shrimp Plant (*Justicia brandegeana*), Desert Honeysuckle (*Justicia spicigera*); Flame Acanthus (*Anisacanthus quadrifidus*) & Mexican Petunia (*Ruellia brittoniana*). Tropical cousins include Flamingo Flower (*Justicia carnea*), Polka Dot Plant (*Hypoestes phyllostachya*) & Persian Shield (*Strobilanthes dyeriana*).

Like its cousin in genus *Ruellia*, it has seed pods that “explode” when ripe & exposed to moisture or high humidity giving it the common name “firecracker plant” in some regions, but not in most of the U.S. The species name *infundibuliformis* means funnel or trumpet-shaped, referring to the flower shape.



**See Crossandra in containers in Butterfly & Sensory Gardens.**

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

'Gold Star' Esperanza, a.k.a. Yellow Bells, was a sport of the native Yellow Esperanza found in Northern Mexico & West Texas. The true native variety has slightly smaller flowers & thinner, pointed leaves. 'Gold Star' typically grows 6-7' tall, but can be kept 3-5' with annual spring pruning. It prefers good drainage growing in both clay & sandy soils. Plants will form bean-shaped seed pods which if removed will promote additional flowering.

Gold Star Esperanza is a phenomenal bloomer in South Texas summer landscapes. Not only do they brighten scenery with bright yellow tubular flowers, but also attract hummingbirds & butterflies.

'Gold Star' Esperanza was one of the first plants named a Texas Superstar by Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service for outstanding growth & flowering in gardens throughout Texas, still prolifically flowering despite soaring summer temperatures & drought conditions. Esperanza plants are deciduous, going dormant & dropping leaves in winter, so they need to be planted with shrubs and perennials that hold leaves to prevent a barren winter landscape.



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



## BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of July 14, 2024)

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!

### **SAPPHIRE SHOWERS DURANTA** (*Duranta erecta* 'Sapphire Showers')

'Sapphire Showers' Duranta, is a semi-tropical shrub & profuse summer bloomer in South Texas. *Duranta erecta*, native to much of South & Central America as well as Caribbean Islands, also is called Brazilian Sky Flower due to light blue or white blossom color of the wild forms. The 'Sapphire Showers' cultivar was a selected for dense growth habit & striking dark purple flowers with white edges.



Known for fast growth in warm weather, this dense shrub has small, glossy green leaves, a great backdrop to its profusion of blossoms. A great pollinator plant, flowers attract a wide range of butterflies for nectar & bees for pollen. High presence of pollinators also results in frequent formation of yellow berries resulting in an alternate common name, 'Golden Dew Drop.' It was named a Texas Superstar Plant by Texas A&M University AgriLife Extension Service for its adaptability & successful growth in trial gardens throughout the state.

This plant needs space! While 'Sapphire Showers' sometimes is described as compact, it easily can grow 6-9' tall. Annual spring pruning to 1-2' will help keep it shorter.

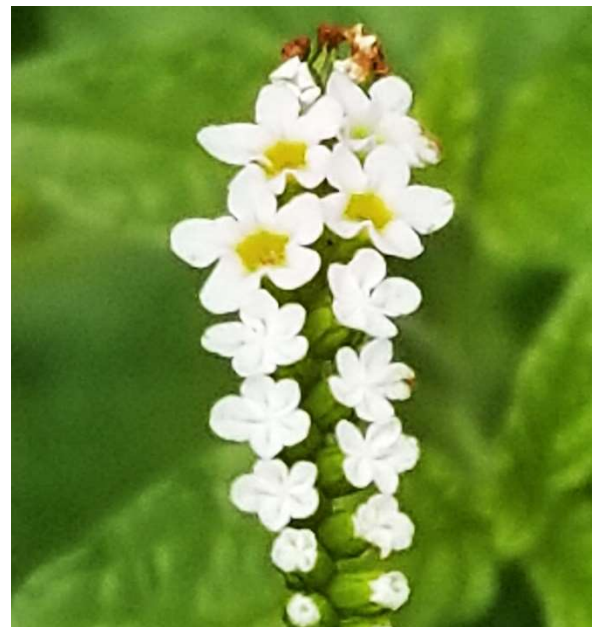
**See 'Sapphire Showers' behind the Visitors Center Entrance fountain.**

### **SCORPION'S TAIL** (*Heliotropium angiospermum*)

Scorpion's Tail is a member of the Borage/Forget-Me-Not Family (Boraginaceae), which is known for hairy leaves & stems. Indigenous to Texas and Florida, it also grows in Mexico & the Caribbean also going by common names of Sore Bush, Bright Eye Bush & Cat Tongue Rooster Comb. Sore Bush refers to its reported medicinal qualities in the Caribbean where it's used for stings, itches, sores & cuts, conjunctivitis (pink eye) & infant colic.

Scorpion's Tail commonly is a low-growing 1-2' tall shrub used as a groundcover; but also can reach 3' tall or more. An annual in northern areas, but will grow for multiple years in other areas when freezes are absent.

Tiny white flowers grow in 2 rows along a rachis (flower stalk midrib); & will produce seeds helping it fill in as a groundcover. Preferring sunny to partly-sunny areas & moderately moist soil, it's good nectar source for a wide range of butterflies, blooming nearly all year.



**See Scorpion Tail in the Butterfly Garden close to the Sam Jones Orchid Conservatory bridge.**

## BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of July 7, 2024)

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'*)

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

*Grammatophyllum 'Broga Tiger'*, hybridized in 2009 by Serdang Orchid Nursery in Malaysia by crossing *G. measuresianum* X *G. 'Tiger's Paw'*, is known for spectacular inflorescences frequently three' long & blooming up to 3 months due to large numbers of smaller fragrant flowers. Individual flowers are about 1" across with gold & bronze design resembling tiger stripes.



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

### **NATIVE TURK'S CAP** (*Malvaviscus aureus* var. *drummondii*)

Turk's cap is a native shrub distributed throughout much of Texas, growing as an understory plant in light shade, & can grow in full sun. The native form grows 3-5' tall & about 3' wide with shade-grown plants being taller. As an understory plant, it grows best in well drained soils with organic matter, but can adapt to poorer soils.

Red flowers 1-2" long emerge from branch tips but newer petals never fully unfurl, resembling rolled paper. With yellow pollen on fused stamen, pollinated flowers produce 1" round green fruit which eventually ripen turning red. Available in nurseries, there also is a rare sport with variegated leaves. A much larger growing "tropical" variety, now being sold as "Big Momma," has leaves about 4" wide & 4-6" long which are much more pointed than the accepted Texas native form with larger, heavier pendulous flowers hanging downward.



Turk's Cap is one of the best-known natives in the Cotton/Hibiscus Family (Malvaceae). It goes by variety range of common names including Drummond Turk's Cap, Drummond's Wax Mallow, Red Mallow, Texas Mallow, Mexican Apple, Sleeping Hibiscus, Bleeding Hearts. The most common Spanish name is Manzanita which means "little apple," referring to its small fruit. Turks Cap is an excellent wildlife food source, providing nectar for hummingbirds, butterflies, moths & other insects. The fruit also are eaten by mammals including humans. The fruit reportedly as a faint apple taste and can be eaten cooked or raw according the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center ([www.wildflower.org](http://www.wildflower.org)).

**See native forms of Turk's Cap in red, pink & located in Butterfly, Hummingbird, EarthKind & Sensory Gardens & on Oso Ridge nature trail.**

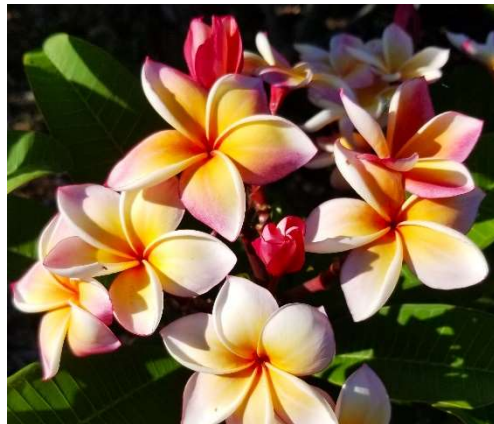
## BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of June 30, 2024)

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

'California Sunset' Plumeria is a showstopper! A seedling from 'Penang Peach', introduced by Jungle Jack's Plumeria became a plumeria collector's favorite with vibrant sunset colors & thick petals. Each flower is 2-4" across & frequently makes huge clusters all in bloom at once collectively 6-9" across, with a strong ripe peach fragrance! Early spring, flowers start out yellow, turning dark orange & red as things heat up. This plumeria also has a semi-compact growth habit, but is fast growing with an incredibly long bloom season compared to others.



Known as the Hawaiian lei flower, plumeria actually originated in the Caribbean & Tropical Americas. They're in the Dogbane Family (Apocynaceae) also including Desert Rose (*Adenium obesum*), Oleanders (*Nerium oleander*) & annual Vinca (*Catharanthus roseus*).

Always favorite flowers for semi-tropical areas, early summer heat has brought them into full bloom at the Botanical Gardens. Thriving in heat & sun, Plumeria bloom May through early October, peaking around the July 4th holiday here when hydrated with supplemental water like our recent big rain, growing noticeably larger!

**The Plumeria Garden, curated and cared for by the Plumeria Society of South Texas, definitely is worth a visit to experience these tropical treasures at their peak!**

### SEA OXEYE DAISY (*Borrichia frutescens*)

Sea Oxeye Daisy is blooming phenomenally well in Coastal Bend lowland areas. The common name ox-eye comes from the large center which turns dark brown as it matures remaining in its dark dry form after flowering with a prickly texture. It is a member of the Sunflower/Aster Family (Asteraceae) with other common names such as Bushy Seaside Tansy & Sea Daisy in other locales. Sea Ox-eye Daisy is found in coastal areas from Maryland to Texas down into Mexico.



Bright yellow daisy flowers 2-2.5" across appear in May through most of summer. An important nectar source for bees & butterflies, also after maturing, seeds are eaten by granivorous birds & its perennial nature provides cover for small wetland animals.

Sea Oxeye Daisy grows primarily upright 2-3' tall, reportedly up to 6 feet. The simple gray-green thick leaves with smooth edges are easy to recognize, becoming more succulent as they age making them more adaptable to harsh conditions.

Sea Oxeye Daisy is one of the most common flowers found in area wetlands, its presence often used as a wetland indicator! Tolerant of a variety of poor soil types including extremely salty/brackish sands & clay. It grows in extremes, surviving flooding periods with poor drainage as well as being extremely drought tolerant.

**Observe Sea Ox-Eye Daisy currently blooming along the Mary Hope Brennecke Nature Trail & along edges of wetland areas.**

# BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of June 23, 2024)

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## BASHAM'S PARTY PINK CREPE MYRTLE

(*Lagerstroemia X 'Basham's Party Pink'*)

Basham's Party Pink Crepe Myrtle, frequently called Basham Crepe Myrtle, is one of the largest growing crepe myrtle trees in our area, reaching 20-30' at maturity with 15-20' canopy spread. From China & Southeast Asia, Crepe Myrtles are in the Loosetrife Family (Lythraceae), in a variety of sizes from 3-30' tall at maturity.

'Basham' is actually a hybrid of 2 different crepe myrtle species, *Lagerstroemia indica* crossed with *L. fauriei*. The result is a fast-growing form with "fun-tastic" mauve pink flower clusters. They bloom only in summer as crepe myrtles are long-day photoperiodic plants, blooming during extended days around summer solstice. This variety also has distinctive peeling grey/tan bark exposing reddish-brown trunk tones beneath old bark. Large, dark green leaves provide shade from spring through late fall, but are deciduous dropping leaves for winter.



With a USDA Zone 8 plant designation surviving temperatures to 10 degrees, Bashams did well after the big freeze. They are a good Xeriscape plant surviving drought conditions once fully established & blooming in the heat of summer.

Basham's Party Pink Crepe Myrtle introduced in 1965 by Texas plantsman, Lynn Lowrey, is considered the granddaddy of Texas hybrid crepe myrtles. Its outstanding performance throughout the state for more than 55 years also earned it the Texas A&M Agri-Life Extension Service's Texas Superstar designation.

**See Basham Crepe Myrtle in full bloom in the Botanical Gardens Parking Lot in front of Education Station and in the Sensory Garden.**

## BLANKET FLOWER (*Gaillardia pulchella*)

Blanket Flower (*Gaillardia pulchella*), a common wildflower throughout Texas, is known for its dark rounded center & a single row of bright red petals with distinctive yellow serrated edges resulting in other common names like Firewheel, Indian Blanket, & 'Girasol Rojo' in Spanish.

Blanket Flower is part of the Asteraceae family, along with daisies, asters, cosmos & sunflowers. These plants are noted for their ray flower formation with dense centers resembling an eye called a 'disc flower', radiating out by colorful petals to attract pollinators. The center is actually a composite of many tiny flowers with multiple nectar sources, making it a great butterfly plant.

Plants only grow 12-24" tall with mossy green leaves covered with tiny hairs giving a sticky feeling if touched. Gaillardia are hardy annuals with several varieties earning Proven Winners designation.



**See Blanket Flower blooming in the Butterfly Garden, Butterfly Hill behind the Sensory Garden, & along the walkway between the Visitor Center & Samuel Jones Orchid House.**

# BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of June 23, 2024)

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**See Blanket Flower blooming in the Butterfly Garden, Butterfly Hill behind the Sensory Garden, & along the walkway between the Visitor Center & Samuel Jones Orchid House.**

# BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of June 16, 2024)

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!

## “HEAD OVER HEELS® BLUSH” DINNER PLATE HIBISCUS

(*Hibiscus moscheutos* 'Head Over Heels® Blush')

Dinner Plate Hibiscus (*Hibiscus moscheutos*), a cold-hardy, herbaceous, flowering perennial plant known for giant, show-stopping blooms, also goes by other names including Swamp Rose Mallow, Crimson-eyed Rose Mallow & Eastern Rose Mallow. Herbaceous green or reddish stems sprout from the ground late spring, quickly forming a small rounded shrub. This perennial hibiscus often is considered an heirloom plant because of its popularity in early to mid-1900s from southern to mid-Atlantic states into the Midwest. Popularity declined after fancy Tropical Hibiscus (*Hibiscus rosa-sinensis*) came along, but renewed interest in hardy perennials has breeders to introduce a new generation of these old favorites including *Head Over Heels®* Series.



Flowers have multiple five-petal blossoms up to 6” across on large plants instantly attracting the eye. Flowers come in a variety of shades from white to dark red along with pinks and purples with a protruding fused pistil & stamen like other hibiscus. The shrub can grow 4-6’ tall & 3-4” wide with fast-growing tender stems turning light gray-brown at the base as they age. This “tender perennial” drops leaves in fall; stems freeze back in cold winters; but it re-sprouts each spring, soon begins flowering & continues blooming throughout summer. These perennial hibiscus varieties are classified as Zone 6 by USDA which means they are root hardy down to -10°F \surviving our mild winters.

Hibiscus are members of the Mallow Family (Malvaceae) along with Turk’s Cap (*Malvaviscus arboreus* var. *drummondii*), cotton & okra. They are important larval plants for multiple butterfly species including Common Checkered Skipper, Gray Hairstreak, Pearly Wood Nymph plus the Lo Moth.

**See *Head Over Heels® Blush* Hibiscus in front of the Orchid Conservatory; & other dinner plate varieties in the Tropical Garden, Butterfly House & backside of the berms behind the Rose Garden.**

## NATIVE PLANT VIOLET RUELLIA (*Ruellia nudiflora*)

Violet Ruellia or Violet Petunia is a low-growing late season wildflower in the Deep South from Alabama to Arizona stretching from Texas deep into Mexico & Central America, frequently found on the edge of wooded areas & adjacent open grassy spaces. The “petunia” common name is due to its frequent individual light violet tubular flowers about 1” across & 1-2” long appearing from April through October on stalks above low-growing grayish-green foliage. Leaves are about an inch wide & 2” long. Violet Ruellia foliage usually remains close to the ground—around 6-8” tall—but flower stalks can grow 12-18” in shaded areas if unmanicured.



Although it & other members of the genus *Ruellia* are called wild violet petunia, *Ruellia* are in the Acanthus (Acanthaceae) Family, not Nightshade (Solanaceae) Family like traditional cultivated garden petunias. It may have some medicinal uses as the Spanish name is Hierba de la Calentura, or “herb of the fever.” This *Ruellia* will reseed, but unlike its taller cousin, Mexican Petunia (*Ruellia simplex* a.k.a. *Ruellia brittoniana*), it doesn’t form dense clumps of thick stems so it’s easy to mow.

An important larval plant for multiple butterflies--Common Buckeye (*Junonia coenia*), White Peacock (*Anartia jatrophae*), Cuban Crescent (*Anthanassa frisia*) & Malachite (*Siproeta stelenes*), the flowers provide a nectar source for both butterflies & hummingbirds.

**See Violet Ruellia in the Butterfly Garden as well as grassy areas behind the Sensory Garden & Butterfly Hill, near the EarthKind Demonstration Garden & Arid Garden.**

# BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of June 9, 2024)

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## 'ELSIE' PLUMERIA (Plumeria rubra 'Elsie')

Elsie, a stunning plumeria cultivar sometimes called "J.J. Elsie" or "Elise", is known for its semi-compact growth habit & thick branches. It is a Thai seedling of Plumeria 'Penang Peach' in the *Jungle Jack* collection, with large clusters of vibrant pink & white swirled blossoms with orange centers & rounded petals--a prolific bloomer with a "sweet & spicy" aroma! Although commonly known as the Hawaiian Lei Flower plumeria is actually native to the Caribbean & Tropical Americas.



The genus Plumeria was named in honor of 17<sup>th</sup> Century French Botanist & Catholic monk Charles Plumier who traveled to the New World documenting many plant & animal species. Another common name for plumeria, "frangipani," came from a fictional 16<sup>th</sup> century Marquis of Italian noble family Frangipani, known for their perfumes.

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

**The Plumeria Garden is in prime blooming season & these tropical beauties can give you a taste of the islands in your yard. The Plumeria Society of South Texas curates the nearly 100-plant collection at the Botanical Gardens, digging each plant & storing them bareroot in greenhouses November through early March.**

## HONEY MESQUITE (*Prosopis glandulosa*)

is a native small tree/large shrub found in the South Texas thorn scrub chaparral & through much of South, Central & West Texas. It grows 15-30' tall with multiple trunks & has deciduous compound leaves with many small, bright green leaflets less than .25" wide & .75" long. Mesquite is quite drought tolerant due to its large spreading root system drawing scarce water from grasslands, fields & streams giving it a "phreatophyte" designation. Its spring flush of leaf growth also is considered a sign of the end of winter!



Mesquite produces long spikes of small creamy white flowers looking like white caterpillars hanging from branch tips. After pollination, loose clusters of beans form maturing at 6-10" long, providing fair forage for livestock & wildlife, but can be toxic to livestock if a high percentage of their diet.

Despite stories of it moving into Texas with cattle drives, archaeologists have found mesquite use by Native Americans in Texas before western settlers, kept in check with wildfires & buffalo migration. The common name 'honey mesquite' came from sticky golden sap that often seeps from trunk or branches. In other areas, it may be called simply mesquite, glandular mesquite, or Algarroba. It's a member of the Fabaceae (Pea/Bean) Family along with woody native cousins: Huisache (*Vachellia farnesiana*), Texas Ebony (*Ebenopsis ebano*), Blackbrush (*Vachellia rigidula*), Retama (*Parkinsonia aculeata*) & Texas Mountain Laurel (*Sophora secundiflora*). The family also includes common legumes such as sweet peas, cow peas, green beans, peanuts & even alfalfa.

**See these majestic sprawling in trees on the Brennecke Nature & Oso Creek Loop Trails.**

## BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of June 2, 2024)

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### AIR PLANT (*Tillandsia ionantha*)

Most frequently called “Air Plant,” this colorful bromeliad doesn’t need soil to live. Like many bromeliads & orchids, it is considered a lithophyte—living on rocks; or an epiphyte—living on a tree branch or trunk without withdrawing water or nutrients.

Plants form a tight rosette of gray-green leaves (due to scales) making small clumps of plants over time. When the plant nears bloom, its leaves turn bright pink & purple tubular flowers emerge between leaves near the plant’s center.

They obtain moisture from humidity through tiny vessels located on their leaves called trichomes that capture nutrients & moisture from the air. These “air plants” are extremely easy to grow, often being placed in shells or glued to ornaments. As a member of the genus, *Tillandsia*, it is a close relative of our native Ball Moss (*T. recurvata*), Giant Ball Moss (*T. baileyii*) and Spanish Moss (*T. usneoides*).

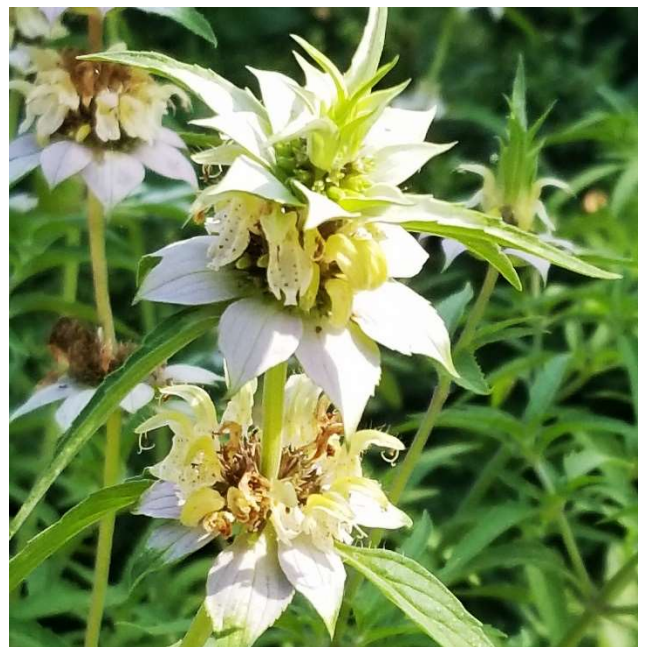


**See blooming Air Plants in the Anderson Bromeliad Conservatory & Samuel Jones Orchid Conservatory, either mounted on wood or growing in wood slat orchid baskets to provide support & excellent drainage.**

### HORSEMINT (*Monarda punctata*)

Horsemint, also known as Lemon Beebalm or Spotted Beebalm, is perennial with aromatic foliage naturally growing in prairies, plains, meadows, pastures & savannas Texas north to Minnesota & in most states in the east. A frequent component in wildflower mixes blooming from April-September, it attracts butterflies and is particularly important for native bees.

It can range from 6” to 3’ tall, typically about 2’ in our area. It produces tall flower spikes with circular layers of bracts—specialized colorful leaves in striking stands of purples, pinks, whites & yellows attracting pollinators for extended periods. The actual tubular yellowish flowers emerge from the bracts.



Horsemint is in the Lamiaceae (Mint) Family along with salvia, coleus & many common culinary herbs. It reportedly was used medicinally with fresh leaves crushed & steeped in cold water & then drunk to ease backaches, also used for fever, inflammation & chills. That may explain why Carl Linnaeus, the “father of taxonomy,” named its genus, *Monarda*, in honor of 16<sup>th</sup> century Spanish physician & botanist, Nicolas Bautista Monardes (1493-1588) who studied medicinal plants in Spain.

**See Horsemint currently blooming in the Butterfly Garden.**



## BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of May 19, 2024)

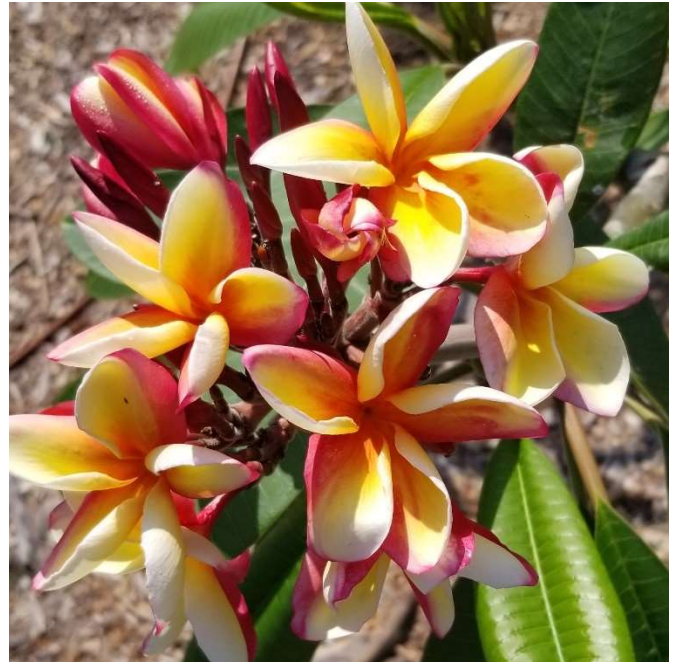
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### 'LAVA FLOW' PLUMERIA (*Plumeria rubra* 'Lava Flow')

Plumeria are favorites for semi-tropical areas like Corpus Christi & the Coastal Bend. Lava Flow is often one of our first varieties in full bloom in our collection, after being stored bareroot all winter, replanted in March.

Believed to be a seedling from variety 'Gloria Schmidt,' this variety has large, full heads with many blossoms & strong rose scent. Individual flowers are about 3" with rounded edges. The eye has reddish-orange lava colors flowing out onto a peach-colored petal. The back is streaked with a red-orange stripe, yellow-orange centers & bright pink petal edges.

Plants are moderate growers, adding 12-24" of compact growth during its growing season. Plumeria need full sun & well-drained soil, also working in pots, but need regular fertilization.



**Lava Flow is one of about 90 large plumeria plants in the Plumeria Garden, maintained by the Plumeria Society of South Texas, in full bloom in summer months. Also called Frangipani, plumeria are best known for their use in Hawaiian lei production.**

### HEARTLEAF SKULLCAP (*Scutellaria ovata*)

Contrary to its common name, Heartleaf skullcap does not have heart-shaped leaves. As noted by the species "ovata," the fuzzy blue-green leaves with slightly serrated edges actually have an oval shape. The velvety leaves provide not only color contrast to green gardens, but also an added sensory factor & provide nectar for butterflies.

It is a low-growing, spreading perennial that typically 6-12" tall, creating groundcover for flowerbeds or butterfly gardens, but it can be taller with more shade. From April through mid-summer, flower stalks soar above the velvety foliage displaying small individual blue blossoms with white throats less than .5" wide, emerging above velvety foliage, similar to its salvia cousins.

Heartleaf skullcap is a member of the mint family along with salvia, coleus & many culinary herbs like oregano, basil & rosemary. It naturally grows in the eastern half of the U.S. from Texas to Minnesota, east to the Atlantic coast.



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

## BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of May 12, 2024)

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!

### **NINETTE ROCK ORCHID** (*Bulbophyllum falcatum* 'Ninette')

Ninette Orchid is considered both an epiphytic & lithophytic orchid native to hot lowland & submontane forest regions of central & west Africa. Epiphytes cling to tree trunks without taking water or nutrients. Similarly, lithophytes live on rocks, gaining nutrients as they are washed down the rock face, absorbed by the orchids' firmly clinging roots.

"Ninette" typically blooms in spring with tiny flowers about one third inch across appearing on a flattened flower stalk (rachis) 6-10" long looking like an elongated flattened peapod with tiny peas that have broken open on the edges. Individual flowers have a maroon base with a yellow lip petal about .5" long, & other petals and sepal rolled out, appearing like an open sphere at the base. Flowering in greenhouses blooms can last several weeks late winter through mid-spring.



**See this unusual specimen blooming in the rear section of the Samuel Jones Orchid Conservatory, accompanied by other blooming orchid genera like cattleyas (corsage orchids), phalaenopsis (moth orchids) & paphiopedilums (lady slipper orchids) during their spring bloom cycle.**

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

Engelmann's Daisy is a member of the aster/daisy family Asteraceae, unusual as a monotypic genus, meaning only 1 species in the genus. It was named after German-born botanist George Engelmann who settled in St. Louis becoming a plant identification leader throughout the Central US in the 1800s.

Sometimes called cut-leaf daisy, Engelmann's Daisy is a hardy perennial 18-24" tall with multiple branches emerging from a central crown. While it may die back during cold winters, it comes back each year. Light green leaves with serrated edges provide a backdrop for pale yellow daisy flowers 1-1.5" across which fully open in late afternoon, with slightly curled petals earlier in the day.



Engelmann's Daisy naturally grows from Texas to Mexico up to Kansas & Missouri. More common in western parts of Texas & Hill Country, it prefers dry clay & calcareous soils. It blooms frequently late spring & early summer along roadsides even in drought conditions due to its prominent taproot.

Arizona & Southeast

**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 May 5, 2024)

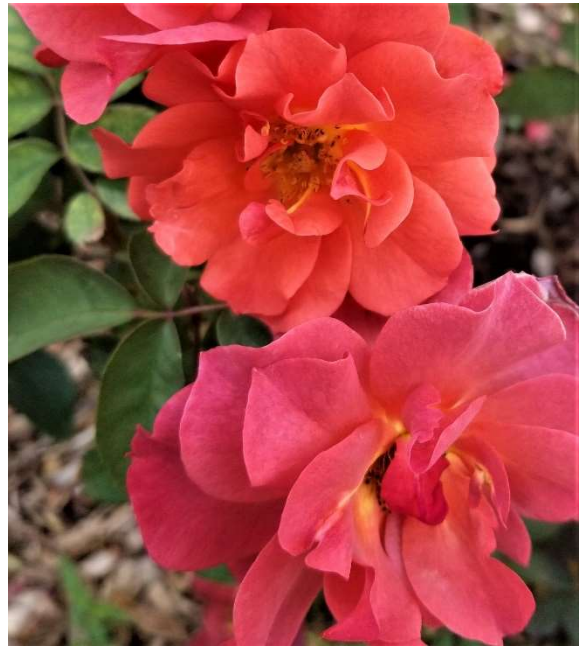
Expanding its horticulture, environmental education and conservation mission, **BLOOMING IN THE BOTANICAL GARDENS**, each week spotlights a featured tropical and native plant—to enjoy on a visit this week, try in your landscape, or simply increase your horticultural knowledge!

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

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

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

"Cinco de Mayo" literally means "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. This week many South Texans celebrate the holiday!



**See 'Cinco de Mayo' floribunda roses in raised beds in the Rose Garden. March-May is prime bloom season for roses in South Texas with fewer blossoms present during summer heat.**

### **COMMON SUNFLOWER** (*Helianthus annuus*)

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

When water is abundant, plants quickly grow 6-8' tall, a nuisance if not in the right place. However, dedicating a corner to them provides nectar for adult butterflies, leaves for caterpillars, pollen for bees & eventually seeds for migratory songbirds. In South Texas, it is the larval plant for Bordered Patch (*Chlosyne lacinia*), American Lady (*Vanessa virginiensis*) & Painted Lady (*Vanessa cardui*) caterpillars.



The golden yellow petals & dark brown centers appear to be a large 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 for nectar at a single landing site. That makes it an efficient feeding site for butterflies.

**See sunflowers in the Butterfly Garden & on Butterfly Hill, periodic specimens along the Oso Loop Nature Trail & a few in our main parking lot by Mexican Petunias (*Ruellia brittoniana* 'Purple Showers').**

## BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of April 21, 2024)

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!

### FANTASIA VIOLET ZONAL GERANIUM

(*Pelargonium x hortorum* 'Fantasia Violet')

Zonal geraniums are spring favorites in Texas, & Fantasia 'Violet' is one of the most vibrant! While somewhat heat tolerant, most gardeners use them as spring pot color until early summer. Fantasia series creates uniform mounding plants about 12" high & wide. Flower stalks with violet-pink petals rise above foliage with 3-4" showy round blossom clusters lasting 1-2 weeks. Geraniums need regularly dead-heading, removing old blossoms, promoting new flower stalk formation through the season. Flowers attract bees & hummingbirds.



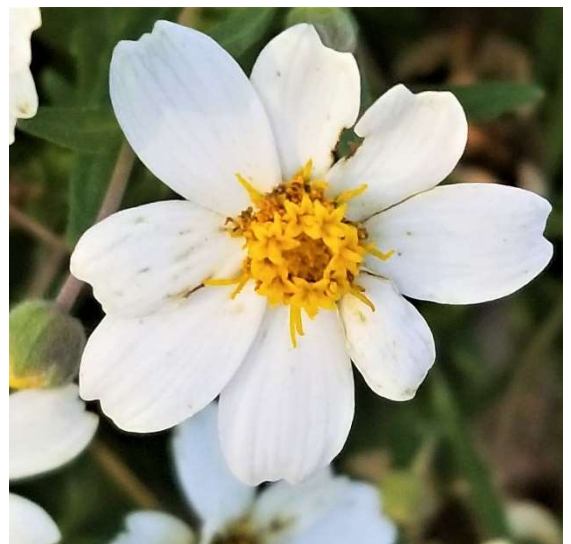
Rounded fragrant leaves on long petioles provide a nice backdrop for colorful flowers. Plants grow best in large pots or hanging baskets allowing better control of water & less diseases from soil splashing on lower leaves. Geraniums are heavy feeders doing best when fertilized every 1-2 weeks while blooming. Although large & showy, Zonal geraniums are susceptible to fungal & bacterial problems causing premature leaf drop if not addressed quickly. Remove any dying or yellowing leaves during weekly deadheading to keep geraniums in top form.

**See containerized geraniums in bloom as you enter the Visitor Center, in front of the Orchid House and in the Butterfly Garden/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. In other regions, this member of the Aster/Sunflower Family, Asteraceae also may be called Rock Daisy, Plains Blackfoot or Arnica.

Blackfoot Daisy closely resembles White Desert Zinnia (*Zinnia acerosa*) or white classic zinnia (*Zinnia angustifolius*). It has 8-13 white ray petals with toothed terminal edges surrounding a yellow center disc, while the zinnia have fewer petals. Solitary flowers are approximately 1" across & may have a slight honey scent.



Plants grow as small mounds 6-12" tall with narrow linear green leaves about an inch long. They're commonly used for color in arid gardens with high heat tolerance & low water requirements plus ability to thrive in full sun. They require good drainage as they don't like wet feet. They are important nectar sources for bees & butterflies in dry regions.

**See Blackfoot daisy blooming in the Butterfly Garden & Butterfly House.**

## BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of April 14, 2024)

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!

### TRUMPET PLAYER'S MYRMECOPHILA ORCHID (*Myrmecophila tibicinis*)

The name "Trumpet Player's Myrmecophila" Orchid comes from enlarged hollow pseudobulbs which can be dried and made into a horn to call children home from playtime in Central America! First described in 1938 under the name *Epidendrum tibicinis* (Bateman ex Lindley), it has been reclassified several times, now in the genus *Myrmecophila*.

This large orchid species, one of the most impressive plants in our collection, is indigenous to lower elevations of Mexico, Guatemala, Belize, Honduras, Costa Rica, Venezuela & Columbia, growing on tree trunks & larger branches in deciduous forests, but growing best in cultivation if mounted. Known for its large, conical, hollow pseudobulbs up to 18" long & 2-3" across, provides habitat for ants in tropical forests.

Plants typically bloom March & April if given a dry period in winter. Long flower spikes can reach 6-15' with a cluster of about 10 fragrant purple-pink blossoms appearing at the end of each spike. Each pinkish purple blossom is about 3" wide with slightly rippled petals & distinctive lip with a golden throat & dark red markings with purple on the end of the lip.



**See Trumpet Player's Myrmecophila now blooming in the Samuel Jones Orchid Conservatory along with many other orchid genera during the spring bloom cycle.**

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

Mexican Bush Sage is considered by most a South Texas native although primarily indigenous to Mexico. Available in most nurseries, it is one of the most popular "native plants" in Texas due to consistent growth & performance in landscapes plus drought tolerance.

Velvety purple or white tubular flowers emerge from purple sheaths on flower spikes blooming several months as new buds form & open over time. The plant has long narrow gray-green leaves & grows to about three feet tall, but flower spikes sometimes extend another 12" higher late in the season. As flower spike matures, dead flowers may require removal of stalks, with deadheading promoting new flower spikes.

Mexican Bush Sage prefers full sun for maximum bloom, but can grow in partial shade making it leggy at times. This true perennial needs to be cut back each spring to keep it compact & full. Vigorous summer growth may require light pruning prior to fall hummingbird migration for a new flush of flowers.



**See Mexican Bush Sage, both a hummingbird & butterfly attractor currently in bloom in the Butterfly Garden, but also is 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 April 7, 2024)

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!

### DANCING LADY ONCIDIUM ORCHID (*Oncidium sphacelatum*)

This bright yellow *Oncidium* orchid is a favorite for consistent blooming with spectacular long flower spikes full of lightly-fragrant, tiny yellow blossoms! “Dancing Lady” was named for flowers resembling women in bright yellow dresses. In Sri Lanka, it is called the *Kandyan dancer* orchid. Some call it *Mother’s Day* orchid for its consistent late spring bloom, this year well ahead of the May holiday.

The large flat pseudobulbs have 2-4 medium to dark green leaves. Long, branched flower spikes emerge from leaf-bearing sheaths in late spring cascading well past the pot. Spikes up to 6’ long have 100 or more tiny yellow blossoms with mottled brown splotches.

Native to Mexico through Central America & into eastern Venezuela, this epiphyte is found in tropical & mountain rain forests. Its popularity is due to re-flowering with minimal culture & care requirements.



**See multiple Dancing Lady Orchids currently in bloom in the Samuel Jones Orchid Conservatory, accompanied by many other species including other orchid genera like *Cattleyas*, *Phalaenopsis*, & *Paphiopedilums*.**

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

Pink Evening Primrose is a low-growing native wildflower found in abundance in much of Texas. Native to grasslands from Northern Mexico up through Texas, Oklahoma, Missouri & Nebraska, they are one of the first wildflowers in bloom this spring, a precursor to other species including 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 yellow centers. Despite the common name, southern populations of this flower open in morning, closing at night. However, plants in northern regions are reversed creating a lot of confusion around a good common name.

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. Each flower lasts only 1 day, but plants consistently bloom February through July.

The vegetative portion of the plant has a low-growing, sprawling form 12-24” across. Simple leaves can be harvested for use in as salad greens, but best flavor occurs with young plants before flowering. Seed capsules attract birds, especially finches.



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

## BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of March 31, 2024)

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!

### MISS ALL-AMERICAN BEAUTY HYBRID TEA ROSE

(*Rosa hybrida* 'Miss All-American Beauty')

'Miss All-American Beauty' is a favorite hybrid tea rose known for its large, full, fragrant deep hot pink blossoms. Flowers open fully to 4-5" per bloom able to be used for cut flowers due to long stems.

Miss All-American Beauty was hybridized by Christian Bedard as a cross between Chrysler Imperial x Karl Herbst. It was the 1968 All-American Rose Selection (AARS) winner, introduced in the US by Conard-Pyle Co. and simultaneously by Wheatcroft in the United Kingdom. This hybrid tea rose grows 3-6.5' tall with medium to dark, leathery green foliage. March-May is prime bloom season for roses in South Texas with fewer blossoms present during the heat of summer.

See a grouping of 'Miss All-American Beauty' hybrid tea roses in the back rose bed approaching the Rose Garden from the Plumeria Garden.



### TEXAS DANDELION (*Pyrrhopappus pauciflorus*)

The Texas Dandelion is a prominent low-growing, pale yellow flower seen along roadsides & in wildflower patches throughout South Texas in early spring, native to southern states from Arizona to Florida. Also called 'Small Flower Desert Chicory' & 'False Dandelion', it's in the Aster Family (Asteraceae) with daisies, sunflowers & mist flowers.

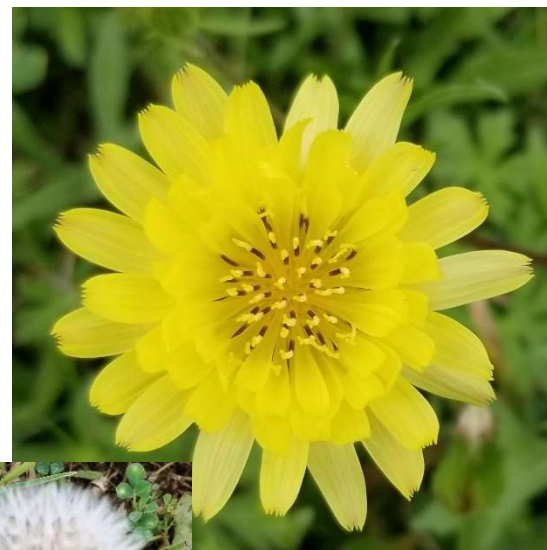
Plants hug the ground and are considered a broadleaf "weed" in cultivated turf areas. In spring, flower stalks stand 6-8" tall providing a blanket of .75" inch pale yellow flowers each morning closing by late afternoon. After pollination, the traditional dandelion fuzzy white seed head appears which allows for wind distribution of seeds & fun for kids as they make wishes blowing away the seeds.

**Foraging Texas** notes dandelion leaves, roots & young leaves able to be used in salad or boiled, used in wine, & roots roasted for a coffee

Vitamins A, B, thiamine, riboflavin along with

protein. Medicinally, the flower is used as wound healer in a salve or infused oil. Roots & leaves are used for diuretic, antibacterial, laxative, sedative & appetite stimulant purposes.

See Texas Dandelion mowed around in grassy areas by our parking area & Education Station. They also can be found in less formal grass areas & fields near the EarthKind Garden & between the Yellow Treehouse playground & Arid Garden.



flowers as edible with flowers sometimes substitute. It is rich in having minerals &

# BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of March 24, 2024)

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!

## NOBLE ROCK ORCHID

*(Dendrobium nobile)*

Noble Rock is an epiphytic orchid native to southern China, the Himalayas & Indochina. Found in lowland & mountain forests preferring diffused light, during a bloom cycle, this orchid has 8-12" pseudobulb stalks or "canes" covered with 50 or more blossoms, each 2-3" across. Older stalks can rebloom with even more flowers in subsequent years creating upright stalks of sweet-scented raceme flowers close to the cane. Flowers vary in coloration, but our show-stopping specimen features white flowers with purple on ends of waxy petals with a striking dark purple throat! Flowering canes can last for 6-8 weeks in late winter or early spring.

**See several Noble Rock specimens currently blooming in the Samuel Jones Orchid Conservatory's front section, along with other genera--cattleyas, phalaenopsis & paphiopedilums. Select orchids will be sold at the BIG BLOOM, Saturday, April 6!**



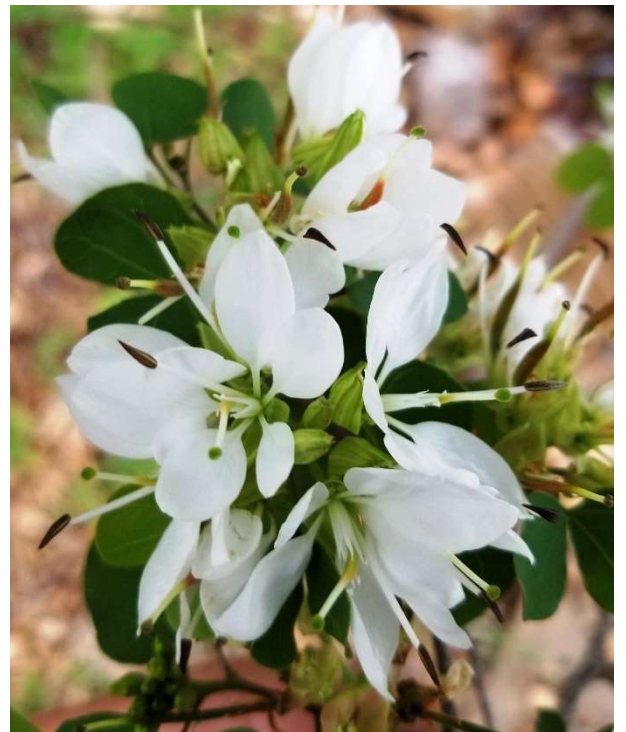
## ANACONCHO ORCHID TREE

*(Bauhinia lunaroides)*

Anaconcho Orchid Tree is the native form of West Texas orchid tree, a cousin of the popular purple flowering Hong Kong Orchid Tree (*Bauhinia purpurea*). This small tree only reaches 8-12', smaller than the exotic form or its South Texas-Mexican counterpart (*Bauhinia mexicana*). This multi-trunk shrub is revered for its silvery bark contrasting nicely with dark green double lobed leaves 1-1.5" long.

Clusters of small white fragrant flowers resembling orchids blossom from spring through fall, providing nectar for butterflies & bees in arid regions. Thin petals of multiple flowers may provide a pom-pom appearance. Anaconcho Orchid Tree is a member of the Pea Family (Fabaceae) along with local natives like mesquite, huisache & retama, all of which produce bean pods when flowers are pollinated.

**See several specimens of Anaconcho Orchid Tree currently blooming in the Butterfly Garden near the Orchid House Bridge.**





## BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of March 17, 2024)

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!

### 'HANNAH RAY' WEEPING BOTTLEBRUSH

(*Callistemon viminalis* 'Hannah Ray')

"Hannah Ray" is a tall bottlebrush tree reaching 15-20' at maturity. Rapid growth produces longer thinner branches with a graceful, slightly weeping form, especially during flowering, compared to dwarf & standard red varieties. Leaves are slightly thinner, longer & softer textured than standard red bottlebrush (*C. citrinus*) or 'Little John' dwarf variety.

"Hannah Ray" has dark pink/rose, almost red flowers. Closer inspection reveals multiple flower buds on branch ends opening at once with thin petals, pistils & stamen resembling bristles, which when viewed collectively gave it the bottlebrush name. Flower blossoms last several weeks with 2-3 bloom cycles annually. They are excellent hummingbird & butterfly plants.

"Hannah Ray" can be pruned into tree form or large shrub or hedge with annual cut backs. If used as a hedge, infrequent selective cutting is the best option to prevent removal of flower buds at through the year.

Bottlebrush are native to Australia grown throughout much of the world. Most varieties are Zone 9 tolerating temperatures in mid 20s, but Hannah Ray survived upper teens during the deep freeze of 2021, re-sprouting from the base.

**See 'Hannah Ray' bottlebrush along the Bromeliad Conservatory walkway, Staples Street fence, & Hummingbird Garden.**



### TEXAS BABY BLUE EYES (*Nemophila phacelioides*)

"Baby Blue Eyes" is an early spring wildflower lasting for only a couple of weeks in late February through early April, with plants dying back from heat by June. Fuzzy pale blue flowers about .75" with white centers give them their common name; and a less common name in other areas, Flannel Breeches.

Plants grow 4-6" tall with gray-green, rounded hairy leaves. They make a striking show early, soon joined by other wildflowers tending to hide them due to their short stature. They grow in a variety of soils including clay, sand, loams, and caliche. Plants are ecologically important providing early sources of nectar & pollen for butterflies, moths, and bees.



"Baby Blue Eyes" is a member of the Waterleaf Family (Hydrophyllaceae), a subfamily of the Borages, with many of 20 related species identified as natural astringents.

**See "Baby Blue Eyes" most prominently in the Arid Garden; but also in grass areas, especially between Sensory & Arid Gardens, & on the Brennecke Nature Trail by the pathway to the Palapa Grande.**

## BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of March 10, 2024)

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!

### BLUE LACE CARPET PETUNIA (*Petunia multiflora* 'Carpet Blue Lace')

Petunias are traditional cool season annual flowers used in landscape plantings, container gardens & hanging baskets. Carpet petunias are low-growing selections helping fill annual color beds or gracefully drape over sides of pots. Blue Lace is popular for its light bluish lavender single flower with dark purple veins. Individual flowers are 2-3" across with plants reblooming from fall through mid-May in South Texas. Plants grow 10-12" tall, spreading 12-15" across. Soft hairy bright green leaves provide a backdrop for blossoms.



Native to South America, petunias are in the Nightshade Family (Solonaceae) along with tomatoes, peppers, eggplant & tropicals including popular angel trumpets (*Brugmansia* sp.); devil trumpets (*Datura* sp.); & yesterday, today and tomorrow plant (*Brunfelsia pauciflora*).

Petunias favor cooler temperatures & less intense sun usually blooming out & dying as temperatures increase & summer approaches.

**See Carpet Blue Lace Petunias currently blooming in the Earthkind Demonstration Garden; with other carpet petunia colors in entrance planters, beds around the Visitor Center & in the Butterfly Garden/Butterfly House.**

### BLACKBRUSH ACACIA (*Vachellia rigidula*)

Blackbrush Acacia, a large shrub/small tree found in South Texas thornscrub chaparral from Rio Grande Plains up to Austin, hugging the Mexican border stretching from Corpus Christi west to Big Bend, also is called Blackbrush, Chaparro Prieto & Gavia. Blackbrush formerly was classified in the genus *Acacia* with older literature referring to it by scientific names *Acacia amentacea* & *Acacia rigidula*.

Blackbrush, one of the first South Texas plants to bloom in spring, features numerous 2" spikes of pale yellow frilly flowers 1-2" long, often appearing on bare branches before spring flush of leaves. Pollinated flowers result in small brown beans later in spring. Bees use Blackbrush for an early pollen source. Butterflies nectar on flowers, & granivorous birds feed on seeds after they drop. This plant has spiny stiff branches growing 4-12' tall creating a dense thicket, the white/gray bark contrasting with tiny dark green compound leaves.



Very drought tolerant, it's a good Xeriscape shrub, easily incorporated into arid landscapes & rock gardens, but rarely found in nurseries. This shrubby tree is a member of the Bean Family (Fabaceae) along with native woody cousins: Mesquite (*Prosopis glandulosa*), Ebony (*Ebenopsis ebano*), Huisache (*Vachellia farnesiana*), & Retama (*Parkinsonia aculeata*).

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

## BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of March 3, 2024)

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!

### PYGMY ATROVIOLACEUM DENDROBIUM

(*Dendrobium atrovioleaceum* 'Pygmy')

This compact version of *Dendrobium atrovioleaceum* has thick, long-lasting, creamy white blossoms with purple spotting on petals & sepals, which can be seen on outsides of sepals before blossoms open. The dark purple lip petal is veined around the column giving it a striped appearance in the throat. Flowering usually occurs late winter or early spring lasting up to 2 months with multiple blossoms on each flower spike which remains relatively close to the medium green pseudobulbs.

This *Dendrobium* species naturally grows in New Guinea & surrounding islands, at elevations of 600-2500'. It grows as an epiphyte on large tree trunks in rainforests, thus preferring continuous growing conditions rather than temperature fluctuations to induce flowering.



See several examples of this specimen blooming in the Samuel Jones Orchid Conservatory with **other Dendrobiums, Paphiopediums, Laelias, & Phalaenopsis.**

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

Texas Mountain Laurel, or Mescal, is a member of the Pea Family (Fabaceae) along with Mesquite & Retama. Its shiny dark, evergreen compound leaves provide a nice shrub base to a native plant landscape. In spring, clusters of lavender/blue flowers bloom for a few weeks, looking like grapes with an amazing grape soda scent!

This slow-growing shrub can be shaped into a small, ornamental, multi-trunked tree normally maturing at 10-15' tall, but occasionally can reach 25-30'. Its slow growth habit results in large specimen plants being somewhat expensive at nurseries. However, it is one of few natives readily available at retail outlets.

As a member of the Pea Family, pollinated flowers create long seed pods possibly lasting a year or more; but bright red seeds inside the pods are poisonous. Locally, it naturally grows in caliche outcroppings around Mathis, with a native range from Central Texas west to New Mexico & south to San Luis Potosi, Mexico.



**See Texas Mountain Laurel trees in the Sensory Garden, across from the Hummingbird Garden by the Brennecke Nature Trail entrance, Arid Garden. Flowers only last for a couple of weeks, so visit soon to experience the intoxicating sweet grape fragrance!**

## BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of February 25, 2024)

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!

### MEXICAN LAELIA ORCHID (*Laelia anceps*)

Mexican Laelia is a species native to orchids of Mexico's Sierra Madre Oriental, the eastern mountain range. It was first described by John Lindley in the *Botanical Register*, 1835. This epiphytic form has striking purple blossoms with pink/gold variations on the throat. Because they originate in mid-elevations of the mountains, they are hardier than many other orchids surviving a wide range of growing temperatures including 100°F to mild freezing temperatures in upper 20s, but I wouldn't risk it!

Due to brilliant colors & durability, Laelias are used in hybridizing & referred to in parentage of species crosses particularly with Cattleyas, producing a new genus name, *Laeliocattleya*.



**See *Laelia anceps* in the Samuel Jones Orchid Conservatory with other blooming orchids--phalaenopsis, paphiopedilums & dendrobiums. Visit often to see these spring blooming orchids as sunshine & warmer temperatures bring more orchids into bloom.**

### LIME PRICKLY ASH, a.k.a. Colima (*Zanthoxylum fagara*)

Lime Prickly Ash, often called by Spanish name "Colima" in South Texas, is a common native shrub in local brushland. Part of the Rue Family (Rutaceae), it's a cousin to citrus as the common name implies. Lime Prickly Ash is native to South Texas & Northern Mexico chaparral brush country plus Central & Southern Florida. This extremely drought-tolerant shrub grows 8-25' tall with a multi-stemmed trunk, producing tiny yellow flowers after summer rains followed by small edible orange berries currently present. The flowers with primarily yellow stamen & pistils are visible if you look carefully, blooming winter into spring.



Distinctive compound leaves help identify Lime Prickly Ash. Leaves have 5-13 leaflets arranged on the "winged" rachis looking like an extension of the leaf blade along a central rib. When crushed, the leaves release a lime aroma. Tiny blackish-brown curved thorns providing protection for the plant will catch clothing & bare skin. Growing in poor soils in full sun or partial shade as an understory shrub makes them good erosion control. Their evergreen nature also makes them good in 'nativescapes' with dark green winter foliage when many South Texas natives drop leaves.

It's a host plant for Giant Swallowtail Butterflies (*Papilio cresphontes*), the largest butterfly in North America! White-tailed deer browse on stems & foliage. Quail & other birds feed on small seeds, & small perching birds often nest in thorny branches. It is also larval host plant for American Snout butterfly (*Libytheana carinenta*), & in bloom is used as nectar plants for other butterfly species. Native Americans & pioneers used powdered bark & leaves as a sharp-tasting spice; all plant parts to numb mouth pain; but in smaller doses it produces a refreshing tingle, leading to *Zanthoxylum* being used in natural toothpastes & tooth powders.

**See many specimens of Lime Prickly Ash along the Mary Hope Brennecke Nature Trail, & other brushy areas.**

## BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of February 18, 2024)

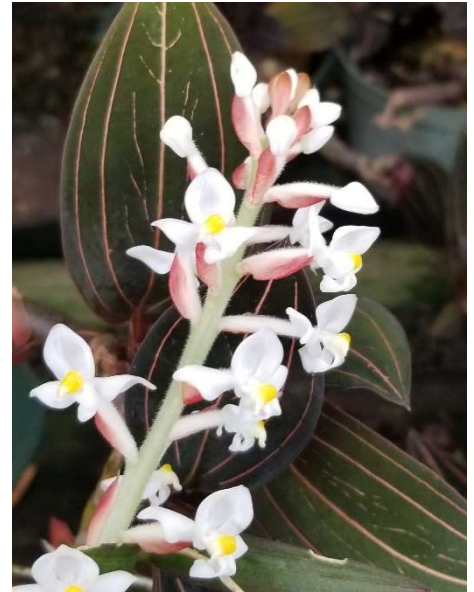
Expanding its horticulture, environmental education and conservation mission, **BLOOMING IN THE BOTANICAL GARDENS**, each week spotlights a featured tropical and native plant—to enjoy on a visit this week, try in your landscape, or simply increase your horticultural knowledge!

### JEWEL ORCHID (*Ludisia discolor*)

Jewel orchid, unlike most orchids which grow on tree trunks is terrestrial, growing naturally on forest floors of Southeast Asia. Jewel Orchids prefer indirect light & need well-drained soil, usually a mixture of orchid bark, peat moss & perlite to mimic conditions in their native tropical forest habitat.

This easy orchid, often grown for its foliage, has striking dark maroon leaves with elegant pink veins creating a pinstripe effect appearing velvety at a distance. Tiny white flowers less than .5" across with a distinctive yellow throat appear on 4-6" tall stalks in winter, contrasting nicely with dark velvety foliage resembling velvet lining of a jewelry box.

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 handled.



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

### HUISACHE OR SWEET ACACIA (*Vachellia farnesiana*)

Huisache is a small tree or large shrub found in South Texas' thorn scrub chaparral. Huisache typically grows 15-20' tall with multiple trunks giving it a large shrub form. Its fine compound leaves have been described as "fernline" with many leaflets less than .25" long.

Huisache is one of the first plants blooming in South Texas brushlands in spring, having just begun its burst of golden color for the year. In colder years, it's often delayed to late February or March. Small fragrant golden orange flowers about .5" across appear before leaves. The most visible part of the flower is a collection of stamen which gives it a fine, starburst or pom-pom effect. Once pollinated, reddish-brown beanlike structures 1.5-3" long appear. In southern Europe this species is extensively planted for the flowers, a perfume ingredient.



The common name, Huisache, comes from Nahuatl (Aztec) meaning "many thorns". It also goes by Texas Huisache, Sweet Acacia, Perfume Acacia, Mealy Acacia, Mealy Wattle & Cassie depending on location. This tree is a member of the Fabaceae (Pea/Bean) Family along with other woody native cousins: Honey Mesquite (*Prosopis glandulosa*), Texas Ebony (*Ebenopsis ebano*), Blackbrush (*Vachellia rigidula*) & Retama (*Parkinsonia aculeata*). It was formerly classified in the genus *Acacia* with scientific name *Acacia farnesiana* in older literature.

Rarely found in retail nurseries, Huisache is very drought tolerant but considered invasive by ranchers due to rapid growth & high seed germination rates.

**See several Huisache specimens along the Brennecke Nature Trail, and a large tree on the walkway to the Administration building.**

## BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of February 11, 2024)

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!

### CALENDULA 'BON-BON YELLOW' (*Calendula officinalis*)

Calendulas are among the most consistent winter-flowering bedding plants! Believed to have originated in Southern Europe, later introduced in northern Europe & Americas, calendulas sometimes are called “English Marigolds” or “Pot Marigold”, for their round full yellow & orange flowers; but they are not close relatives of the traditional pungent marigold (*Tagetes* sp.)

The most commonly locally-sold variety is *Bon-Bon*, a compact plant readily reblooming with yellow or orange flowers 2-3” across. Plants have medium-sized simple grey-green leaves & grow 8-18” tall when flowering. Calendulas are members of the daisy/sunflower family (Asteraceae) with composite flowers, but a single blossom actually is a collection of tiny flowers grouped in a single inflorescence.

Calendulas can be started with seeds, but transplants are more popular in cooler months here, usually performing October - May. To increase new bud formation, remove spent blossoms (dead-head) regularly. Calendulas provide nectar for butterflies & hummingbirds, & pollen for bees in cooler months when other plants aren't flowering. They are also a larval plant for several moth species.

Homeopathically, Calendula flowers also are used medicinally for wounds, rashes, infection & inflammation, but strong evidence supporting these advantages is lacking, according to WebMD. Flower petals also were used in dyes & cosmetics in Ancient Greece & Rome.

**See Calendulas in the Butterfly Garden, Butterfly House & growing in beds between the Visitor Center & Samuel Jones Orchid Conservatory.**

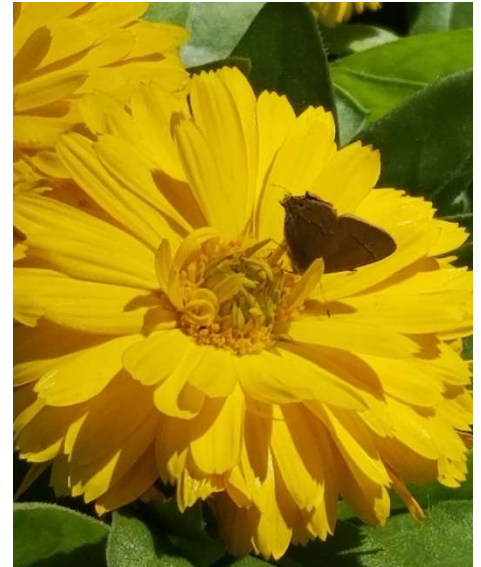
### AGARITA OR WILD CURRANT (*Mahonia trifoliolata*)

Agarita, *aka* Wild Currant, is showing bright yellow flowers starting to peak open with more consistent blooming expected the next few weeks in brushy areas of South Texas—another signal of spring approaching! Early bloom cycle is most striking when many branches have yellow flower clusters near the ends; but plants bloom sporadically later in spring. Unlike many native plants, it can be found at private retail garden centers.

Agarita has a wide range of common names (& spellings) depending on location including Agarito, Algerita, Laredo Mahonia, Laredo Oregon-grape & Trifoliate Barberry. This native member of the Barberry Family (Berberidaceae) is a common shrub in South Texas brushlands with a range stretching west to Arizona, dipping into Northern Mexico.

Agarita grows 3-8' tall, 3-4' wide. Known for gray-green, multi-pointed, trifoliate leaves resembling Christmas holly, this time of year flowers are the showstoppers with clusters of vibrant golden cup-shaped blossoms visible when most surrounding natives are still dormant. After pollination, flowers at maturity produce clusters of red berries eaten by birds & wildlife, which also can be harvested for jam, jelly or wine. Quail and small mammals also use the prickly-leafed plant for cover. Pioneers used the roots for yellow dye.

**See Agarita naturally growing along the Mary Hope Brennecke Nature Trail.**



# BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of February 4, 2024)

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!

## MEMORIA GORDON PETERS LADY SLIPPER ORCHID

(*Paphiopedilum* X 'Memoria Gordon Peters')

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

This week, we are featuring hybrid *Paphiopedilum* 'Memoria Gordon Peters' with striking long gold & maroon striped petals which look like twisted streamers around the lower lip petal that makes up the "slipper." Similarly colored sepals provide a cover and a backdrop for the slipper petal. This variety has smaller flowers about 4" across. Bright green leaves are about an inch wide, & 6-8" long. It was a cross of *Paphiopedilum* 'Julius Irving' & *P. philippinense*.



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

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

## TANGLEWOOD, a.k.a. Desert Olive (*Forestiera pubescens*)

Tanglewood is a common native spineless understory plant of the South Texas Chaparral Thorns scrub. This member of the olive family (Oleaceae) has several common names including Desert Olive, Stretchberry, Chaparral & Downy Forestiera. The most used common name here is Tanglewood coming from rapidly growing branches moving into existing trees & shrubs creating a "tangled" effect. Some call it Spring Herald or Spring Goldenglow since the flower appears early spring before leaves appear, ahead of most other communal plants. It also is called Elbowbush or Devi's Elbow with the 90° angle of new branches to the original stem.



If sweet perfume from seemingly bare, dormant plants gets your attention while walking through South Texas Brushlands in February or early March, then you might be smelling Tanglewood. This plant is one of the first bloomers to signal spring, and the flowers are easy to miss. Tiny flowers open along leafless branches. Each flower is only about .25" across & lacks obvious petals. This plant is dioecious, having male & female flowers on different plants. Male flowers have clusters of bright yellow stamen in a starburst effect. Female flowers are fragrant recognizable by the reddish round-ended pistils creating a similar starburst effect. Bees & butterflies pollinate separated male & female plants.

When flowers are pollinated, small green fruit appear eventually maturing to a dark blue-black, which then are eaten by birds & small mammals. The rest of the year, it appears as a dense shrub that can grow to 10+ feet tall with dark green .75" long oval leaves usable as great visual screen in dry regions.

**To find Tanglewood, follow your nose & careful inspection along the Brennecke Nature Trail. Good luck in your aromatic explorations as we wait for spring in South Texas!**

## BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

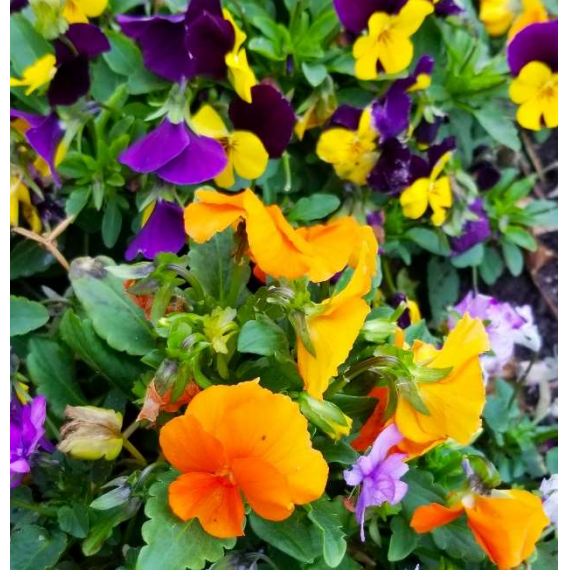
(week of January 28, 2024)

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!

### VIOLA – SORBET MIX (*Viola odorata* 'Sorbet')

Violas are small flowering plants, commonly called “wood violet”, native to European & Asian woodlands introduced into the Americas & Australia. Other common names are sweet violet, English violet, common violet, florist’s violet, garden violet. Violas are essentially miniature pansies (*Viola tricolor* var. *hortensis*), both being in the Violet Family (Violaceae). Cool-season annuals in South Texas, Violas grow late Fall through mid-spring. As temperatures & sun intensity increases, plants decline.

'Sorbet Mix' only reaches 6-8" in height, the small rounded leaves a backdrop to a dazzling combinations of flower colors. 'Sorbet Mix' includes yellow, orange, white, lavender, dark purple & blue, plus multicolor blossoms with the classic pansy markings. Flowers are only .5-.75" wide, but plants are profuse bloomers, blossoms lasting multiple days quickly replaced with new flowers! Violas are another hardy annual that withstood recent mid-20s freeze.



Violas are edible flowers are used as garnish on salads, & living decorations on cakes & pastries. But it's critical that pesticides are not applied to flowers used in salads!

**See them as short-term color in the Tropical Garden, and flower beds leading to & around the Butterfly House, as well as in combination container plantings.**

### COMMON GREENSHIELD LICHEN (*Flavoparmelia caperata*)

Lichens are common moss-like organisms living on tree trunks & rocks; unique in that lichens are symbiotic organisms made up of multiple species including fungus, algae or cyanobacteria & sometimes a yeast. Lichens are present on trees, rocks & even fences. They are not parasitic but epiphytic, not extracting moisture or moisture from trees, confirmed by their presence on non-living rocks & stones.

Greenshield lichens are part of the foliose lichen group which have leaf-like structures. But other lichen forms include crustose lichens which look like scales on tree bark, & fruticose lichens with a lacy appearance.

The visible portion of the lichen is not a bloom but rather the vegetative structure present all year; making them more visible & colorful in winter months due to less surrounding vegetation & moisture. Common Greenshield Lichens have rounded leaflike structures ranging .5-1" tall. These lichens often appear to be a sheet with rounded, frilly edges. The leaf-like structures appear greener when wet & gray-green when dry.



**See common Greenshield Lichen on trees throughout the Botanical Gardens; but largest, nicest specimens are on trees along the highly accessible Mary Hope Brennecke Nature Trail.**



## BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of January 21, 2024)

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!

### **STOCK 'HARMONY MIX'** (*Matthiola incana*)

'Harmony Mix' Stock is an early-blooming, fragrant cool season annual many Coastal Bend gardeners overlook at garden centers. The florist industry uses tall-growing varieties of stock to add a spike of color along with its sweet perfume. Stock frequently is found in northern climate Victorian style cottage gardens. In South Texas, we use it as a cool season annual.

Semi-double blossoms with round petals start opening at the bottom of the thick bloom stalk with flower colors ranging from white to light pink, dark rose & shades of purple. Thick, medium green leaves provide a backdrop. Harmony is a dwarf variety, typically growing about 10" tall and spreading 6-8" across. Once the plant blooms out, cut the spent flower stalk a couple of inches above the ground & new growth & flowers should emerge.



Despite getting to 25°F earlier this week, these stock plants kept on blooming **without covering** during the cold snap, not surprising being a cold-hardy member of the cabbage family.

**See blooming Stock as winter color in the Tropical & Butterfly Gardens.**

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

Pink Mint appeared unphased by the week's freezing weather dipping to 25°F. It consistently is one of the first wildflowers to bloom even before spring weather returns. Pink Mint is in the Mint Family (Lamiaceae) along with salvias, coleus & many common culinary herbs.

Drummond's Pink Salvia produces multiple flower stalks featuring small lavender-pink tubular blossoms with white throats & lavender speckles, resembling many tubular flowers in the 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 serrations on the edge.

This annual only grows in cooler temperatures, dying out due to summer heat, but returning each November from seeds. After blooming which can linger through May, allow flowers to die back and left on plant to produce seeds for next year. It provides an important nectar source for winter hummingbirds and butterflies.



According to the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center, Drummond's Pink Mint, a.k.a. Drummond's Hedge-nettle, is found only in Texas. 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.

**See it in the Butterfly Garden, Butterfly Hill & Hummingbird Garden, but also occurring naturally in smaller populations in other gardens & sunny spots along the Brennecke Nature Trail.**

## BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of January 14, 2024)

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!

### LAELIA NEMESIS ORCHID (*Laelia anceps* X *Laelia superbiens*)

This orchid is a primary hybrid--a cross of 2 naturally occurring species, *Laelia anceps* and *L. superbiens*. Introduced in 1902 by Crawshay, *Laelias* are native to Central America. These epiphytic orchids do not require traditional "soil" but attach themselves to trees and rocks.

The narrow lavender petals & sepals, bright yellow "throat" & dark purple lower lip of this orchid make a striking statement. The early hybrid has an extremely long flower stalk, often reaching 2-3' with 3-5 blossoms at the end of each stalk. Each blossom is 4-5" across, but looks smaller due to narrow petals & sepals. Tracing the flower stalk back to the pseudobulb will reveal the plant's thick gray-green leaf-like structures only about 6-8" tall.



Having been used in hybridizing due to their brilliant colors & durability, *Laelias* are referred to in parentage of species crosses particularly with *Cattleya* species, producing the new genus name, *Laeliocattleya*.

**See *L. Nemesis* in the Samuel Jones Orchid Conservatory. Other orchids also still in bloom include cattleyas, paphiopedilums & dendrobiums.**

### FLUTED BIRD'S NEST FUNGUS (*Cyathus striatus*)

A closer look sometimes turns up an unusual find! During cooler winter months, many native plants don't bloom; but sometimes there are surprises.

For instance, the Striated Bird's Nest Fungus currently is producing its fruiting structures in rich organic material. We discovered this unusual fungus in a pot in the Butterfly House, where it is breaking down organic matter on the surface of the soil mix of a hibiscus plant; but likely more are present along our Nature Trail. Striated Bird's Nest Fungus is a saprophytic fungus, belonging to the largest group of macro-fungi responsible for breaking down & recycling dead plant & animal material.



The conical-shaped fungus actually is very small, only about an inch tall growing at the soil surface. So likely you'll miss them if not specifically looking. Once discovered, a close inspection shows the fungus looks amazingly like tiny beige bird's nests about .5" wide, most often found in clusters. In the center of each "nest" are round light gray structures resembling eggs, thus resulting in the common name of "bird's nest." With age, the "nest" structures turn darker brown. This species is also recognizable by the striations or flutes on the sides of the conical cups.

**Visit the Butterfly House and look in the hibiscus pots to view the fungus. (If it freezes this week as predicted, pots temporarily will be stored inside.)**

## BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of January 7, 2024)

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!

### **BIG BANG' EQUITANT ORCHID** (*Tolumnia* Jairak Firm 'Big Bang')

Orchids come in all sizes and colors. One of the smallest orchids in our collection is a group formerly called Equitant Oncidium orchids, endemic to a few Caribbean basin islands. Leaves typically are 2-6" long within this group arranged in overlapping pairs at the base which inspired the name "equitant," from Latin meaning "riding a horse."

Small clusters of 2-6 flowers are common, emerging from a thin flower stalk so blossoms appear to hang in space! Colors range from browns to whites & purples. Jairak Firm 'Big Bang' are only about .5" wide with a large red lower lip petal & darker red petals & sepals behind with highlighting splashes of golden yellow.

Although 'Equitant' still is used by orchid aficionados, this orchid group now have their own genus, *Tomlumnia*. Most equitants only have been hybridized for the past half century, but even in that short time, there have been many crosses; so you will often see the genus simply followed by the hybrid name.



**See a late fall/winter bloom in the Samuel Jones Orchid Conservatory allowing visitors to not only view Equitants like 'Big Bang', but also multiple flowering Cattleya, Dendrobium & Paphiopedilum specimens.**

### **COMMON DAY FLOWER** (*Commelina erecta*)

Common Day Flower, or spiderwort, is a warm month wildflower. However, our warm fall & mild winter have these resilient flowers sporadically still blooming when other natives are temporarily dormant. This plant often is considered a weed but can be used as native groundcover. Part of its hardiness comes from a succulent underground tuber allowing it to store water living through the winter & surviving summer heat.

The three-petal flowers consist of 2 upper blue petals & a lower white "lip" petal resulting in an alternate common name, 'white-mouth dayflower'. Slightly fuzzy green leaves resemble wide grass blades about 1" wide & several inches long.



It probably is the most common member of the Spiderwort (Commelinaceae) Family which also includes Oyster Plant (*Rhoeo spathacea*), Purple Heart (*Tradescantia pallida*) & various trailing tropicals grown in hanging baskets under the umbrella name of "Wandering Jew." It is found in most of the continental U.S., particularly in the South. A vigorous grower, like other Commelina species, if growing in unwanted areas, needs to be dug, removing the central growing point attached to the fleshy, underground tuber.

**See Day flower along the nature trail, in the Butterfly Garden, in front of Education Station, as well as occasionally a few free-growing dayflowers in other beds, providing a surprise pop of color this winter & attracting overwintering butterflies on warm sunny days.**