



“Blooming in the Gardens” LIBRARY 2025



BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of Dec 28, 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.

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LITTLE JOHN DWARF BOTTLEBRUSH

(*Callistemon viminalis* ‘Little John’)

“Little John” is a compact bottlebrush reaching 3-5’ at maturity with similar width. Thin, pointed, gray-green leaves about 2” long surround branches with red flowers emerging from branch tips between leaves. We think 1 branch has a single flower, but it really is a synchronous opening of multiple flower buds with thin, dark-red petals, pistils & stamen resembling bristles, which look like a red bottle brush. Flower blossoms last several weeks in each of its 2-3 yearly bloom cycles. Winter blooms make it an excellent pollinator plant for year-round bees & butterflies. Infrequent pruning is recommended between bloom cycles to prevent removal of flower buds on branch ends.



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

Find ‘Little John’ Bottlebrush in bloom along the walkway by the Anderson Bromeliad Conservatory, in the Sensory Garden, in front of the Hummingbird Garden & Education Station.

STRAGGLER DAISY

(*Calyptracarpus vialis*)

Straggler Daisy, also known as Horseherb, is a spectacular cool season pollinator plant, just coming back into its glory. Other common names include *Hierba Del Caballo* (literally translated as horsetail), & Lawnflower as it is often found in turfgrasses. Many homeowners call it a weed, which is a name for any plant growing in an unwanted space; but we challenge South Texas residents to avoid hoe & herbicide, instead embracing this native groundcover in winter months in all continental U.S. states.



Straggler Daisy grows in shade or sun with tiny quarter-inch butter yellow flowers that break up the bright green blanket of hairy foliage that rarely grows higher than 8-10”. Straggler Daisy is a great pollinator plant supplying wintertime nectar & pollen for bees & butterflies when many other plants are dormant.

Straggler Daisy is in the Daisy Family (Asteraceae) & can be found in many of the field & lawn areas as well as mixed with other winter wildflowers in various gardens, & along the Mary Hope Brennecke Nature Trail. D

BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of Dec 21, 2025)

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SHRIMP PLANT (*Justicia brandegeana*)

This herbaceous perennial tropical is native to Mexico, well-adapted to the Texas Coastal Bend. Gardeners consider it extremely easy to grow, living in both full sun or shade, blooming nearly year-round. It is in the Acanthus Family (Acanthaceae) along with Mexican petunias (*Ruellia* sp.), Flame Acanthus (*Anisicanthus quadrifidis* var. *wrightii*) & Polka Dot Plant (*Hypoestes phyllostachya*).

The floral inflorescence is mostly made up of modified leaves called bracts with long-lasting rosy-pink color which look like the segmented body of a shrimp, often 3-5" long. Tubular white flowers with pink/maroon lip emerge from bracts holding both nectar & pollen, providing nectar for butterflies & hummingbirds when blooming throughout fall & winter until frost kills the blossoms. Each "shrimp" inflorescence may produce 20-30 white flowers over 1 or 2 months, with new bracts forming most of the growing season. Green stems of shrimp plant have distinct segmented sections between slightly fuzzy green leaves about 1" wide & 2-3" long. Additional branches may emerge at stem joints. Plants typically grow 2-3' tall & about 3' wide. As branches fall over touching the ground, they can root easily propagating.



See Shrimp plant blooming in Sensory & Hummingbird Gardens & on Butterfly Hill.

LINDHEIMER'S MUHLY GRASS

(*Muhlenbergia lindheimeri*)

Lindheimer's Muhly, sometimes called Big Muhly, is a robust native grass providing a striking display of beige plumes in the fall, often lasting through January. Plumes frequently stand 3-6' tall dancing in the wind throughout winter. Lindheimer's Muhly creates a nice line element of design for landscapes providing a native alternative to Pampas Grass (*Cortaderia selloana*). Indigenous to the Edwards Plateau with its native range stretching into Northern Mexico, it was named after its discoverer Ferdinand Jacob Lindheimer (1801-1879), often called Father of Texas Botany because of his work as the first permanent-resident Texas plant collector.



Gardeners most frequently use Lindheimer's Muhly as an individual grass clump providing height & elegance with little care. Clumps need to be pruned to 6-10" each spring to remove dead flower stalks & promote fresh new leaf growth for summer months. When not in bloom, has narrow bright green leaves 36-48" long. It is adapted to a wide range of soils including rocky, calcareous soils such as caliche, but also well-drained soils including sand. Separating clumps is recommended every 2-3 years.

See Lindheimer's Muhly specimens in the Earthkind Demonstration Garden.

BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of Dec 14, 2025)

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POINSETTIA (*Euphorbia pulcherrima*)

Poinsettias, a holiday season favorite, are native to Southern Mexico & Central America. The actual flower of the poinsettia is the tiny yellow centers called cyathia. Colorful bracts we consider blooms are really leaves to attract pollinators to the small flower! Bracts change from green to colors in late fall & winter due to extended, uninterrupted nights. Most horticulturists call them “short-day” plants since they naturally bloom in the Northern hemisphere in winter—short days & necessary long dark periods.

Naturally occurring plants may reach 10’ tall. But plant breeding & use of growth regulators has reduced plant size available in commercial outlets. Poinsettias can be planted in the ground in the Coastal Bend if protected from cold weather, wind & fall night lighting.



Poinsettias are members of the spurge or euphorbia family (Euphorbiaceae), in the same genus (*Euphorbia*) as familiar succulents like pencil cactus (*Euphorbia tirucalli*) & crown of thorns (*Euphorbia milii*). Like other Euphorbias, poinsettias have a milky white latex sap, a skin & eye irritant, so don’t rub your eyes around poinsettias!

H-E-B has donated more than 100 plants in the Anderson Bromeliad Conservatory! The living poinsettia tree is mostly traditional red. However, displayed amongst tropical bromeliads find more gorgeous red, white, pink, and bicolor red with white speckles.

SNAKE EYES (*Phaulothamnus spinescens*)

Snake Eyes is a large shrub known for its unusual translucent white berries which allow a large single black seed inside to be seen, looking like a small eyeball--resulting in the Spanish name *Ojo de Vibora*. Because plants are dioecious, having male & female plants, fruit are only found on female plants. Plants may produce flower & seed multiple times a year; but “eyes” appear for several weeks during each fruiting cycle. A female plant which may have hundreds of individual berries scattered on branches also is known as Devil Queen in other regions.

Snake Eyes makes a great shrub able to be sculpted with selected pruning, but is rarely found in the commercial plant industry. Individual plants grow 6-12’ tall with .75” leaves, no apparent thorns, but sharp, pointed tips on branches provides protection from browsing animals. A member of the Pokeweed Family (Phytolaccaceae), it’s closely related to American Pokeweed (*Phytolacca americana*) & Pigeonberry (*Rivina humilis*), both native to Southern Texas & Northern Mexico from our Gulf coast to Baja, CA, including Mexioco provinces of Tamaulipas, Nueva Leon, & Sonora.



See a crop of “snake eyes” visible on plants along the Brennecke Nature Trail.

BLOOMING in the GARDENS

(week of December 12, 2021)

Expanding its horticulture, environmental education and conservation mission, **BLOOMING in the GARDENS** each week spotlights a featured exotic and native plant at the South Texas Botanical Gardens & Nature Center—to enjoy on a visit this week!

'CIRCLE STAR' CATTLEYA ORCHID (*Sophrolaeliocattleya* 'Circle Star')

'Circle Star' Cattleya Orchid, originated in 2003, by crossing Cattleya 'Seagulls Apricot' x C. 'Circle of Life,' is one of many hybrid orchids bred by the late Frank Fordyce over a 61-year career.

This relatively small orchid only has pseudo bulbs and leaves usually 4-6 inches long and about $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch wide. While the plant's size may not turn heads, the rich red 3-inch blossoms do catch one's eye among the more common sea of purple and white flowering orchids, especially during the Christmas season. The lip petal and throat lack secondary tones creating solid color. Unfortunately, it typically only produces 1-3 blossoms on each flower stalk.

See this beautiful orchid in the Samuel Jones Orchid Conservatory, still with a nice selection of fall-blooming orchids for a colorful Holiday Season.



PERENNIAL BROOMWEED (*Gutierrezia sarothrae* Asteraceae)

Perennial Broomweed, a member of the Sunflower Family (Asteraceae) is a common short-lived native perennial wildflower in South Texas scrub-brush chaparral. It naturally occurs in arid regions from South Texas to Southern California, and from Mexico north to Idaho. It also is known as False Broomweed and Broom Snakeweed.

Unlike the single-stalked annual broomweed, the perennial form has multiple sprawling branches 6-24 inches long, emerging from a woody base. Narrow, threadlike leaves produce a lacy effect. Small pale yellow to white flowers cluster at branch tops June to December. Plants go dormant as temperatures drop late January through early March. It has been reported toxic to grazing livestock after ingesting significant quantities.

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



BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of Dec 7, 2025)

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WHITE BARFIELD CATTLEYA ORCHID

(*Cattleya* 'Barfield')

Cattleyas are the impressive corsage orchids, & our large white *Cattleya* 'Barfield' is a winter showstopper! Plants have white sepals & large frilly true petals, all white except for a yellow throat inside its tubular lip petal. The 4-4.5" blooms usually last 2-3 weeks with 2-3 flowers per spike. Compact plants are 12-16" tall with light green foliage. Peak *Cattleya* blooming season usually starts early October, extending through early winter months.

Visit the Samuel Jones Orchid Conservatory to see many other *Cattleya* species in bloom with whites, purples & orange hues.



TEXAS OR WILD POINSETTIA

(*Euphorbia cyathophora*)

Texas Poinsettia (*Euphorbia cyathophora*) is a short wildflower also called Desert Poinsettia, Mexican Fireplant, Painted Euphorbia, Fire on the Mountain, Paint Leaf or Kaliko plant in other areas. This native creates a colorful patchwork of green, scalloped alternate leaves combined with a prominent red blotch at the base of each bract touching the flower base. It is one of the modest old-fashioned, tough plants found throughout South & Central Texas into Mexico.

The true flower of both wild & traditional Christmas poinsettia are actually the bulbous yellow or green structures botanists term “cyathia” or “nectaries” we think of as the center of the blossom. The colorful portion usually called petals are bracts, leaves that stay colorful longer to attract pollinators to the flower. Bracts start coloring up in mid-summer lasting until a freeze.



Wild poinsettias often are classified as annuals; but mild winters allow multiple growth years. Wild Poinsettias grow 1-3' at maturity depending on available water & sun. The colorful bracts & flowers attract butterflies, while leaves provide food for sphinx moth caterpillars.

Wild poinsettia is the same genus as traditional Christmas poinsettias (*Euphorbia pulcherrima*) but bloom for longer periods from summer through frost. Both are members of the Spurge Family (Euphorbiaceae) along with other succulents like Crown of Thorns (*Euphorbia milii*) and Pencil Cactus (*Euphorbia tirucalli*), but also common patio plants including crotons (*Codiaeum variegatum*), jatrophas & copper plants (*Acalypha wilkesiana*).

See Texas or Wild Poinsettias in Butterfly & Hummingbird Gardens & natural areas via nature trails.

BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of Nov 30, 2025)

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RLC. SAENT U-SA ORCHID

(*Rhyncholaeliocattleya Saeng U-Sa*)

Orchid *Rhyncholaeliocattleya Saeng U-Sa* is a hybrid in the *Rhyncholaeliocattleya* genus registered in 2016 with the Royal Horticultural Society by S. Noisuwan—a cross of *Rhyncholaeliocattleya Yen Twentyfour* Carat × *Rhyncholaeliocattleya Chomthong Fancy*.

Rhyncholaeliocattleya orchids have strong *Cattleya* lineage in its many crosses through the years. This “cattleya-like hybrid,” a relatively compact orchid, has bright green pseudobulbs/leaves 8” tall. Each new pseudobulb produces only 1-2 blossoms; but what it lacks in number, it makes up for with color! Three golden yellow sepals to the rear of the blossom back up three main petals with rich burgundy highlights and stunning burgundy ruffled lip. Each flower is 3-4” across with the traditional *Cattleya* corsage orchid form.



See *Rhyncholaeliocattleya Saeng U-Sa* in the Samuel Jones Orchid Conservatory along with many other cattelyas in their fall prime bloom time in our region.

CHILE PEQUIN (*Capiscum annuum*)

Chile Pequin is a native very hot pepper naturally found on Eastern U.S. seaboard from Maryland to Florida, west to Arizona & Utah, & south into Central America. This critical fall/winter food source for birds includes wild turkeys which digest the hot fruit depositing seeds to nearby locations leading to common names of Turkey Pepper or Bird Pepper along the East Coast.

Plant forms individual tiny flowers about .5” wide, which after pollination form the .5” round or slightly elongated edible peppers turning red when mature. Plants in South Texas frequently fruit during Thanksgiving & Christmas holidays providing a natural burst of color. However, they can be a bit of a grinch if not prepared for their hot effects!

Chile pequin peppers have high concentrations of capsaicinoids, the pharmacologically active compounds that give hot peppers their spice with a rating of 30,000 to 50,000 Scoville Units, 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!

Compact plants grow 1-3’ tall with 1” spade-shaped bright green leaves. Plants usually stay evergreen in our area with mild winters, but are deciduous in colder locations, going dormant & dropping leaves. Plants prefer moist soil but survive drier conditions once established. They grow in many soils including clay, sand, loams & caliche mixes, with good drainage critical.



See Chile Pequin on Butterfly Hill, EarthKind Garden & Brennecke Nature Trail.

BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of Nov 23, 2025)

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JAVA WHITE COPPERLEAF

(*Acalypha wilkesiana* 'Java White')

This large tropical shrub, native to coastal regions & lowland forests of Fiji & South Pacific islands, thrives in our hot summers, doing best in bright morning sun & some afternoon shade.

'Java White' produces fuzzy, cattail-like flowers from the leaf axils, though not its prime feature. These copperleaf plants known for stunning foliage have large white & green leaves sporting random patterns of splotches, speckles & angular color design. Plants can reach 5-8' tall, 3-5' wide, give them space! Like other copperleaf (a.k.a. copper plant), these tropicals will freeze, but if established often grow back rapidly mid to late spring.



Java White Copperleaf is part of the spurge family (Euphorbiaceae) with many potted tropical favorites like poinsettias, joseph coat, jatropha, crotons & even crown of thorns & pencil cactus.

Find it in the Tropical Garden!

PAM'S PINK TURK'S CAP

(*Malvaviscus arboreus* var. *drummondii* 'Pam's Pink')

Turk's Cap, one of the best-known Texas natives in the Cotton/Hibiscus family (Malvaceae), is usually found as red. But other variations include "Pam's Pink," a great performer in Texas landscapes. Red Turk's Cap was named a Texas Superstar Plant by Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service for its adaptability trials all over Texas; but pinks & whites are just as hardy. Turk's Cap goes by 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. The most common Spanish name is Manzanita which means "little apple," referring to its small fruit.



Like the more common red form, Pam's Pink Turk's Cap has flowers 1-2" long emerging from branch tips but petals never fully unfurl, looking like rolled paper. Yellow pollen on fused stamen with pistil protrude past the petals. Pollinated flowers produce 1" round green fruit ripening red. An understory plant often found growing in light shade, can grow in full sun, reaching 3-5' tall & about 3' wide. It does best in well drained soils with organic matter, but adapts to poorer soils.

Turks cap provides an excellent wildlife food source--nectar for hummingbirds & butterflies, plus small fruit eaten by mammals. The fruit reportedly has a faint apple taste & can be eaten cooked or raw according the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center (www.wildflower.org).

Find Pink Turk's Cap in the Earthkind Demonstration Garden.

BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of Nov 16, 2025)

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MAGIC OF MASHIMA HYBRID ORCHID

(Blc. ‘Magic of Mashima’ X ‘Volcano Queen’)

This amazing elegant orchid blooming in the Samuel Jones Orchid Conservatory produces spectacular large blossoms about 4” across with frilly lips & rich velvety dark red/purple lip often with yellow highlights near the throat. Each flower stalk typically has 2-3 flowers. Plants remain compact standing about 12-15” tall.

Orchids are one of the most widely hybridized plant families with both professional & amateur orchid breeders crossing various flowers to obtain larger or unusual blossoms. Over time, the lines of the genera have blurred as with this week’s hybrid, Blc. ‘Magic of Mashima’. Blc. is an abbreviation of *Brassaeliocattleya*, the orchid nothogenus for intergeneric hybrids containing at least one ancestor species from each of 3 ancestral genera *Brassavola* R.Br., *Cattleya* Lindl. & *Laelia* Lindl., & from no other genera. Magic of Mashima hybrid is a cross of Blc. Fred Stewart & Lc. Drumbeat ‘Volcano Queen’.



Visit the Orchid Conservatory to admire a wide variety of fall-blooming orchids!

PINK TROPICAL SAGE (*Salvia coccinea*)

Tropical Sage is a good native plant for our area, thriving with little care. With nearly year-round blooms, it provides nectar for butterflies & hummingbirds. The most common native form is red, but white & pink (aka Pink Nymph) variations also occur naturally. Native patches of Tropical Sage are found in sandy coastal regions from Texas east to Florida & into South Carolina.

Like other members of the Mint Family (Lamiaceae), it has characteristic square stems, bright green simple spade shaped leaves & abundant stalks of tubular flowers less than an inch long. Most tropical sage varieties typically grow 18-30” in full sun or partial shade, staying more compact in bright light. If plants get too tall, they handle cutting back to 4-6”, encouraging new branching & blooms not long afterward.



Tropical Sage is a Zone 8 annual, surviving mild winters, also coming back year after year from heavy seeding; so you might find it popping up in other flower beds or sidewalk cracks.

See pink Tropical Sage in our Butterfly & Sensory Garden & Earthkind Demonstration Garden; while native red is present along the Mary Hope Brennecke Nature Trail.

BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of Nov 9, 2025)

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SCARLET FIREBUSH (*Hamelia patens*)

Scarlet Firebush, a subtropical shrub native to central & South America & Florida, should be classified an exotic tropical, but some nurseries group it with natives since it's found in the southern part of Tamaulipan Biotic Province encompassing Northeast Mexico near the Gulf.

Plants are known for bronze foliage in full sun, probably why Firebush is its best-known common name in the industry. Slightly hairy leaves can be 3-6" long arranged in whorls or a circle orientation on stems. While foliage is vibrant, *Hamelia* readily produces clusters of narrow tubular inch-long orange flowers at branch tips in summer & fall, with nectar for hummingbirds & butterflies. It needs little trimming to stay in bloom in warm months.



Firebush is a great perennial for Texas, an early Texas Superstar designee by Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service. Moderately freeze-sensitive, it survives light frosts, but freezes to the base after a hard freeze, rapidly coming back from the trunk easily re-growing 6-8' tall during growing season. Compact or dwarf varieties are now more readily available with smaller leaves & flowers; but even these varieties often grow to 4-5' tall.

Find Firebush in the Butterfly, Hummingbird, EarthKind Demonstration Gardens, & in front of the Samuel Jones Orchid Conservatory.

BLUE MISTFLOWER OR CRUCITA

(*Chromolaena odoratum*)

Blue Mistflower or Crucita is a tall-growing form of mistflower, closely related to Padre Island Mistflower (*Conoclinium bettonifolia*) & 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 our gardens.

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



Considered annual dying out in colder climates, it sometimes becomes perennial in mild winters, cutback in spring to keep it full. Seeds sprout nearby often producing large plants.

Blue mistflower grows naturally from Mexico & Texas along the Southern U.S. into the Caribbean, resulting in a wide variety range 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 Fall Mistflower in Butterfly & Hummingbird Gardens, on Butterfly Hill & along the Nature Trail, all blooming this autumn, another local common name, Fall Mistflower.

BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of Nov 2, 2025)

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‘PORTIA’ CATTLEYA ORCHID

(*Cattlianthe* ‘Portia’)

Cattlianthe ‘Portia,’ formerly *Cattleya* ‘Portia,’ is a primary hybrid since a cross between two species, *Guarianthe bowringiana* (formerly *C. bowringiana*) x *Cattleya labiata*. The Royal Horticultural Society accepts the name *Cattlianthe* ‘Portia’.

Cattleya Portia are intermediate size between parents, with 7-12 striking bright, brilliant purple blossoms on tall heads above pseudobulbs. Flowers are about 3.5” wide with a darker purple lip & golden yellow highlight in the throat. Flower stems often produce a cluster of 8-12 blossoms with multiple stalks on larger plants. Flowering plants can reach 24-30” tall.



Many *Cattleya* experts consider them among the finest & most spectacular *Cattleya* hybrids ever bred. Registered by James Veitch & Son, 1897, & *C. Portia* by H.G. Alexander, 1927, both have received many awards from the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) & American Orchid Society (AOS). *Cattleya* Portia ‘Cannizaro,’ received Award of Merit (AM) from RHS in 1936 & AOS in 1951. This is a great option for those wanting an easy orchid with consistent blooming, gaining the heavy fall blooming characteristic from *Gur. bowringiana* (a.k.a. ‘Autumn Pixie’ Orchid).

See many blooming C. Portia examples, including large specimens in hanging baskets, in the Samuel Jones Orchid Conservatory, creating an impressive explosion of color!

MEXICAN MINT MARIGOLD (*Tagetes lucida*)

Mexican Mint Marigold is a South Texas native herb sometimes called Spanish, Texas, or Mexican Tarragon, a spice used in Central American cooking & a French Tarragon alternative. Endemic to Mexico & southwest United States, it’s in the same genus as traditional bedding plants French & African marigold varieties, both actually Mexican natives used in *Dia de los Muertos* celebrations! Mexican Mint Marigold provides nectar for migrating butterflies & pollen for native honeybees. Both drought & heat tolerant, its perennial nature & compact form require little care.

Mexican Mint Marigold’s bright yellow flowers are about .5” wide, in clusters giving a burst of color late summer, peaking mid to late fall. The compact mounding bush 12-18” tall with its yellow flowers contrast with narrow 1” fragrant leaves. Plants spread over time, but respond well to division every 2-3 years encouraging new growth. Its aromatic leaves are used in cooking providing a licorice or anise scent & flavoring. It’s also used in herbal teas as possible help with upset stomach, stimulating the appetite & as a diuretic. Historically, Aztecs reportedly used it to flavor a cocoa-like drink along with medicinal use as an anesthetic & in ritual sacrificial events.



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

BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of October 26, 2025)

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PLUMERIA ‘RHAPSODY’ (*Plumeria rubra* ‘Rhapsody’)

Plumeria are always favorite flowers for semi-tropical areas like the Coastal Bend. ‘Rhapsody’ is a strong-blooming dwarf variety that branches nicely. This variety from Jungle Jack Collection has 4” pink blooms with a thin pink edge & bright orange center, creating dense blossom clusters. Flowers also have a strong spicy basil fragrance smelling like Thai food.

Plumeria need full sun & well-drained soil. They can be grown in pots, but need regular fertilization. ‘Rhapsody’ is one of about 90 large plumeria plants featured in the Plumeria Garden. The Plumeria Society of South Texas maintains “The Grove” which is about to go into greenhouse hibernation for the winter starting November 8, returning in March. Make your visit quickly if you want to see these tropical treasures this season.



GULF MUHLY GRASS (*Muhlenbergia capillaris*)

This native grass provides a spectacular display of unexpected color every fall, lasting from September through January depending on temperature & precipitation. Our specimens are at the start of their long blooming cycle with pink tufts emerging from the clump and starting to expand. As we approach November, these grasses will feature even more stunning displays of delicate seed heads that can tower to 3-5’, creating a shimmering pink/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. Gulf Muhly accepts 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 an individual grass clump or planted mass to create a larger impact in fall. Clumps need to be cut back to 6-10” tall each spring to remove dead flower stalks & to promote fresh new leaf growth for summer months. Separating clumps also is recommended every 2-3 years in the landscape.

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

BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of October 19, 2025)

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MEXICAN FIREBUSH a.k.a. COMPACT FIREBUSH

(*Hamelia patens* var. *glabra*)

Mexican Firebush is subtropical shrub native to Central & South America, sometimes called Yellow Hummingbird Bush, Compact Firebush or Compact Hamelia in other regions. It is a member of the Madder Family (Rubiaceae) along with gardenias, ixora, and coffee.

Despite one common names, there is not much “compact” about this plant easily growing 6-8’ tall each year. It is differentiated from traditional semi-fuzzy, bronze-leafed firebush by its glossy, medium green leaves & yellow-orange tubular flowers instead of traditional reddish-orange blossoms. Both forms of *Hamelia* are good pollinator plants.

Hamelia plants prefer full sun. The leaves on this variety are glossy on top, bright green arranged in whorls along the stem, contrasting nicely to clusters of narrow tubular inch-long yellow-orange flowers on ends of orange pedicels covering the plant summer & fall, providing nectar for hummingbirds & butterflies. It needs little trimming to maintain bloom in warm months. This form of *Hamelia* is moderately freeze-sensitive, surviving light frosts, but freezing to the base after a hard freeze, rapidly coming back from the trunk & re-growing 6-8’ tall, even after February 2021 hard freeze.



See Mexican or Compact Firebush along the path to the Anderson Bromeliad Conservatory across from the large iguana enclosure, & in the Hummingbird & Butterfly Garden near the Sam Jones Orchid Conservatory.

FALL ASTER (*Symphyotrichum oblongifolium*)

Fall Aster is a Central Texas native producing consistent, showstopping displays of hundreds of lavender daisy-like blossoms covering the entire mounding plant. Fall Aster also sporadically blooms in spring, but fall bloom is more consistent. Other common names in other regions include Aromatic Aster, Aromatic American Aster, Wild Blue Aster & Shale Aster. It has adapted to a range of soils--sand, loam, clay & caliche allowing a natural distribution from North Carolina to Pennsylvania, west to Montana, down the Great Plains states south through Texas into Tamaulipas, Mexico.

Plants typically grow about 20” tall & may spread 30-36”. Large moss-green mounds of foliage remain in butterfly & perennial gardens between bloom cycles. Plant in sunny areas with good drainage. Members of the sunflower family Asteraceae along with daisies, chrysanthemums, cosmos and gaillardia, like other ray-flowers, the daisy-like blossom is actually a collection of tiny nectar-producing flowers forming the distinctive yellow center “eye” of what we consider an individual bloom. The ray-flower design provides an efficient landing spot for bees & butterflies looking for nectar.



See Fall Asters in full bloom in the Butterfly Garden.

BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of October 12, 2025)

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QUEEN EMMA CRINUM LILY

(*Crinum augustum* 'Queen Emma')

“Queen Emma” is a tall growing crinum lily native to tropical Southeast Asia. It can reach 6' tall with broad, strap-like leaves up to 3-4' long. It likes full sun or part shade with more maroon leaf tones in brighter light. Impressive flower stalks stretch 3-4' have numerous white & purplish flowers with long, thin petals. Plants tend to form clumps with smaller “pups” emerging near the base. These can be removed to keep the plant narrower & more of an individual plant. Crinum lilies are among the easiest lilies which readily bloom.



Crinums are swamp plants but tolerate dry soil for short periods due to their large bulb, making them a great addition to tropical gardens in South Texas. They take little to no care, & being tropical, they don't have a cold weather requirement to rebloom. They also are salt tolerant providing another option for coastal landscapes. Although considered a Zone 10 plant, these plants have survived our coldest winters for the past 10 years grown in our slightly colder Zone 9 climate.

See “Queen Emma” crinums in the shade behind our Visitor Center as well in in front of the Samuel Jones Orchid Conservatory.

TALL GOLDENROD (*Solidago altissima*)

Goldenrod is a tall growing perennial wildflower showing its glory each autumn in moist areas commonly seen along roadsides throughout eastern & central Texas. Goldenrod is a great butterfly plant, providing nectar for fall migrating pollinators.

Most of the year, narrow simple green leaves are seen on 1-3' stems. In late summer & early fall, they begin to bolt forming fast-growing flowering stalks reaching 3-6' resembling a golden plume in full bloom. Individual flowers are only about .5" across, but make spectacular displays for several weeks when in full bloom. This deciduous perennial plant drops leaves in fall & remains dormant in winter, re-sprouting from the base in spring.



Common names are 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 this one has leaves with distinctive smooth edges, similar to tropical milkweed.

A great specimen currently is blooming in the Butterfly Garden near the Orchid Conservatory.

BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of October 5, 2025)

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Almond Verbena (*Alloysia virgate*)

Almond Verbena, an amazing summer flowering plant, provides beneficial nectar for bees & butterflies during grueling heat. The tiny white flowers attract people searching for its pleasing sweet fragrance.

Almond verbena is a large shrub reaching 15' high, but can be trimmed into a hedge or small multi-trunk tree. A profusion of tiny white flowers on 4-6" flower stalks can be found all over this plant when it goes into bloom for 2-3 week cycles throughout the year, many after rainy periods. The simple leaves of this plant are 3-4" with a sandpaper-like texture.

A woody member of the Verbena (Verbenaceae) Family, & closely related to our native Whitebrush or Texas Beebush (*Aloysia gratissima*), another excellent butterfly nectar plant, Almond verbena was named “Florida Plant of the Year” in 2008 for its consistent growth & profuse flowering. USDA classifies it as a Zone 8 plant surviving to 20 degrees for extended periods, thus found in butterfly gardens throughout much of Central Texas. Deciduous in much of the state, dropping leaves in winter, it can retain leaves during our mild winters if temps stay near freezing mark.

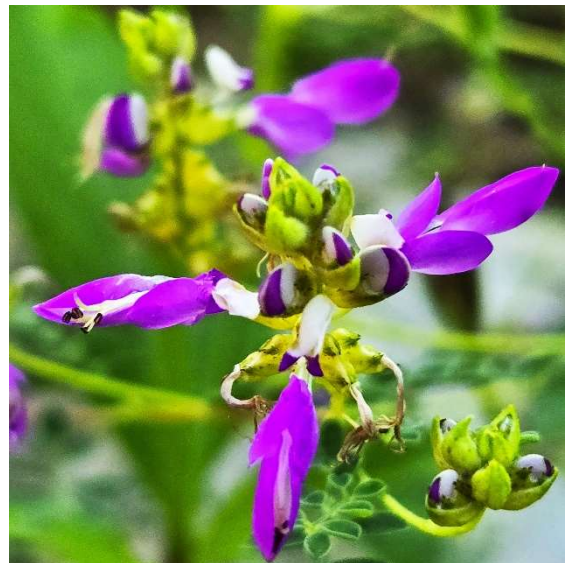
See Almond Verbena in the Butterfly Garden by the bridge connecting to the Samuel Jones Orchid Conservatory, & in the Sensory Garden behind the berm behind the stone benches.



BLACK DALEA (*Dalea frutescens*)

Black Dalea, a.k.a. Black Prairie Clover, is a small, thornless shrub native to dry, scrubby limestone hills of northern Mexico up through southwest Texas into Oklahoma & west into New Mexico. Native stands of Black Dalea, worth protecting, have dwindled due to cattle & deer browsing in the Texas Hill Country.

Black Dalea is in the Pea Family (Fabaceae), with small purple flowers with white throats similar in shape of a sweet pea, but much smaller, often less than .5" long, appear on dense heads or flower spikes near end of branches from July-October. Flowers attract bees, butterflies & other pollinators. This low-growing, perennial shrub rarely gets above 2' tall. Plants are noted for dark brown stems & tiny dark green compound leaves sometimes described as delicate or fernlike. Once established Black Dalea is drought, heat & sun tolerant. Overwatering produces weak spindly growth.



See Black Dalea, both a nectar plant plus a larval plant for Southern Dogface Butterfly (*Zerene cesonia*), growing under the Vitex tree by the Butterfly House entrance.

BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of September 28, 2025)

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AUTUMN PIXIE ORCHID (*Cattleya bowringiana*)

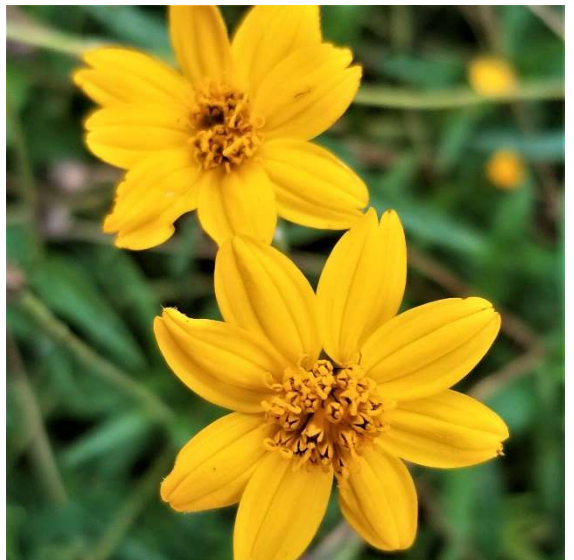
Autumn Pixie Orchid is one of the most consistent & easy to grow fall-blooming orchids making it a “must have” in home collections, and a fall highlight in the Orchid Conservatory. Flower stems produce clusters of 10-12 striking purple flowers 2.5” wide lasting several weeks in September & October. A standard 6-8” pot can easily have 2-5 flower spikes with 5-10 blossoms per spike for a stunning display. Like most orchids, this plant goes unnoticed most of the year until it blooms, with pseudobulbs, often thought of as leaves, being plain, medium green, erect, usually 2-3” wide & 12-18” tall unless growing in large clumps.



Discovered in 1885, this orchid native to Belize & Guatemala, grows in a wide range of environments including tropical forests, rocky ravines & occasionally in quartz sand. Orchid growers consider it one of the easiest orchids, and a great starter plant for the novice grower. Its consistent blooming has made it widely used in orchid breeding.

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

Zexmenia, a.k.a. Hairy Wedelia or Texas Creeping Ox-Eye in other regions., is a great low-growing native plant for the Coastal Bend. This native wildflower with individual golden yellow daisy-like flowers an inch across, has pointed dark green leaves a half inch across & an inch long with coarse, sandpaper-like foliage that forms mounds 10-30” tall. A member of the Aster/Sunflower Family (Asteraceae), Zexmenia has ray flowers which attract butterflies with daisy like structure actually a collection of small nectar-producing flowers that are the visible center of each yellow blossom. An outstanding plant for butterfly gardens it provides nectar for all species & is a host plant for caterpillars of Bordered Patch butterflies (*Chlosyne lacinia*), so expect periodic leaf damage from feeding caterpillars.



Growing naturally in well-drained soils from the Rio Grande, through the Coastal Plains, extending into the Edwards Plateau, wedelia will freeze back during winter & may appear dead. But don’t hastily dig it up or replace it. It quickly regrows from the base when warm weather returns with a fresh, dense clump of foliage until it starts shooting up its yellow flowers.

See Zexmenia in the Butterfly Garden, on Butterfly Hill behind the Sensory Garden, & naturally growing in small patches of native grassland areas.

BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of September 14, 2025)

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MARI’S SONG CATTLEYA ORCHID

(*Cattleya Mari’s Song*)

Cattleya Mari’s Song blossoms have light lavender sepals & large frilly true petals with deep splashes of dark purple, white & yellow. The 4” blooms are fragrant usually lasting about 4 weeks. This fall bloomer has 3-5 flowers per spike. Compact plants are 12-16” tall with light green foliage. It is an early bloomer coming into main orchid blooming season, with many other *Cattleya* species budded up.

Cattleya Mari's Song was registered with the Royal Horticultural Society by Suwada Orch. in 1992. It was originated by K. Takagi with Royal Horticultural Society registered parents *Cattleya Irene Finney* (1964) × *Cattleya Cherry Chip*.



See *Cattleya Mari’s Song* & a variety of other orchids beginning now through December in the Samuel Jones Orchid Conservatory.

MEXICAN BUSH SAGE (*Salvia leucantha*)

Mexican Bush Sage is considered a South Texas native although primarily indigenous to Mexico. Available in most nurseries, it is one of the most popular “native plants” in the state due to its consistent growth & performance in landscapes coupled with drought tolerance. Mexican Bush Sage is both a hummingbird and butterfly attractor!

Mexican Bush Sage prefers full sun for maximum bloom, but can grow in partial shade which makes it a little leggy at times. Velvety purple or white tubular flowers emerge from purple sheaths on the flower spike blooming over several months as new buds form & open. As flower spike matures, an abundance of dead flowers may require removal of elongated stalks, with this deadheading promoting new flower spikes to form.



The plant has long narrow gray-green leaves & grows to about 3’ tall, but flower spikes sometimes extend 12” higher late season. This true perennial needs a cut back each spring to stay compact & full. Vigorous summer growth may require a light pruning prior to fall hummingbird migration for a new flush of flowers.

See Mexican Bush Sage blooming in the Butterfly Garden, but is in bud in the Hummingbird Gardens, “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 September 7, 2025)

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MONA LAVENDER PLECTRANTHUS

(*Plectranthus X hybrida* ‘Mona Lavender’)

Mona Lavender Plectranthus is a hybrid developed at the Kirstenbosch Botanical Garden in Cape Town crossing 2 South African perennials--Stoep Spurflower (*Plectranthus saccatus*) for very large lavender blooms, & Candle Plant (*Plectranthus hilliardiae*) for dark green leaves with purple backs. Resulting plants are a favorite in garden centers.

Plants grow 10-14” tall with light lavender half-inch tubular flowers with darker purple speckles appearing on 4-6 inch stalks. Hairy dark green leaves & dark purple underside provide an attractive backdrop for flowers & foliage color when not blooming. Most commonly seen as a container plant, they can be planted in an annual bed. Freeze sensitive, they are short-term color, similar to coleus.



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

Find Monna Lavender hanging baskets currently blooming in the Butterfly House.

WILD OLIVE (*Cordia boissieri*)

Wild Olive—sometimes 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, but hard freezes have limited further expansion.

Wild Olive is a hummingbird attractor, providing natural nectar sources for fall migration. While not usual orange flowers known to attract hummers, its bountiful clusters of 2” white blossoms with deep throats & yellow centers are packed with natural nectar. Pollinated flowers develop into opaque pale green fruit resembling an olive, edible but not tasteful. The common name “olive” is visual only. It’s in a completely different family (Boraginaceae) than common edible olives (*Olea europaea*). Wild Olive trees have large green leaves about 4 X 6” with coarse medium to dark green top & lighter gray-green underside with small “hairs” giving it a smooth soft texture underneath. Its bark is coarse & stringy, different from most other trees. They typically mature 12-15’ tall & 15-20’ feet wide, but can grow taller depending on water availability. This tree produces dense shade which limits grass growth beneath if clustered with other trees.



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

BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of August 31, 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.

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GOLDEN SHRIMP PLANT (*Pachystachys lutea*)

This herbaceous perennial, often called *Golden Candles* or *Lollipop Plant* for its long-lasting blossoms, is native to lowland areas of Central & South America from El Salvador to Peru. Flower inflorescence is made up primarily of modified leaves called bracts with long-lasting golden color resembling the segmented body of a shrimp. Its true flowers are white tubular blossoms which emerge from the bracts. Each "shrimp" inflorescence may produce 20-30 white flowers over a 1-2 month period.



Golden Shrimp Plant is a member of the Acanthus Family (Acanthaceae) along with Red Shrimp Plant (*Justicia brandegeana*), Mexican Petunias (*Ruellia* sp.), Flame Acanthus (*Anisicanthus quadrifidus* var. *wrightii*) & Polka Dot Plant (*Hypoestes phyllostachya*). While Golden Shrimp plant is in the same family as the red-flowering landscape perennial form, it is more freeze sensitive typically planted in pots or used as an annual in our area. Golden shrimp plant also has a more upright form maturing at 12-36" tall, with golden blossoms towering at the plant's top, with long bright green leaves.

See a large example of Golden Shrimp Plant currently blooming in the Butterfly House.

GREGG'S MISTFLOWER (*Conoclinium greggii*)

Gregg's Mistflower is a low-growing *Conoclinium* known for masses of blossom clusters with thin pale blue petals looking like blue mist seen in mass. Named after botanist Josiah Gregg (1806-1855) who documented many plants of North Central & East Texas during 2 extended expeditions in 1840-41, who in 1844 wrote two-volume "The Commerce of the Prairies" describing many native American plants.

Plants grow 12-16" tall, creating nice groundcover with delicate-looking 3-pointed bright green serrated leaves. This mistflower is deciduous, dropping leaves & dying to the ground each winter; but don't dig it up or replant! Roots & underground stems are dormant as this perennial reemerges in spring with lots of flowers if just ignored during winter.



Gregg's Mistflower in the aster family (Asteraceae) naturally grows in dry, calcareous soils from Central Texas through New Mexico & Arizona. It's well adapted in much of Texas including the Coastal Bend with good drainage! Locally, 2 native forms of mistflower in the same family are native including Padre Island Mistflower (*Conoclinium betonicifolium*) & Fall Mistflower (*Chromolaena odorata* formerly *Eupatorium odorata*).

See Gregg's Mistflower in the Butterfly Garden & Butterfly House, probably with multiple monarch & queen butterflies nectaring on this butterfly magnet, especially during Fall migration. It also serves as deer browse in Central Texas.

BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of August 24, 2025)

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‘ELSIE’ PLUMERIA (*Plumeria rubra* ‘Elsie’)

Elsie is a stunning plumeria cultivar, also called “J.J. Elsie” or “Elise,” known for its semi-compact growth habit & thick branches. this Thai seedling of Plumeria ‘Penang Peach’ is from the Jungle Jack collection. With large clusters of vibrant pink & white swirled blossoms with orange centers & rounded petals, it is a prolific bloomer with “sweet & spicy” aroma!

The genus Plumeria was named honoring 17th Century French Botanist & Catholic monk Charles Plumier who traveled to the New World documenting many plant & animal species. The other common name for plumeria, “frangipani,” came from a fictional 16th 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*) and annual Vinca (*Catharanthus roseus*). Though commonly known as the Hawaiian Lei Flower, plumeria are actually native to the Caribbean & Tropical Americas.

See our Plumeria Garden now in prime blooming season. These tropical beauties can give you a taste of the islands in your own backyard. 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-early March to protect from wintery weather, replanting in March.

GREENHEADED CONEFLOWER

(*Rudbeckia laciniate*)

This form of Rudbeckia, collectively referred to as Black-Eyed Susans, has green flower centers rather than dark brown. Other common names are Cutleaf Coneflower, Greenhead Coneflower, Wild Goldenglow & Sochan in other U.S. regions. It grows naturally in sunny areas of prairies, plains, meadows, pastures, savannas, woodland edges.

Dark green leaves with lobed edges surround golden yellow flowers emerging on the apex of stems ranging 3’ or taller. Each blossom is 3-4” across with cone-shaped greenish-yellow center with back-tilted petals, appearing to hang down around the center “cone”. Center cones elongate becoming brownish as seeds ripen resembling traditional Black-eyed Susans late in the season.



Like other ray flowers in the Sunflower Family (Asteraceae), the center has true flower components containing pollen & nectar, with a closer look showing tiny flower parts opening over several weeks. Single rows of golden yellow petals 2-3” long attracts pollinators to inconspicuous true flowers on the green conical center.

See Greenheaded Coneflower in the Butterfly Garden.

BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of August 17, 2025)

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“HEAD OVER HEELS® BLUSH” DINNER PLATE HIBISCUS

(*Hibiscus moscheutos* ‘Head Over Heels® Blush’)

Dinner Plate Hibiscus is a cold-hardy, herbaceous, flowering perennial with giant, show-stopping blooms! Also called Swamp Rose Mallow, Crimson-eyed Rose Mallow & Eastern Rose Mallow, herbaceous green or reddish stems sprout late spring, quickly creating a small round shrub. Flowers in whites, dark reds, pinks & purples with multiple 5-petal blossoms up to 6” on large plants instantly attract the eye, each flower with protruding fused pistil & stamen like other hibiscus varieties.

It can grow 4-6’ tall & 3-4’ wide with fast-growing tender stems turning light gray-brown at the base aging during the season. This “tender perennial” drops leaves in fall & stems freeze back in cold winters, re-sprouting each spring, soon flowering & blooming throughout summer. These perennial hibiscus varieties are classified as Zone 6 plants by USDA, root hardy to -10°F easily surviving our mild winters. They are larval plants for multiple butterfly species including Common Checkered Skipper, Gray Hairstreak, Pearly Wood Nymph plus Lo Moth.



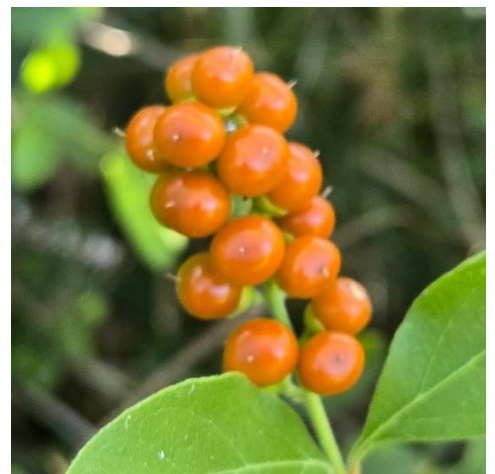
This perennial hibiscus often is considered an heirloom plant for its popularity in early to mid-1900s from southern to mid-Atlantic states & much of the Midwest. Its popularity declined when fancy Tropical Hibiscus (*Hibiscus rosa-sinensis*) came along; but renewed consumer interest in hardy perennials has breeders introducing a new generation to these old garden favorites like the *Head Over Heels®* Series. Hibiscus are members of the Mallow Family (Malvaceae) along with Turk’s Cap (*Malvaviscus arboreus* var. *drummondii*), cotton & okra.

See *Head Over Heels® Blush* Hibiscus in front of the Orchid House. Other perennial swamp hibiscus are in the Tropical Garden & behind berms behind the Rose Garden.

FIDDLEWOOD (*Citharexylum berlandieri*)

Native Fiddlewood is a large drought-tolerant shrub growing in brush thickets with well-drained clay & clay loam soils along Coastal & Rio Grande Plains. Getting 6-10’ tall, up to 18’ with moisture, can be dense shrub or small tree, in full sun or partial shade. Fiddlewood has dark orange berries after clusters of fragrant tiny white blooms early this summer. Dark green glossy leaves provide a backdrop for flowers & berries.

The common name “Fiddlewood” comes from other species of *Citharexylum*, used to make violins! This Texas native form has other common names: Tamaulipan Fiddlewood, Negrito, Zitherwood, Orcajuela, Encorba Gallina, Revienta-Cabra. It sometimes is called Berlandier’s Fiddlewood, after French-Swiss physician Jean Louis Berlandier (1805-1850) who collected plants in Texas & northern Mexico in the early 1800s. Fiddlewood is a woody member of the Verbenaceae Family (Verbenaceae) with lantanas, vervains, frog fruit & vitex.



Fiddlewood with berries can be found at the Botanical Gardens between the Butterfly House & Samuel Jones Orchid Conservatory.

BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of August 10, 2025)

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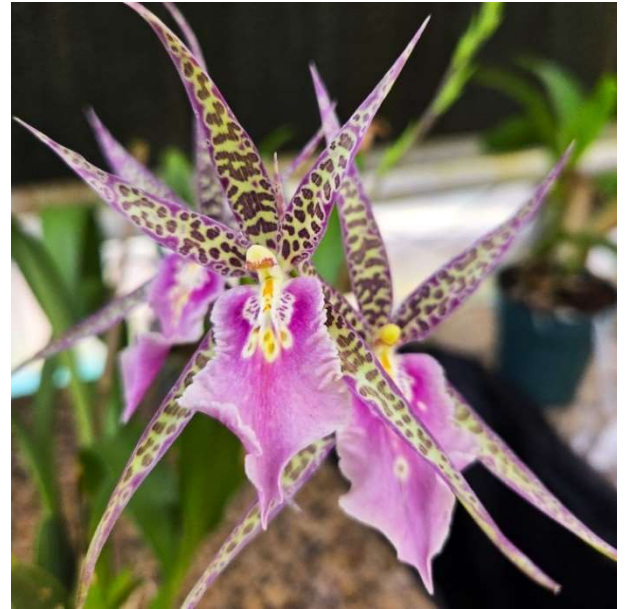
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'IZUMI' HYBRID ORCHID

(*Miltassia* Charles M. Fitch 'Izumi')

Miltassia (Mtssa.) Charles M. Fitch 'Izumi' is a captivating hybrid orchid renowned for its stunning, star-shaped flowers with mottled lavender/purple patterns & gray-green undertones on elegant, slender petals with an alluring light purple lip! The 1.5-2” star-shaped blossoms last about a month often blooming twice yearly.

'Izumi' has a distinguished pedigree in the orchid world as a hybrid of *Brassia verrucosa* & *Miltonia moreliana*. This exceptional clone earned the prestigious Award of Merit from the American Orchid Society in 1997, a tribute to exceptional beauty and vitality of this Hawaiian hybrid.



See a potted specimen of this beautiful orchid currently blooming in the rear section of the Samuel Jones Orchid Conservatory, along with numerous other orchids.

SPINY HACKBERRY

(*Celtis pallida*)

Spiny hackberry, commonly called Desert Hackberry, Chaparral or 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 & the Chihuahuan Desert, growing 8-20' tall on 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 which browse stems & foliage. It also is the 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 its berries are non-hallucinogenic. These shrubby trees commonly grow in poor soils in full sun or partial shade as an understory shrub. They are important for erosion control & can be used as native “green screen” due to dense growth & thorny branches.



You'll see many specimens of Spiny Hackberry recognizable by the small round orange berries throughout the Tamaulipan thornscrub chaparral lining the Mary Hope Brennecke nature trail & other brushy areas in the Botanical Gardens' native habitat.

BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of August 3, 2025)

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PINK PIXIE BOUGAINVILLEA

(*Bougainvillea glabra* 'Pink Pixie')

Bougainvillea, a.k.a. “Paper Flower” is a great tropical shrub providing long-lasting color in hot, sunny landscapes. Bougainvillea is a member of the Four O’Clock Family, Nyctaginaceae, with most members found in tropical areas. The paper-like blossoms are technically bracts, colorful modified leaves attracting pollinators for extended periods. The actual flower is the thin white tube inside the bract, & surrounding stamen often blending with bract color.



Though some consider bougainvillea as vines, they aren’t since they don’t wind around supports or have tendrils that attach to fences or structures. Pink Pixie is known for its shorter, straight branches that look like fingers extending up from the base with colorful fingernails. Flowers are tight to the stem with tips of leaves sometimes visible between blossoms. Pixie Pink Bougainvillea is considered a dwarf form by some horticulturists. It doesn’t grow 20’ tall requiring fencing or arbors for support, its relative dwarfness easily can produce a nice-sized shrub 5-8’ tall.

See “Pink Pixie” in front of the Orchid Conservatory near the large butterfly topiary.

‘AUGUSTA DUELBERG’ MEALY WHITE SAGE

(*Salvia farinacea* 'Augusta Duelberg')

Mealy Sage is in the mint family (Lamiaceae) along with other salvias, coleus & many herbs. Native forms typically grow 12-24” tall, reseeding & producing multiple plants creating a mound blooming short spikes of medium to light blue flowers with variations ranging all the way to white as seen with ‘Augusta Duelberg’ variant. One to three tubular flowers open at any time on each flower spike making blossoms for months from spring until frost. When flowering slows, it can be increased again by removing spent flower spikes.



While the native form is shorter, this selection was a sport off of the popular darker blue ‘Henry Duelberg’ collected from a cemetery by noted Texas plantsman Greg Grant, & named a Texas Superstar by Texas A&M University AgriLife Extension Service. This form blooms consistently growing 20-36”, having dense foliage compared to most wild varieties. Mealy Sage, either white or blue, is a consistent bloomer thus a great plant for butterflies, hummingbirds & bees. Both ‘Duelberg’ forms (Augusta and Henry Duelberg) of Mealy Sage performs well if cut back in early spring to remove freeze damaged leaves & flowers to promote new spring growth.

Mealy Sage, native to Central & West Texas & New Mexico, is now grown elsewhere including California, Oklahoma, Louisiana, Florida & even Ohio. It’s well adapted to a wide range of soils in prairie, meadows, roadsides, edges of forests & even dry calcareous soils of West Texas.

See it in EarthKind Garden raised beds & the Butterfly Garden.

BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of July 27, 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.

PLUMERIA 'DEAN CONKLIN' (*Plumeria rubra* 'Dean Conklin')

As one of the earliest named varieties, Dean Conklin often is considered a “classic” plumeria; but is still revered for its salmon-orange flowers with petals tapering to points creating colorful star bursts! Individual blossoms have a faint spicy carnation scent, but what it lacks in fragrance, it makes up in vibrant colors.

'Dean Conklin' Plumeria was introduced at the 1977 dedication of the Dean Conklin Garden at KoKo Crater Botanic Garden, so is historically significant for the International Plumeria Society & favorite of collectors.

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

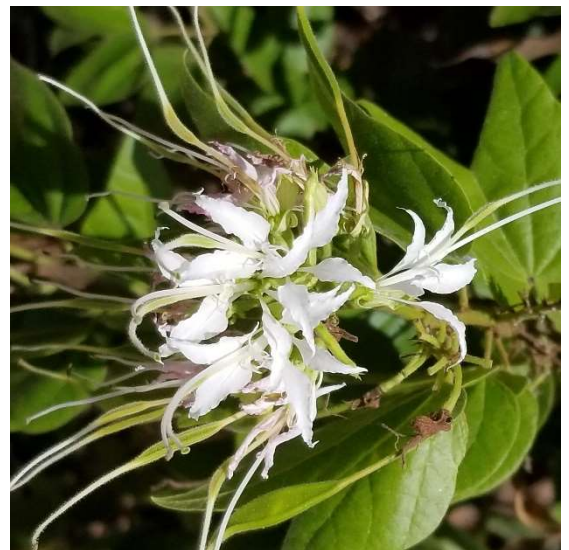


See Dean Conklin in “John’s Corner” of the Plumeria Garden with other favorites of late plumeria curator, John Balcar.

MEXICAN ORCHID TREE (*Bauhinia Mexicana*)

Mexican Orchid Tree is a shrubby small tree that blooms several times throughout warm months with 4-5” clusters of white flowers with long narrow petals & frilly looking stamen. Flowers provide an excellent nectar source attracting a wide array of butterfly species & hummingbirds. Like other legumes, pollinated flowers produce small beans which ripen & break open. Falling to the ground, seedlings easily can be propagated. Bauhinias are members of the Pea Family (Fabaceae) which includes local natives like mesquite, retama & many other bean-producing native trees.

Mexican Orchid Tree is native to Mexico & Deep South Texas. It is a vigorous-growing, multi-trunked shrub or small tree that may reach 8-12’ tall & similar width. Unlike other tropical Bauhinia species growing in the area, this one is identifiable by its 2-2.5” leaves with 2 distinctive points.



Texas has 2 native orchid trees. 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 the Treehouse entrance.

BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of July 20, 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.

PAGODA PLANT (*Clerodendrum paniculatum*)

Padoda Plant is a striking tropical with layered flower stalks of orange blossoms. Flower clusters can be over 12" tall, but individual blossoms are less than an inch across at the edges but extend several inches from the main flower stalk. Blossoms open from the bottom of the flower stalk with newer ones near the top, looking like rows of layered flowers, like a Pagoda. It blooms multiple times late Spring through Fall. A good hummingbird attractor with a large number of long-lasting tubular orange blossoms, it also is a recommended butterfly plant by Rio Grande Valley Butterfly Farm.



This fast-growing plant matures each year at 5-7' here. Pagoda Plant spreads from underground stems, but has little branching above ground, producing single stalks with flower clusters on the end. Stems have small leaves at the base but grow much larger, up to 12" near the base of the flower stalk, providing an elegant serene backdrop for the towering stalk of orange clustering flowers.

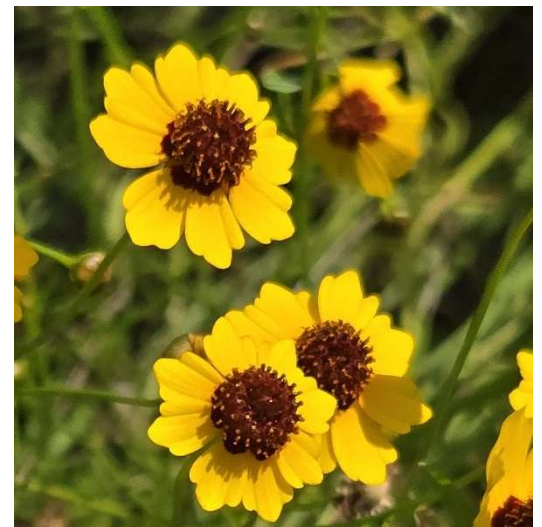
Native to tropical regions of Asia including China & Philippines, it's a member of the Mint Family (Lamiaceae) with coleus, sages & many herbs. Pagoda plant is a close relative of *Clerodendrum* species like Bleeding Heart Vine (*Clerodendrum thomsoniae*) & Blue Butterflies (*Clerodendrum ugandense*). Pagoda Plant will freeze, but was root hardy re-growing in spring, after Winter Storm Uri in 2021.

See the stunning Pagoda Plant currently blooming in the Tropical Garden.

GOLDEN TICKSEED (*Coreopsis tinctorial*)

Annual Golden Tickseed grows 1-2' tall with narrow, compound green leaves low to the ground while flowers extend well above foliage. These plants bloom February-December here most prolific flowering April - May, but summer rains have kept them profusely blooming. Varieties of the showy annual are naturally found in plains of central U.S. into Canada & naturalized in many other states.

Golden Tickseed is found in low moist soils in prairies, swales & ditches, particularly showy in large patches when the golden flowers move in the wind resulting in another common name, Goldenwave. They also have common names of Plains Coreopsis or Calliopsis. Local coreopsis blossoms are usually yellow with a little maroon near the base of each petal; but variations with more visible maroon coloration are found in other regions.



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

See Golden Tickseed in naturalized areas near Butterfly Hill behind the Sensory Garden, along ditches near our parking lot & Administration Building, & throughout the nature trail.

BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of July 13, 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.

‘TEMPTATION’ PLUMERIA

(*Plumeria rubra* ‘Temptation’)

Plumeria ‘Temptation’ is from Jungle Jack collection, sought-after for compact growth, thick branches & showstopping highly-variable blooms featuring gold, red, orange, pink & bright yellow petals with distinctive dark striations. Thick, wide petals of 3.5-4” blossoms creating long-lasting flower clusters 8-10” across. While the spectacular flowers definitely turn heads, the sweet, vanilla-jasmine scent is spectacular! It often blooms mid-summer until green housed early November.



Tropical Plumeria thrive in hot sunny conditions blooming profusely July-September in the Coastal Bend with fewer blossoms moving into cooler autumn. Plumeria are members of the Dogbane (Apocynaceae) Family also including Desert Rose (*Adenium obesum*), Oleanders (*Nerium oleander*) & annual Vinca (*Catharanthus roseus*).

Visit the Plumeria Garden with 83 varieties on display & in full bloom under curation of Plumeria Society of South Texas volunteers. The Society hosts its annual Plumeria Sale, 10 am-1 pm, Saturday, July 19, at the Garden Senior Center, 5325 Greely.

LIME PRICKLY ASH (aka COLIMA) (*Zanthoxylum fagara*)

Lime Prickly Ash, also known by its Spanish name “Colima,” is a large native shrub found in South Texas/Northern Mexico Thornscrub Chaparral plant communities as well as central & southern Florida. This extremely drought-tolerant shrub commonly grows 8-25’ tall with a multi-stemmed trunk. Tiny yellow flowers after rains are followed by 1-seed pods turning red or brownish-red when ripe. Distinctive compound leaves help identify this native shrub. Leaves have 5-13 leaflets on the “winged” rachis looking like an extension of the leaf blade along the central rib. A member of the Rue Family (Rutaceae), Lime Prickly Ash is a cousin to citrus as the common name implies. When crushed, leaves release a distinctive citrus aroma. Tiny blackish-brown curved thorns will catch clothing & bare skin protecting the plant.



These trees grow in poor soil, full sun or partial shade, as an understory shrub, good for erosion control. Its evergreen nature makes it a good shrub in “native-scapes” providing dark green foliage in winter when many South Texas Natives drop leaves.

Like other citrus family members, it is 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 nest in thorny branches.

Native Americans & early settlers used powdered bark & leaves as a spice due to its sharp taste. All visible plant parts can numb the mouth when used in large amounts; but smaller doses produce a refreshing tingle with *Zanthoxylum* species being a common ingredient in natural toothpastes & tooth powders.

Find Lime Prickly Ash at the Hummingbird Garden entrance, along Mary Hope Brennecke Nature Trail, & other brushy areas.

BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of July 6, 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.

PRIDE OF BARBADOS (*Caesalpinia pulcherima*)

Pride of Barbados is a fast-growing tropical shrub with showy orange & yellow blossoms on flower spikes above fine textured foliage. It's also called Peacock flower for its frilly appearance created by extended stamen & pistils. Blossoms open as yellow & orange turning solid orange in a few days. It usually starts blooming late May-June through October.

Pride of Barbados is a member of the Pea/Legume Family (Fabaceae) along with native mesquite trees. If flowers are pollinated by butterflies or hummingbirds, it produces flattened seed pods. Removal can extend the bloom cycle.

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

Native to West Indies & Tropical Americas, Pride of Barbados is freeze sensitive, dropping leaves in mild winters & freezing to the ground in colder South Texas winters. It is considered "root hardy" to Zone 8 in Central Texas. Spring regrowth is slow, with leaves usually reappearing mid-April. But give this plant space as it often grows 8-12' tall once established. Its superior performance statewide earned it the Texas Superstar designation by Texas A&M Agri-Life Extension Service. It is a great nectar plant for both hummingbirds and butterflies.

See this spectacular plant currently in full bloom in our parking lot, on Butterfly Hill behind the Sensory Garden, Hummingbird & EarthKind Demonstration Gardens.



ZYZOTES MILKWEED (*Asclepias oenotheroides*)

Zyzotes Milkweed is one of the most common native milkweeds in the Coastal Bend, also one of the most inconspicuous. From dormancy, it leafs out when rain follows a dry period. The flower, unique among milkweeds according to Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center, are pale green with purple tinges. The long, slender hoods extend beyond the stigmatic groove flaring or bowing outward at the top. The pale gray-green opposite leaves are .5-2.5" wide, & 1-4" long with wavy edges. A shallow-rooted perennial form with an underground tuber, it survives mowing & periodic dry spells.

Zyzotes, like other milkweeds, is a larval plant for Monarch & Queen butterflies, but can be toxic to livestock & the milky sap may cause humans skin irritation. Native Americans made a poultice for skin rashes by mashing, heating & applying it to skin. The Spanish named it "zizotes" meaning "skin sores."

Zyzotes Milkweed is found in Louisiana to Arizona & Texas up to Oklahoma & Colorado which lends to multiple common names including Hierba De Zizotes, Side-cluster Milkweed, Longhorn Milkweed, Primrose Milkweed, Lindheimer's Milkweed & Side-cluster Milkweed. Preferring sandy or gravelly soil, it's often found in prairies, ditches & fields.



See Zyzotes Milkweed in the Butterfly Garden & Butterfly Hill behind Sensory Garden.

BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of June 29, 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. (If Print Edition is black/white, see E-Edition to view color.)

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

Plumeria Garden is in full bloom, & one of the most floriferous varieties is "Texas Fiesta." It's a cultivar from the classic Elizabeth Thornton variety, a multicolor pink plumeria, named for a Plumeria Society of America founder.

Texas Fiesta is a plumeria party animal, with its consistent easy blooming nature, producing clusters of medium pink blossoms with yellow/orange centers, resembling swirling Folklorico dresses full of color & fun. The 3" flowers have a sweet & spicy fragrance, adding to their appeal.

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



The plumeria collection at the Botanical Gardens is stored bareroot, green housed in winter, replanted in March. Recent rains triggered quick leaf production & early flowering of multiple varieties with peak flowering season from July through September in the Coastal Bend.

The Plumeria Collection is curated by the Plumeria Society of South Texas.

RETAMA (*Parkinsonia aculeate*)

Retama is a small, native tree known for its vibrant green trunk & long thin compound leaves and small leaflets on each side providing dappled shade for plants below. Retama blooms profusely from late spring through fall with mildly-fragrant, delicate yellow blossoms with hints of red/orange at the throats about an inch across. Pollinated flowers result in bean pods hanging from the branches. Retama was adopted as one of the Corpus Christi city trees October 2, 1957. Retama is a member of the legume family (Fabaceae) with mesquite, peas & common green beans.



This fast-growing tree quickly can reach 15-20' tall & 12-15' wide. However, its rapid growth produces weak wood that frequently breaks in high winds, making it a marginal tree for urban landscapes. It works better in rural landscapes needing fast-growing, drought-tolerant tree options.

Retama also may be called Mexican Paloverde or Jerusalem Thorn. It is extremely drought tolerant and easy to grow, often found growing wild along drainage ditches showing its versatility to withstand dry and wet conditions. It is also extremely adaptable to a wide range of soil conditions.

See Retama currently in full bloom around town including the backside of the Butterfly Garden & multiple areas along the Brennecke Nature Trail. Just watch for bright green leaves & sweet-scented yellow flowers.

BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of June 22, 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. (If Print Edition is black/white, see E-Edition to view color.)

'NATCHEZ' CREPE MYRTLE (*Lagerstroemia* X 'Natchez')

Natchez Crepe Myrtle is a large, fast-growing crepe myrtle tree in our area, reaching 18-25' at maturity & 10-15' canopy spread, but can grow larger in wetter regions! Originally from China & Southeast Asia, Crepe Myrtles are members of the Loosestrife Family (Lythraceae) and come in a variety of sizes from 3-30' tall at maturity.

Natchez is actually a hybrid of 2 different crepe myrtle species, *Lagerstroemia indica* crossed with *L. fauriei*. The result is a fast-growing form with striking large white flower clusters. Blossoms frequently fall in the breeze leaving a blanket of tiny white floral confetti on sidewalks and lawns. This only occurs in summer as crepe myrtles are long-day photoperiodic plants, blooming in response to the extended days around the summer solstice.



Large, dark green leaves provide shade from spring through late fall; but this deciduous tree, drops leaves for winter. This variety also has distinctive peeling grey/tan bark that exposes attractive cinnamon red trunk tones beneath the old bark.

See Natchez Crepe Myrtle in full bloom behind & beside Education Station.

VIOLET RUELLIA (*Ruellia nudiflora*)

Violet Ruellia or Violet Petunia is a low-growing late season wildflower native in the Deep South from Alabama to Arizona, stretching from Texas deep into Mexico & Central America, frequently found on edges of wooded areas or adjacent to open grassy spaces.

Common name "petunia" comes from its frequent individual light violet tubular flowers about an inch across & 1-2" long appearing from April-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—6-8" tall—but flower stalks can grow to 12-18" in shaded areas if unmanicured.



Although it & other members of the genus *Ruellia* often are called wild violet petunia, they are NOT in the same family as traditional petunias, but rather Acanthus (Acanthaceae) Family. This *Ruellia* reseeds, but unlike its taller cousin, Mexican Petunia (*Ruellia simplex* a.k.a. *Ruellia brittoniana*), it doesn't clump for easier mowing.

An important larval plant for many butterflies--Common Buckeye (*Junonia coenia*), White Peacock (*Anartia jatrophae*), Cuban Crescent (*Anthanassa frisia*) & Malachite (*Siproeta stelenes*), flowers provide an important nectar source for both butterflies & hummingbirds. It also may have medicinal uses as the Spanish name is *Hierba de la Calentura*, "herb of the fever."

See Violet Ruellia can be found 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 15, 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.

PLUMERIA 'WILDFIRE'

(*Plumeria rubra* 'Wildfire')

Wildfire season is upon us at the South Texas Botanical Gardens & Nature Center, but a good kind! The dark red 'Wildfire' Plumeria is in full blaze in the 100-plant tropical Plumeria Garden. Many plumeria are in full bud, starting to open as they finally have rooted in & leafed back out after being green housed bareroot all winter, replanted in March. Plumeria need full sun & well-drained soil. If grown in pots, they need regular fertilization.



'Wildfire' a.k.a. "Scarlet Knight," discovered in Hawaii by Barbara Randolph in 1989, is a tall, upright plant with few branches but known for its bold dark red blooms, spicy clove fragrance, & blossom longevity. Blossoms measure 3.5-4" featuring a solid dark red coloration with a golden center. However, petals tend to fade over time transitioning to softer tones that maintain their charm.

The Plumeria Society of South Texas maintains this unique tropical collection in full bloom summer through October.

FLAME ACANTHUS

(*Anisacanthus quadrifidus* var. *wrightii*)

Orange tubular blossoms of Flame acanthus gave Central Texas settlers a vision of a burning bush in the heat of summer thus the "flame" in its common name. A member of the Acanthus Family (Acanthaceae), along with Mexican petunias (*Ruellia* sp.) & shrimp plant (*Justicia brandegeana*), Flame acanthus is an excellent Xeriscape plant, being naturally drought- and heat-tolerant.



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

In some areas it is called Hummingbird Bush due to attractive effects of orange blossoms for miniature fall migrants. However, don't limit its use to hummingbirds. It provides nectar to butterflies & is the larval plant of Crimson Patch (*Chlosyne janais*), Texas Crescent (*Junonia coenia*) & Common Buckeye (*Anthanassa texana*) butterflies, so expect caterpillars to appear in late summer.

Its native distribution extends from the Edwards Plateau & West Texas into Northern Mexico, but the general species extends south to Oaxaca in Southern Mexico. The variety name "Wrightii," & former species name (*A. wrightii*), was given for world-wide botanical collector Charles Wright (1811-1885) who collected extensively in Texas, Cuba & his native state of Connecticut.

See Flame acanthus in the Butterfly & Hummingbird Gardens.

BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of June 8, 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. View in color at Caller.com, E-Edition.

SPICY RED JATROPHA (*Jatropha integerrima*)

Spicy Red Jatropha provides long-lasting summer color in a compact tropical shrub. A popular landscape shrub, it may freeze back but has consistently regrown in spring. Half-inch, 5-petaled red or dark pink flowers with bright yellow stamen create much larger clusters of color guaranteed to brighten a landscape. Flowering continues most of the year except cold seasons.

In the ground, these tropical shrubs can reach 6-8' tall, but periodic severe pruning can keep them shorter. Mature plants have medium to dark green 3-lobed leaves 3-4" long which provide a great backdrop for brilliant flower clusters.

This Jatropha, originally from Cuba, is a member of the Spurge Family, Euphorbiaceae, along with other kissing cousins like crown of thorns, pencil cactus, poinsettias & crotons. Like other spurges, Spicy Red Jatropha is adapted to full or partial sun & pretty drought-resilient, making it a great addition to a Xeriscape garden seeking a tropical flair.



See Spicy Jatropha in the patio area near the Samuel Jones Orchid Conservatory, & in the Butterfly House.

INLAND SEA OATS (*Chasmanthium latifolium*)

Inland Sea Oats is a great native ornamental grass underused in local landscapes. It's known for its low spreading growth & flat pale green flower spikelets that blow in the wind on arching stems allowing them to hang above the green bamboo-like leaves. Leaves may turn pale green in sunny locations & have been described as turning a bright yellow-gold in fall. Native to most of the continental United States, it is a member of the Grass Family (Poaceae). It also goes by a variety of common names in other regions including Indian Wood Oats, Wild Oats, River Oats, Flathead Oats, Upland Oats, Upland Sea Oats.

This ornamental grass only grows 2-4' tall & clumps. As a perennial, it comes back year after year, but spring pruning encourages new fresh growth. It is a great option for low-maintenance shady areas, providing height & line element to landscape designs. Seed heads are also used in floral arrangements.



Inland Sea Oats are native to the Eastern U.S from Pennsylvania to Florida, west to Kansas & Texas, & into north eastern Mexico, just over the border in Nuevo Leon.

See specimens in the Earthkind Demonstration Garden along with other ornamental grasses & hardy plants for our region.

BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of June 1, 2025)

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'TOBA'S FIRE' PLUMERIA (*Plumeria rubra* 'Toba's Fire')

Recent plumeria growth & flowering will amaze you! As summer temperatures get “hotter”, so do the blossoms! Toba's Fire is this week's stunning plumeria originated in Hawaii's Richard & Evelyn Toba collection, featuring fiery sizzling golds, oranges & reds. Blossoms with 3” petals often start as yellow-orange with dark red edges, becoming darker & more intense in heat of summer!

Toba's Fire is a standard plumeria frequently reaching 10' or more here, taller in tropical regions without threat of freezes. Although commonly called Hawaiian Lei Flower, Plumeria originated in the Caribbean & Tropical Americas. When not threatened by freezing weather, plants become large trees 25-30' tall covered in blossoms at each branch tip.

Plumeria are members of the Apocynaceae Family which includes Desert Rose (*Adenium obesum*), Madagascar Palm (*Pachypodium lamerei*), Oleander (*Nerium oleander*), Allamanda, Mandevillea, & annual Vinca (*Catharanthus roseus*).



See amazing variety & colors of plumeria bloom profusely now through mid-October in the Plumeria Garden curated by volunteers in the Plumeria Society of South Texas.

HORSEMINT (*Monarda punctata*)

Horsemint, a.k.a. Lemon Beebalm or Spotted Beebalm, is a hardy perennial with aromatic foliage naturally growing in prairies, plains, meadows, pastures & savannas from Texas north to Minnesota & states to the east coast. It's a frequent part of wildflower mixes blooming from April-September, attracting butterflies, & more importantly native bee populations!

Horsemint produces tall flower spikes with circular layers of bracts—specialized colorful leaves that attract pollinators for extended periods in striking stands of purples, pinks, whites & yellows. The actual tubular yellowish flower emerges from bracts & is the source for nectar & pollen. Height ranges 6” to 3' tall depending on environmental conditions, but most here reach 2'.



Horsemint is in the Lamiaceae (Mint) Family with salvias, coleus & many common culinary herbs, many with fragrant. It reportedly was used medicinally with fresh leaves crushed & steeped in cold water, then drunk to ease backaches; but also used for fever, inflammation & chills. That may explain why Carl Linnaeus, the “father of taxonomy,” named its genus, *Monarda*, in honor of 16th century Spanish physician & botanist, Nicolas Bautista Monardes (1493-1588), who studied medicinal plants in Spain, although he never came to the Americas.

See Horsemint currently blooming in the Butterfly Garden.

BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of May 25, 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

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

'Broga Tiger' Orchid is an impressive specimen with the plant nearly 3' tall & 4-6' wide! *Grammatophyllum* 'Broga Tiger' was hybridized by Malaysia's Serdang Orchid Nursery in 2009 by crossing *G. measuresianum* X *G. 'Tiger's Paw.'* Known for its spectacular inflorescences often 3' long, blooming for up to 3 months due to the large number of smaller fragrant flowers, individual flowers are about 1" across with gold & bronze striping resembling tiger stripes!

Grammatophyllum orchids commonly are known as "Queen of Orchids" because of their enormous size. Plants are fast-growing & have broad leaves about 3" wide & 18-24" long having been compared to sugar cane leaves, resulting in another common name, Sugar Cane Orchid.



See our specimen, donated by local orchid aficionado Richard Schmidt wanting orchid lovers around the area to enjoy this spectacular plant, in the Samuel Jones Orchid Conservatory.

COMMON SUNFLOWER (*Helianthus annuus*)

Common sunflower is one native plant whose benefits often are overlooked due to its abundance & familiarity. While large flowering hybrids are sought for their impressive flower head & abundance of seeds, the smaller flowering forms growing wild are important for wildlife!

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



With abundant water, plants quickly grow 6-8' tall, making them a nuisance if not in the right place. However, dedicating a corner of garden space for sunflowers provides nectar for adult butterflies, leaves for caterpillars, pollen for bees & eventually seeds for migratory songbirds. In South Texas, sunflowers serve as the larval plant providing necessary food for caterpillars of Bordered Patch (*Chlosyne lacinia*), American Lady (*Vanessa virginiensis*) and Painted Lady (*Vanessa cardui*) butterflies.

See sunflowers in the Butterfly Garden, on Butterfly Hill, periodic specimens along the Mary Hope Brennecke Nature Trail, and a few in the main parking lot by Mexican Petunias (*Ruellia brittoniana* 'Purple Showers').

BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of May 18, 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

ENGLEMANN'S DAISY

(*Engelmannia peristenia*)

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

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



Engelmann's Daisy naturally grows from Texas to Arizona & Southeast Mexico up to Kansas and 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.

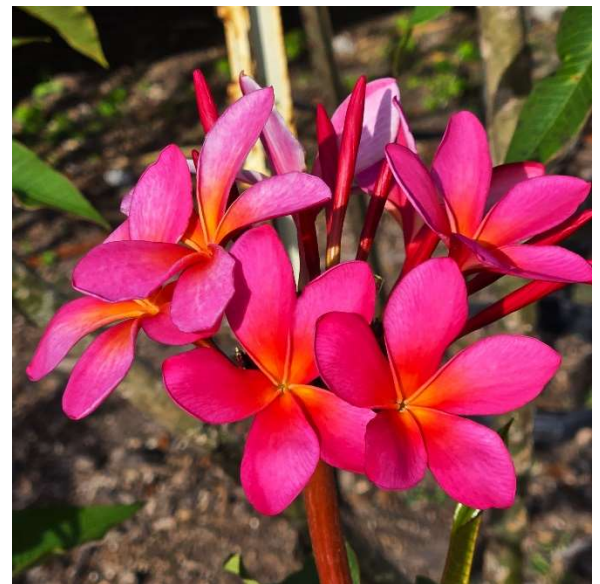
See Engelmann's Daisy on Butterfly Hill, a monarch waystation planting behind our Sensory Garden, adjacent to the Butterfly Garden.

PLUMERIA 'EXOTICA'

(*Plumeria rubra* 'Exotica')

Plumeria are favorite flowers for semi-tropical areas like the Coastal Bend. Exotica often is one of the first varieties to fully bloom after winter green housing, just replanted in March. But many others are in full bud, starting to open as they finally have rooted in, leafing back out. Plumeria need full sun & well-drained soil. They can be grown in pots, but need regular fertilization.

'Exotica' is a consistently prolific, early-blooming variety with flower clusters on nearly every branch tip according to Jungle Jack's Plumeria. The thin, slightly "twisty" petaled blossoms create a star shape with multicolored pink blossoms, orange centers, hot pink edges & a darker backside. This variety has a strong floral fragrance and standard upright growth pattern.



'Exotica' is one of about 90 large plumeria plants featured in the Plumeria Garden, maintained year-round by Plumeria Society of South Texas volunteers, including digging up for winter storage, and bringing back out in spring.

BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of May 11, 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

TEXAS LAVENDER OR VITEX TREE *Vitex agnus-castus*)

Vitex' fragrant compound palmate leaf looks like green fingers, & releases a lavender aroma when brushed against, so some call it "Texas Lavender Tree." A bit messy with masses of tiny spent flowers falling during bloom cycle, it also readily seeds after being pollinated by hummingbirds, butterflies & bees resulting in numerous "volunteers" in gardens.

Starting late April, Vitex produces its 6-8-week show of lavender flower spikes. Extended blooming may occur throughout summer & fall with fewer blossoms in summer heat. Light pruning of dead flowers can result in more blooms. Pale pink and white varieties also are found, but most common is the purple form. Vitex will form a small tree reaching heights of 12-18', but annually can be pruned severely near the ground for a 6-8' bush. Tree forms require regular pruning to remove frequent suckering from the base.



While some believe Vitex is a Texas native, it actually is indigenous to the Mediterranean region of South Eastern Europe & Western Asia. Early writings show introduction into the U.S. as early as 1670s, having come from English gardens with early settlers. Despite woody stems, Vitex is part of the mint family (Lamiaceae) along with many herbs & coleus. It does well in our region despite the heat, one of the first plants to be awarded Texas Superstar designation by Texas A&M Agri-Life Extension Service!

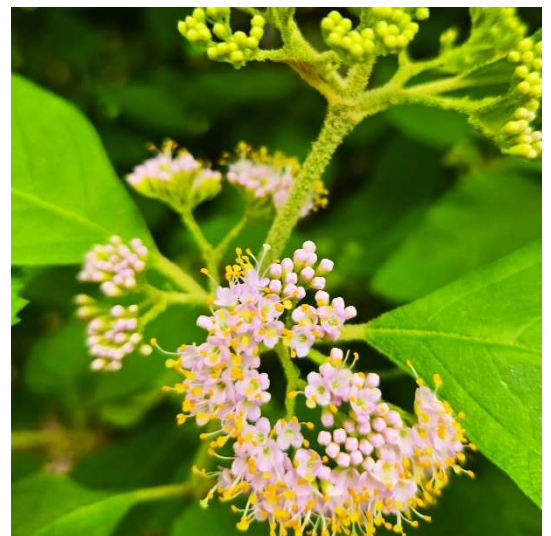
See Vitex blooming in Butterfly Garden & along trail to outdoor tortoise pens.

AMERICAN BEAUTYBERRY

(*Callicarpa Americana*)

American Beautyberry is an understory shrub that commonly grows 4-7' tall and 3-4' wide. Berries provide a necessary fall & winter food source for migratory songbirds. American Beautyberry is in the verbenaceae family (Verbenaceae) which includes lantana and duranta. Large slightly hairy leaves are pointed with serrated edges, measuring 2-3" wide & 3-6" long. Most recognized by its striking bright purple fruit in fall and winter, it currently is blooming in May!

Clusters of tiny pale lavender-pink flowers with bright yellow stamen create a misty appearance along the stems, as flower clusters form above each leaf of the stem. Once these tiny flowers are pollinated by bees, butterflies or wind, they transform into clusters of tiny green berries which ripen over time expanding into familiar bright purple berry clusters along the stem for which the plant typically is admired.



See large flowering Beauty Berry specimens in the Sensory Garden and on Butterfly Hill behind the Butterfly House.

BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of May 4, 2025)

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CINCO DE MAYO FLORIBUNDA ROSE

(*Rosa hybrida* 'Cinco de Mayo')

'Cinco de Mayo' is a prolific-flowering floribunda rose. Its blooms are a "blend of smoked lavender & rusty red-orange," opening to 3.5" across, each with 20-25 petals, and like other floribundas 3-5 blossoms common on each stem! Growing 3-4' tall, it has glossy green foliage and a 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 was an All-American Rose Selection (AARS) Winner in 2009, bestowed annually upon roses that outperform all others in American gardens & vases.



"Cinco de Mayo" literally means "Fifth of May," also an annual celebration of the 1862 victory of the Mexican army over France at the Battle of Puebla during the Franco-Mexican War. Many South Texans celebrate the holiday.

See 'Cinco de Mayo' roses in our Rose Garden. March-May is prime bloom season for roses in South Texas with fewer blooms during the heat of summer.

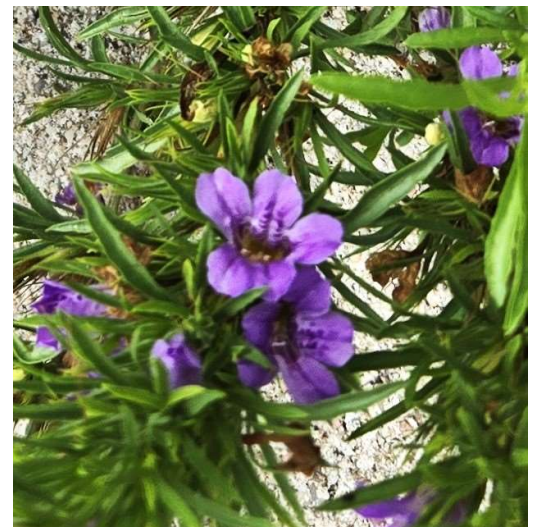
SNAKE HERB (Dyschoriste linearis)

Snake Herb, a low-growing perennial groundcover indigenous to calcareous clay soils in western two-thirds of Texas, goes up into Oklahoma where it also is known as "Polkadots" due to dark purple blotches in the throat of the flowers. Two-lipped tubular flowers often are hidden as they emerge from base of leaf axils revealing lavender to purple flowers with blotched throats.

Blooming can range from March through early October with sufficient moisture, attracting both bees & butterflies.

Plants usually grow 6-12" tall, with square, hairy stems that emerge from the ground & grow upright. Thin, green leaves grow along stems in opposite arrangement which has also led to an additional common name of Narrowleaf

Dyschoriste. Plants can grow in full sun, but benefit from partial afternoon shade.



Snake Herb is both heat & drought tolerant, but also can withstand short wet periods, making it a good landscape option here. It is a member of the Acanthus family (Acanthaceae) along with other popular landscape plants like Flame Acanthus (*Anisicanthus quadrifidus* var. *wrightii*), Shrimp Plant (*Justicia brandegeana*), and Mexican Petunias (*Ruelia*).

Origin of its most common name in Texas, "snake herb," is not definitively known, but believed to be from Comanches & Lipan Apaches that chewed the root of a plant called "snake herb," making a poultice of the herb with saliva they put on snake bite wounds.

See Snake Herb currently in bloom in the Sensory Garden center raised bed next to the windmill.

BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of April 27, 2025)

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COCONUT ORCHID (*Maxillaria tenuifolia*)

Maxillaria tenuifolia has a distinct scent earning it the common name “Coconut Orchid.” Maroon & white spotted blossoms close to an inch across open consistently in April & May in our conservatory. Each flower spike typically has 10-12 blossoms, with a plant easily having 50-60 blooms (5-6 spikes) in each bloom cycle! Coconut Orchid has grass-like foliage staying fairly compact making it a good potted plant even not in bloom. This epiphytic orchid, however, needs good drainage to prevent rotting, & should be planted in orchid bark or similar medium.

This species was discovered near Veracruz, Mexico by Karl Theodore Hartweg, described by Lindley in 1837 in the Botanical Register. It naturally grows in lower elevations from Mexico to Costa Rica at elevations up to 5000’.



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

SCORPION’S TAIL (*Heliotropium angiospermum*)

Scorpion’s Tail is a little-known native Texas member of the borage or forget-me-not family (Boraginaceae), known for hairy leaves & stems. Tiny white flowers grow in 2 rows along a rachis (flower stalk midrib) which gives it the appearance of its common namesake.

Scorpion’s Tail usually is a low growing shrub reaching only 1-2’ tall often used as a groundcover. However, it can reach 3’ tall. An annual in northern areas, it will grow multiple years where freezes are absent.

Preferring sunny to partly sunny areas & moderately moist soil, it produces seeds that help it fill in as a groundcover. A good nectar source for a wide range of butterflies, it blooms nearly all year.

In the US, it is indigenous to Texas & Florida, but also grows in Mexico & the Caribbean. Other common names are 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.



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

BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of April 20, 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

BURNT SPOT ONCIDIUM ORCHID

(*Oncidium sphacelatum*)

This bright yellow *Oncidium* orchid locally is called “Mother’s Day Orchid” due to consistent timely bloom in our area. It is native to lower elevation rainforests in Mexico through Central America & into eastern Venezuela.

Spectacular flower spikes 3-6’ long emerge from leaf-bearing pseudobulbs with hundreds of tiny non-fragrant yellow blossoms, many with brown splotches near the throat or small upper petals. Plants have large flat light green pseudobulbs & slightly darker strap-like leaves emerging above the fattened portion. The sprawling nature of the bloom spike leaves an undeniable impression to any orchid collection. This epiphytic orchid prefers bright but indirect light & watering only weekly in summer.



These orchids are showstoppers entering the Samuel Jones Orchid Conservatory due to size, and color. However, peak spring bloom also features other *Phalaenopsis*, *Cattleya*, *Paphiopedilum* & *Vanilla* species! **Selections from our collection will be sold at Birdiest Festival in America’s “Super Saturday,” from 10-5, April 26!

TEXAS FROGFRUIT (*Phyla nodiflora*)

Texas Frogfruit is a great low-growing groundcover option for local landscapes. It rapidly grows only 6-10” tall producing clusters of tiny white flowers almost year-round. Closer inspection shows individual 1/8” wide white blossoms are part of a longer yellow-throated tubular flower. Multiple blossoms emerge from green round inch-long flower stalks which blossom for weeks, making consistent nectar sources for pollinators. Narrow inch-long semi-succulent leaves are abundant year-round, drought resistant once established.

A single plant can spread 18-24” across with multiple plants creating a thick bed of lush green foliage sprinkled with white flowers. Its low growing habit needs little pruning through the year except keeping outer edges in bounds.



Frogfruit is native to 23 southern United States & deep into tropical Americas. As a native, it is seen in rarely considered spaces, including shallow dry ditches & thinning turf areas especially noticeable in winter when butterflies are seeking nectar on warm, sunny winter days. It is also a larval plant needed for caterpillars of native butterflies including Phaon Crescentspots, Buckeyes, and White Peacocks.

Unfortunately for many gardeners who like a tidy turf area, keeping frogfruit with grass means living with other broadleaf weeds which cohabitate.

See Frogfruit purposefully planted in the Butterfly Garden & adjacent Butterfly Hill; but also growing naturally in many short grassy native areas.

BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of April 6, 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

CELESTIAL NIGHT FLORIBUNDA ROSE

(*Rosa hybrida* 'Celestial Night')

'Celestial Night' is a prolific-blooming dark plum-purple floribunda rose with full flowers having 41+ petals in a cupped form creating a full blossom excellent for flower vases. 'Celestial Night' is a patented variety that was an offspring of Ebb Tide & Grande Dame floribunda roses, introduced in 2017. Not only hailed for striking color & mild fragrance, it also has good disease resistance critical for roses in South Texas.

Floribundas have medium-sized bushes & multiple blossoms per stem, providing more color than larger Hybrid Tea Roses. This variety has 4-5' bushes about 3 feet wide at maturity.

See a grouping of 'Celestial Night' in the center bed approaching from the Plumeria Garden.



TEXAS BLUEBONNET (*Lupine texensis*)

Texas Bluebonnet, an abundant wildflower throughout Texas, is revered for fields of azure flowers! *Lupine texensis* was named State Flower of Texas in 1901. In 1971, 5 more Texas native lupines were included in the designation with the state's wide-ranging environmental conditions. Bluebonnets were named a Texas Superstar in 2020 bringing more availability at retail nurseries.

The common name comes from the shape of the individual blue & white flower resembling the old-fashioned lady's bonnet. However, the flower can also be found in other colors like shades of pinks, whites, light purple & maroon/red. Flowers last 2-4 weeks on average with flowers opening at the bottom of the flower stalk first.

Most South Texas bluebonnets germinate in October, growing to a small rosette of leaves that goes dormant in winter. Once warm weather & spring rains come, plants start growing again, switching to reproductive mode sending up of stalks of flowers.

Bluebonnets are members of the Pea/Bean Family (Fabaceae). After pollination, plants produce a seed pod. For annuals, these seeds are needed for next generation; so leave plants & spent flowers in place until pods turn brown & crack open to have more bluebonnets next year!

Why do we see so many along roadways? Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) plants approximately 30,000 pounds of wildflowers each year along state roads, making Texas famous for its palette of natural color each spring. Though technically not illegal to pick a bluebonnet, it's better to take a picture leaving flowers for others to enjoy, and pollinated for next year.

Due to months of drought, we don't have fields of bluebonnets this spring. See a nice display in the Earthkind Demo Garden, plus "volunteers" sprouting in moist pockets.



BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of April 6, 2025)

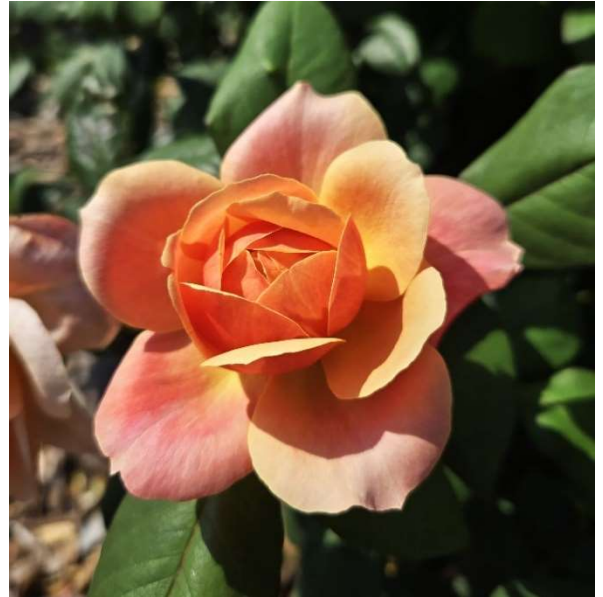
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'STATE OF GRACE' GRANDIFLORA ROSE

(*Rosa hybrid 'Wekspodotogi'*)

'State of Grace', an elegant flowering grandiflora rose, was discovered in 2011 by Christian Bredard, introduced as 'State of Grace' in 2018 by Edmund's Roses. Grandiflora roses have 3-5 large blossoms per stem like a floribunda, but height & elegance of a hybrid tea!

This variety has bronzy pink outer petals & golden center petals with flowers contrasting nicely with dark green foliage, & mildly fruity blossom fragrance. Plants can grow 3-5' tall. 'State of Grace' also has good disease resistance to both downy & powdery mildew. April-May is the prime bloom season for roses in South Texas with fewer blossoms present during the heat of summer.



See a new grouping of 'State of Grace' planted in rear raised beds of the Rose Garden closest to Plumeria.

TEXAS BABY BLUE EYES (*Nemophila phacelioides*)

Baby Blue Eyes, an early spring wildflower, lasts only a few weeks usually blooming late February through early April, with plants dying back from heat by June. Drought conditions have delayed flowering, but recent rains opened blossoms on smaller than normal flower stalks.

Baby Blue Eyes is named for its pale .75" blue flowers with white centers. Its fuzzy bluish flowers also led to the less common "flannel breeches" name in other regions.

Baby Blue Eyes make a striking show early in the season soon accompanied by other wildflowers when they may get lost because of short stature. Plants typically grow 4-6" tall with gray-green, rounded hairy leaves. They tolerate a variety of soils including clay, sand, loams & caliche. Ecologically important, they provide early sources of nectar & pollen for butterflies, moths & bees.



They are members of the Waterleaf Family (Hydrophyllaceae), a subfamily of the Borages, with many of the 20 related species identified as natural astringents.

See Baby Blue Eyes most prominently in the Arid Garden; but also can be found in grass areas, between Sensory & Arid Garden; along Brennecke Nature Trail by the pathway leading to the Palapa Grande; or in beds near Administration & Education Buildings.

BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of March 30, 2025)

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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, with long stems perfect for cut flowers! This hybrid tea rose grows 3-6.5' tall with medium to dark, leathery green foliage.

Hybridized by Christian Bedard, Miss All-American Beauty was as a cross between Chrysler Imperial x Karl Herbst; & was the 1968 All-American Rose Selection (AARS) winner, introduced in the U.S. by Conard-Pyle Co., simultaneously by Wheatcroft in the United Kingdom.

See a grouping of 'Miss All-American Beauty' in the back bed as you approach the Rose Garden from the Plumeria Garden. March-May is prime rose bloom season in South Texas with fewer blossoms present during the heat of summer.



BLACKBRUSH ACACIA (*Vachellia rigidula*)

Blackbrush Acacia is a large shrub/small tree found in South Texas thornscrub chaparral from Rio Grande Plains to Austin, hugging the Mexican border from Corpus Christi west to Big Bend. It has numerous 2" long spikes of frilly pale yellow flowers, often appearing on bare branches before the spring flush of leaves. When pollinated, small brown beans form later in spring. This plant has spiny stiff branches growing 4-12' tall creating a dense thicket. The white/gray bark contrasts with tiny dark green compound leaves.

Bees use Blackbrush as an early pollen source. Butterflies nectar on flowers, & granivorous birds feed on seeds after they drop. Typically one of the first plants to bloom in spring in South Texas, this year blooming appears delayed possibly due to drought conditions.



Blackbrush formerly was classified in genus *Acacia* with older literature calling it by scientific names *Acacia amentacea* & *Acacia rigidula*. It is very drought tolerant & 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*), and Retama (*Parkinsonia aculeata*). Common names include Blackbrush, Chaparro Prieto & Gavia.

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 23, 2025)

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DORIS DAY FLORIBUNDA ROSE

(*Rosa hybrida* 'Doris Day')

'Doris Day' is a good floribunda rose named for classic big screen actress & singing legend, Doris Day, reflecting the joy, charm of this film icon known as 'America's Sweetheart.' Evenly bright yellow blossoms are "full of sunshine & will sweeten up your garden" with their fruity & sweet spice aroma. The old-fashioned blooms with ruffled edges are in beautiful rounded clusters on vigorous stems. Doris Day was a cross of floribunda roses Julie Newmar & Julia Child by hybridizer, Christian Bédard introduced in 2015 by Week's Roses.



This floribunda rose grows to 3-5' tall with glossy, bright green leaves & upright bushy growth habit with good disease resistance. Heavy spring pruning mid to late February is recommended to promote new growth, & a light September pruning to produce more fall blossoms.

See Doris Day currently brightening the front raised beds of the Rose Garden near the Sensory Garden. Roses typically start blooming late March or early April after spring pruning, continuing until summer heat produces dormancy in most roses. Cooler fall temperatures provide a second blooming cycle in South Texas.

ANACONCHO ORCHID TREE

(*Bauhinia lunaroides*)

West Texas native Anaconcho Orchid Tree only reaches 8-12' tall, 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 about 1-1.5" long. Clusters of small white fragrant flowers resembling orchids bloom spring through fall, providing nectar for butterflies & bees in arid regions. Thin petals of multiple flowers provide a pom-pom appearance.



It's a cousin of the popular purple flowering Hong Kong Orchid Tree (*Bauhinia ppurea*). Common names in other regions include Anacacho Bauhinia, Texas Orchid Tree & Texas Plume. Anaconcho orchid tree is a member of the Pea Family (Fabaceae) along with local natives like mesquite, huisache & retama, all which produce bean pods when flowers are pollinated.

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

BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of March 16, 2025)

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C. G. ROEBLING 'BEECHVIEW' ORCHID

(Lc. C. G. Roebling 'Beechview')

Lc. C.G. Roebling 'Beechview' is a classic primary hybrid considered a staple in quality orchid collections, registered in 1895. It is a cross between *Cattleya gaskelliana* X *Laelia purpurata*.

Known for fragrant, large light blue-white flowers with an indigo blue tubular lip & gold veining deep in the throat, plants produce only 2-3 flowers per stalk, but each flower can be 5-6.5" across--instant showstoppers when blooming!

See several specimens blooming in the Samuel Jones Orchid Conservatory along with other blooming Phalaenopsis, Dendrobium, Cattleya & Paphiopedilum cultivars.



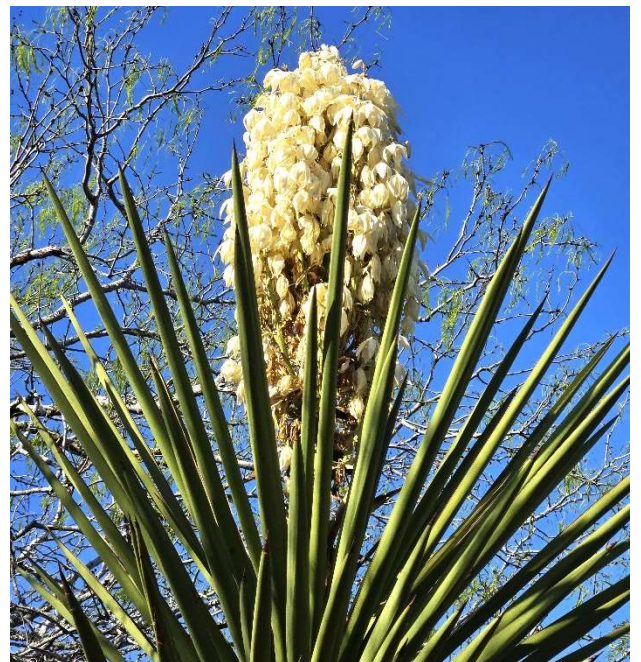
SPANISH DAGGER

(*Yucca transeolata* Agavaceae) (Century-Plant Family)

Spanish Dagger is a slender stemmed plant reaching 6-12' tall or more. The stem has thick dark green stiff leaves about 3" wide & 18-36" long. Each leaf has a firm edge & sharp point that lead to the common name! Other names include Spanish Bayonet, Don Quixote's Lance, Palma Pita, Palma De Datil & Palmito.

A single impressive flower stalk about 2' long emerges near the top in mature plants late winter or early spring, towering above the foliage signaling the beginning of Spring. Whiteish, pendulous flowers about 3" wide hang from the stalk, opening over about two weeks. Fertilized flowers result in dark fruit capsules that hang from the flower stalk.

Spanish Dagger was important to native Americans with some parts being edible & leaves used for fiber & thatching. Roots were pounded & used for soap. Spanish Dagger is found in the South Texas chaparral brush, often emerging above low growing brush.



See blooming Spanish Dagger near the Birding Tower on the Brennecke Nature Trail; while smaller, non-blooming plants grow elsewhere along our trails.

BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of March 9, 2025)

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NORMA CROTON

(*Codiaeum variegatum 'Norma'*)

It's not the blooms that catch your eye, but you'll enjoy colorful croton foliage nearly year-round. Leaves are mostly green grown in shade; with colorful yellows, reds & oranges hues from anthocyanin pigments appearing in sun. Crotons are a great option for fall patio color when other plants aren't blooming, such as early spring or late fall.

Crotons are tropical members of the Euphorbia Family (Euphorbiaceae), cousins to poinsettias, pencil cactus & crown of thorns, without succulent stems. These woody shrubs are native to Indonesia, Malaysia, Australia & Western Pacific Islands, in a variety of leaf shapes & colors.



While most grow them in pots on patios, our mild winters allow crotons to be planted outside in protected areas near the coast. 'Norma' typically grows 3-4' tall, but may reach 5' or more with age. Traditional pinnate leaves are 3-4" wide & 6-8" long with distinctive veining which is the first portion to change color in sun. The areas between follow & may become entirely yellow in bright sun. As leaves mature, there may be a slight rippled effect along the edges.

See a potted specimen, one of several colorful croton varieties in the rock patio in front of the Samuel Jones Orchid Conservatory.

TEXAS MOUNTAIN LAUREL

(*Sophora secundiflora*)

Texas native Mountain Laurel is known for its shiny dark, evergreen compound leaves that provide a nice shrub base for native plant landscape. In spring, clusters of lavender/blue flowers appear for a few weeks, looking like grapes with a grape soda scent! This slow growing shrub can be shaped into a small, ornamental, multi-trunked tree usually maturing at 10-15' tall sometimes reaching 25-30'; but also creates long production time for large plants, making them costly in retail nurseries! But Texas Mountain Laurels are available in retail outlets.



In the Pea Family (Fabaceae), along with beans & native trees like mesquite & retama, pollinated flowers create long seed pods possibly lasting a year or more on the bush. Pods form after bees & butterflies pollinate flowers, but bright red seeds are toxic with quinolizidine alkaloids which can cause loss of appetite, diarrhea, depression, weakness, incoordination, paralysis & weak heart rate.

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. In other locales it may be called frigolito, frijollito, frijolillo, coral bean & big-drunk bean.

See Texas Mountain Laurels in the Sensory Garden, entrance to Brennecke Nature Trail & Arid Garden. Their unique flowers & grape aroma only last 2-3 weeks, so visit soon.

BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of March 2, 2025)

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LYCASTE 'DAINTY' ORCHID

(*Lyc. candida* X *Lyc. Campbellii*)

Lycaste 'Dainty's small flower stalk holds 10-15 butter yellow tubular flowers emerging from yellow-green sepals which serve as backdrop "petals" to the untrained observer. The lack of foliage during the blooming cycle allows the 1.5-2" blossoms to take centerstage while trying to attract pollinators. Beneath the flowers, vegetative yellow-green pseudobulbs are present from which new pseudobulbs with large bright green foliage emerge.

Lycaste 'Dainty' is a primary orchid hybrid originated in 1992 by Santa Barbara. A "primary hybrid" is a cross between two species (not other hybrids) which in this case is a cross of *Lyc. candida* x *Lyc. Campbellii*.



See this specimen orchid currently blooming in the Samuel Jones Orchid Conservatory along with other blooming Phalaenopsis, Dendrobium, Cattleya and Paphiopedilum cultivars.

TEXAS NIGHTSHADE (*Solanum triquetrum*)

Texas Nightshade's tiny white flowers with light violet tinges typically are less than .5" across with petals often curling back to feature a bright yellow stamen cluster sometimes called "banana anthers." Plants flower nearly year-round except during extreme cold weather. If pollinated, the plants produce a small berry turning red at maturity.

This semi-evergreen perennial shrub varies in size & growth habit ranging from a 2' herbaceous shrub to sprawling vine-like thin stems up to 7' long. It sometimes is called Texas pepper vine due to its common long, thin branches growing within other plants. But it is not a true vine due to lack of tendrils, twisting stems, or other specialty attachments. The species name 'triquetrum' means 3-cornered referring to the narrow bright green simple leaves also varying from .5 to 2.5" long, triangular-ovate to linear & often lobed.



A member of the Potato or Nightshade Family (Solanaceae) is native only to Texas & northern Mexico, growing in pastures, along fence lines, brushy woodlands & around homes when seeds are spread by birds. Other regional common names include White Nightshade, Tomatillo, Hierba Mora & pepper vine.

See Texas Nightshade in bloom in the Hummingbird Garden & mixed in with shrubs along the Brennecke Nature Trail.

BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of February 23, 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!

HYBRID LADY SLIPPER ORCHID

(*Paphiopedilum* Magic Mood 'Sunshine' X Stan Condon 'Jessica' X *P. Blenhill* 'Indomitable' X Blenhill 'King Tide')

WOW! We are featuring another fabulous Lady Slipper *Paphiopedilum* blooming in the Samuel Jones Orchid Conservatory! About 4" across, this Lady Slipper has wider petals than many others making a statement in any collection. The "slipper" & side 'petals' have striking gold & maroon coloration contrasting with the white & maroon upper petals, accomplished by crossing two hybrids, *Paphiopedilum* Magic Mood 'Sunshine' X Stan Condon 'Jessica' and *P. Blenhill* 'Indomitable' X Blenhill 'King Tide'.

Paphiopedilum orchids commonly are called Lady Slippers because of the unique pouch on the tongue petal of flowers displayed on stalks above the foliage. Dark green, often speckled strap-like leaves provide more attractive foliage than many other orchid genera.



Paphiopedilums, native to South East Asia, are more terrestrial than many other orchid varieties, tending to prefer more moisture. They are low-light orchids which is why the American Orchid Society considers them well-adapted for indoor home environments treated similar to African violets.

CAROLINA WOLFBERRY (*Lycium carolinianum*)

Carolina Wolfberry is a shrubby evergreen wetland plant in the Potato Family (Solanaceae) with semi-succulent leaves. Four-petaled lavender-purple flowers typically appear April-October in most regions, blooming nearly year-round in our area with mild winters. If pollinated, plants produce .25" red berries which feed birds. They are safe for human consumption, being close relatives of Gogi Berry, the common name of fruit for (*Lycium barbarum* & *Lycium chinense*).

This native may appear in spreading form or grow erect up to 6' tall, often seen in ditches, ravines, depressions, swamps & marshes in coastal plains from South Texas to South Carolina. In other regions, it may be called Caroline Desert-thorn, Creeping Wolfberry or Christmas Berry.



See Carolina Wolfberry in wetland areas along the Brennecke Nature Trail, & Oso Loop Trail (currently being resurfaced).

BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of February 16, 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!

'HANNAH RAY' WEEPING BOTTLEBRUSH

(*Callistemon viminalis* 'Hannah Ray')

"Hannah Ray" Weeping Bottle Brush is a tall-growing bottlebrush tree reaching 15-20' at maturity, blooming 2-3 times a year, most surprisingly early after recent January cold snap. This variety has a dark pink, almost red flowers. Close inspection reveals multiple flower buds on the ends of branches that open at once with thin petals, pistils & stamen resembling bristles on a brush, lasting several weeks.

Its rapid growth produces longer thinner branches with a graceful, slightly weeping form, especially during flowering, compared to the dwarf & standard red varieties. Leaves tend to be slightly thinner, longer & softer textured than the standard red bottlebrush (*C. citrinus*) or 'Little John' dwarf variety. 'Hannah Ray' can be trimmed up into tree form or pruned as a large shrub or hedge with annual cut backs. If used as a hedge, infrequent cutting is the best option to prevent removal of flower buds for the next bloom.



Native to Australia, grown in much of the world, most Bottle Brush are Zone 9 plants tolerating temps in the mid 20's. Hannah Ray grew back from the base after the 2021 deep freeze!

See 'Hannah Ray' Bottle Brush, excellent hummingbird & butterfly plants, along the Bromeliad Conservatory walkway, Staples Street fence & Hummingbird Garden.

TANGLEWOOD (a.k.a. Desert Olive)

(*Forestiera pubescens*)

Tanglewood is a common spineless understory plant in the South Texas Chaparral Thorn Scrub. This member of the olive family (Oleaceae) goes by many common names like Desert Olive, Stretchberry, Chaparral, Elbowbush & Downy Forestiera. It also may be called Spring Herald or Spring Goldenglow because it flowers very early in spring before most other species, before its leaves appear. One of the first to signal spring, the small yellow flowers are easy to miss, but their perfume is unmistakable walking through South Texas brushlands early in the season.



Each flower is only about a quarter" across lacking obvious petals. Also, this plant is dioecious, with male & female flowers on different plants. Male flowers have clusters of bright yellow stamen in a starburst effect. Female flowers are fragrant recognizable by reddish round-ended pistils creating a similar starburst effect. Bees & butterflies pollinate the separated male & female plants. After the tiny flowers are pollinated, small green fruit appear & eventually mature to a dark blue-black color, before being eaten by birds & small mammals. The rest of the year, it appears as a dense shrub that can grow at least 10' tall with dark green .75" long oval leaves for a great visual screen in dry regions.

To see Tanglewood, follow your nose & carefully inspect plants along the Brennecke Nature Trail to find this understory plant with tiny fragrant flowers.

BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

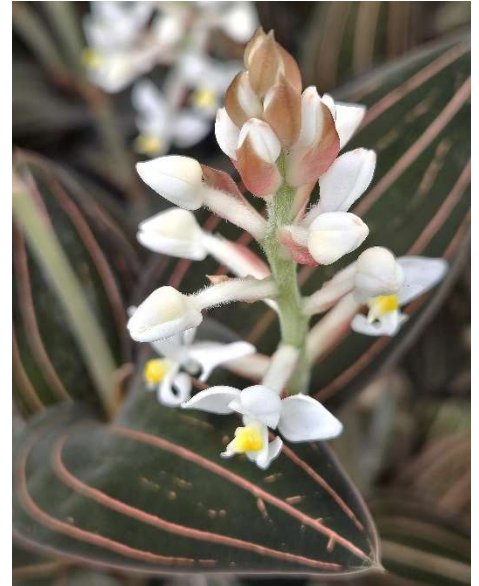
(week of February 9, 2025)

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!

JEWEL ORCHID (*Ludisia discolor*)

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

Jewel orchid, unlike most orchids which grow on tree trunks, is terrestrial, growing naturally on Southeast Asia forest floors. 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.

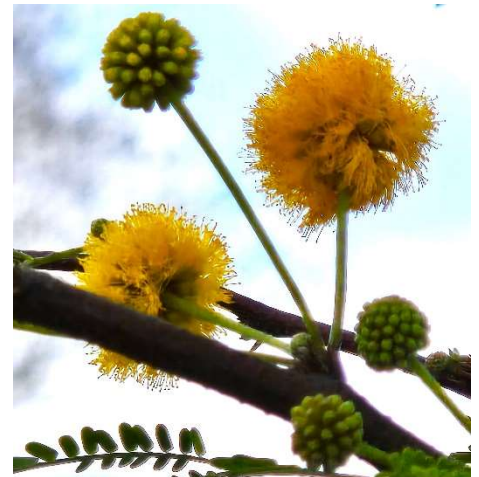


See several of these unusual orchids blooming now in the Samuel Jones Orchid Conservatory.

HUISACHE OR SWEET ACACIA (*Vachellia farnesiana*)

Huisache is a small tree/large shrub found in South Texas thorn scrub chaparral. Huisache typically grows 15-20' tall making multiple trunks in a large shrub form. It has fine compound "fernlike" leaves with many leaflets less than .25" long.

One of the first plants in the South Texas brushlands to bloom in spring, Huisache has just begun its burst of golden color. In colder years, that may be delayed into late February or March. Small fragrant golden orange flowers about .5" inch across appear before leaves. The most visible portion 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. Huisache is considered very drought tolerant but also invasive by ranchers due to rapid growth & high seed germination rates. It rarely is found in retail nurseries.



The common name, Huisache, is derived from Nahuatl (Aztec) meaning "many thorns". It also goes by other common names of including 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 formerly was classified in the genus *Acacia* with scientific name *Acacia farnesiana* in older literature.

See several huisache specimens along the Brennecke Nature Trail, and 1 shading the sidewalk to the Administration Building.

BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of February 2, 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!

SHIN SHIANG DIAMOND 'TAI YOUNG #1' ORCHID

(*Potinara Shin Shiang* 'Diamond Tai Young #1')

This orchid hybrid is a variation of the hybrid of Shin Shiang, 2003, as a cross of *Rhyncholaeliocattleya* Kat E-Sun x *Rlc.* Tzeng-Wen Beauty. This "cattleya-like hybrid" relatively compact orchid has bright green pseudobulbs/leaves about 8" tall. Each new pseudobulb produces 1-2 blossoms, but what it lacks in number, it makes in color, stopping you in your tracks! Three butter-yellow sepals to the rear of the blossom bring out the yellow central vein of wide deep burgundy-purple petals slightly ruffled edges along with the brilliant gold throat of the orchid's lip. Each flower is approximately 3" across in the traditional *Cattleya* corsage orchid form.



See Shin Shiang Diamond in the Samuel Jones Orchid Conservatory along with many other orchids like *Cattleya* that regularly bloom in fall but, like last year, seem to be extending much later than usual brightening overcast winter days for visitors.

DRUMMOND'S PINK MINT

(*Stachys drummondii*)

Despite a freeze just over a week ago, Drummond's Pink Mint is already back with buds & blooms, consistently one of the first local wildflowers flowering, proving an important nectar source for winter hummingbirds & butterflies.

Drummond's Pink Mint produces multiple flower stalks featuring small lavender-pink tubular blossoms with white throat & lavender speckles, resembling many tubular flowers in the genus *Salvia*, sometime confused with this kissing cousin. 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. A member of the Mint Family (Lamiaceae) its cousins including salvias, coleus & many common culinary herbs. This annual only grows in cooler temperatures dying out in late May & June with summer heat, but tiny seedlings start growing again in November & December. 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 Scottish naturalist Thomas Drummond who identified & collected plant samples in the Southwest U.S. & Northern Mexico in the 1830s, collecting over 750 plant samples & identifying over 150 birds.

See Drummond's Pink Mint in the Butterfly Garden, Butterfly Hill & Hummingbird Garden; but smaller populations also naturally occur in other gardens & in sunny spots along the Brennecke Nature Trail.

BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of January 26, 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!

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 stalks above the vegetative plant. 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 gold & maroon striped long petals which appear like twisted streamers around the lower lip petal that makes up the "slipper." Similar colored sepals provide cover & backdrop for the slipper petal. This variety has smaller flowers about 4" across. Bright green leaves are about 1" wide and 6-8" long. It was a cross of *Paphiopedilum* 'Julius Irving' and *P. philippinense*. It was a cross of *Paphiopedilum* 'Julius Irving' and *P. philippinense*.



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

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

COMMON GREENSHIELD LICHEN (*Flavoparmelia caperata*)

Lichens are common moss-like organisms that live on tree trunks & rocks, but are unique in that they are symbiotic organisms made of multiple species including fungus, alga or cyanobacteria, and sometimes yeast. Greenshield Lichens are part of the foliose lichen group with leaf-like structures. But other lichen forms include crustose lichens which look like scales on tree bark, & fruticose lichens with a lacy appearance. 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.

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



See Common Greenshield Lichen on trees throughout the Botanical Gardens, with large, nice specimens visible on trees along the Mary Hope Brennecke Nature Trail.

BLOOMING IN THE GARDENS

(week of January 19, 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!

'CARROT' EQUITANT ORCHID

(*Tolumnia* Jairak Flyer 'Carrot')

Orchids come in all sizes & colors. Some of the smallest in our collection is a group commonly called Equitant Oncidium orchids. Small clusters of 2-6 flowers emerge from a thin flower stalk blossoms appearing to be hanging in space. Colors range from browns to whites & purples. Jairak Flyer 'Carrot' blossoms are only about .5" wide with frilly petals & beautiful orange & brown tones, perfect to celebrate autumn or Halloween. Leaves are 2-6" long arranged in overlapping pairs at the base which inspired the name "equitant," from Latin meaning "riding a horse." Although Equitant still is sometimes used, these orchids are not officially in genus *Tolumnia*. (With so many crosses you often will see the genus simply followed by hybrid name.)



See 'Carrot' in the Samuel Jones Orchid Conservatory in full bloom with other Equitants, Cattleya, Dendrobiums, Oncidiums & other genera.

COMMON DAY FLOWER (*Commelina erecta*)

Common Day Flower or Common Spiderwort is a familiar wild flower blooming nearly year-round making it a native groundcover option for landscapes. It has 3-petal flowers with 2 upper blue petals & lower white "lip" petal which gave it an alternate common name of White Mouth Dayflower. The slightly fuzzy green leaves resemble wide grass blades about ¾-1" wide & several inches long. This member of the Commelinaceae (Spiderwort) family is also a very close cousin to the common hanging basket plants called Wandering Jews.

Common Day Flower is a perennial found in most of the continental U.S., particularly the South. Due to its vigorous growth, it is considered a weed; but removal can be challenging with its fleshing underground roots. If in an unwanted area, it should be dug, removing the growing point with all the branches radiating from the central growing point.



See Day flower in a number of areas along the nature trail, in the Butterfly Garden & a few unwanted spaces amongst tropicals near the Visitor Center.

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 lacey 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, resprouting 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)

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.