



# “Blooming in the Gardens” LIBRARY 2025



## **BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS**

**(week of January 5, 2025)**

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

### **LITTLE JOHN DWARF BOTTLEBRUSH** (*Callistemon viminalis* 'Little John')

"Little John," a compact bottlebrush reaching 3-5' tall & wide at maturity, has thin, pointed, gray-green leaves about 2" long surrounding the branches, which feature red flowers emerging from tips between the leaves. While we think of one branch having a single flower, it really is a combination of synchronous openings of multiple flower buds with thin, dark-red petals, pistils & stamen resembling bristles like a typical "bottle brush," thus the common name. Flower blossoms last several weeks at each of its 2-3 bloom cycles each year, putting on a colorful show in winter.

'Little John' can be trimmed into a hedge or medium-sized shrub. Infrequent pruning is suggested between bloom cycles to prevent removal of flower buds on branch ends.

Bottlebrush are native to Australia, but grown throughout much of the world. Most varieties are Zone 9 plants tolerating temperatures in the mid-20s.



**See 'Little John' Bottlebrush blooming in front of the Anderson Bromeliad Conservatory, in the Sensory Garden, in front of Education Station & at the Hummingbird Garden, as it is an excellent nectar plant for both hummingbirds and butterflies.**

### **SILVERLEAF NIGHTSHADE** (*Solanum elaeagnifolium*)

Silverleaf Nightshade is a common South Texas wildflower, blooming nearly year-round. Known for its five-petaled blue star-shaped flowers featuring a cluster of bright yellow stamen in the center, blue-violet is the most common color, with lighter blue & occasional white variations. After flowering, small round green fruit appear eventually turning yellow-orange. Plants have silvery triangular leaves about 1" wide & up to 4" long. Plants are upright with few branches growing 1-2' tall.

This deep-rooted, heat-loving perennial is native to the Americas, but widely naturalized in many other tropical regions of the world. In other regions, it may be called White Horse Nettle, Tomato Weed or Trompill; & considered an invasive weed in semi-arid regions including India, Australia, South Africa, Pacific Islands & parts of the U.S. Silverleaf Nightshade is a member of the Solonaceae Family. commonly called the Nightshade or Potato Family & includes tomatoes, peppers, eggplant & potatoes. It is known to be toxic to cattle, with hallucinogenic & paralytic effects in humans.



**See Silverleaf Nightshade in the Hummingbird Garden, various native habitats near the Arid Garden & on the pathway by the flagpole.**