



# “Blooming in the Gardens” LIBRARY 2025



## **BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS**

**(week of January 12, 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!

### **LOQUAT OR JAPANESE PLUM**

*(Eriobotrya japonica)*

Loquat or Japanese plum is a member of the Rose Family (Rosaceae) along with several other fruits such as plums, pears, quince & cherries. Our loquat is currently blooming with clusters of small creamy-white half-inch blossoms emerging from fuzzy beige sepals. When pollinated by bees or butterflies, edible fruit develop & mature into a 2" sweet golden ball, the size of a fig.

Its attractive large dark green leaves with rust-colored fuzz on the underside & serrated edges are 6-9" long & 2-3" wide, providing an attractive alternative to more commonly used small-leaf shrubs and trees in the garden; and often are used in floral design. Loquats can grow to 20 or 30' tall, but most stay 15-18' in our area with limited rainfall.

This small ornamental tree & proven performer in South Texas landscapes, as its common name implies, is native to Southeast Asia. It has good freeze tolerance, surviving temperatures as low as 10°F, making it a Zone 8 plant.

**See our loquat specimen in the Sensory Garden.**



### **SKELETON-LEAF GOLDENEYE** (*Viguiera stenoloba*)

Skeleton-leaf Goldeneye, or Resin Bush, is a consistent bloomer from late spring through fall & into mild winters, slowing down only when temperatures drop to the lower 30s. The common name "goldeneye" comes from individual 1" golden-yellow daisy-like flowers with a large yellow ray-type center. It grows into a 2-4' densely branched shrub. The "skeleton-leaf" name refers to its deeply serrated foliage having a fine, almost lacy texture from a distance. Essential oils produce their aromatic quality from which the "resin bush" common name emerged. Skeleton-leaf Goldeneye is evergreen in South Texas, holding leaves all winter; but is deciduous in northern regions, dropping leaves in winter, re-sprouting from stems or roots in early spring.



Native to dry areas from the Rio Grande Valley to the Edwards Plateau & West into New Mexico, it is a great water-wise plant for landscapes, performing best in full sun after establishment. Flowers provide nectar for butterflies & pollen for bees until frost. It naturally occurs in caliche soils but grows in other soil types with good drainage.

**See Skelton-Leaf Goldeneye in the Butterfly House & Garden, on Butterfly Hill behind the Sensory Garden, & Hummingbird Garden entry.**

## **BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS**

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

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### **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.**