



“Blooming in the Gardens”

LIBRARY

July to Dec. 2020



GARDENS IN BLOOM

(week of Dec. 27, 2020)

The South Texas Botanical Gardens & Nature Center currently cannot offer Saturday classes, weekend Rep-Tales and Parrot Talk, or Orchid-ology series, due to COVID-19 protocol, plus health and safety of guests. Fulfilling its horticulture, environmental education and conservation mission, **WHAT'S BLOOMING**, each week spotlights a featured tropical and native plant—to enjoy on a visit this week, or enhance your landscape!

LOQUAT or JAPANESE PLUM (*Eriobotrya japonica*)

Loquat, a small ornamental tree well-adapted to South Texas landscapes, is a Zone 8 plant tolerating freezing weather to 10°F, and salt-tolerant even when poor water quality. It can mature to 20-30 feet, but only reaches 15-20 feet here. While the common name “Japanese Plum” tells its origin, it surprisingly is a member of the Rose (Rosaceae) family.

Its large, attractive dark-green leaves, ranging 6-9 inches long and 2-3 inches across, have a rust-colored fuzzy texture on the underside, and serrated edges—a popular choice for floral design-- also offering a striking alternative to more common small-leaved shrubs and trees in the landscape.

See Loquat in the Sensory Garden, currently blooming with spikes of small white flowers about a half-inch across, which, after being pollinated by bees or butterflies, transform into small fruit, which can be eaten after turning golden.



PINK MINT (*Stachys drummondii*)

This wildflower only has been documented naturally occurring in Texas, according the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center, particularly from Northern Mexico near the Gulf, through the Eastern Rio Grande Valley and up along the Coastal Plain toward Houston. The species was named after Scottish naturalist Thomas Drummond who, in the 1830s, collected more than 750 plant samples, and identified more than 150 birds in the Southwest U.S. and Northern Mexico. Also, known as “Drummond’s Hedgenettle,” it is a member of the Mint Family (Lamiaceae), along with most culinary herbs, salvia and coleus.

Pink Mint has stalks with small lavender-pink tubular blossoms, a white throat and lavender speckles, shaped similarly to cousins in genus *Salvia*. Plants have light green foliage, and grow 1-2 feet tall, blooming in cooler months lasting through spring. Blossoms die off in in April, when spent flowers should be left to dry and produce viable seeds for next year. Plants die back in June and July from heat, with seedlings returning in November as temperatures drop. These “weeds” to some are an important nectar source for resident butterflies in winter and early spring.

See Pink Mint most prominently found in the Butterfly Garden and Butterfly Hill, but also naturally occurring in small populations in other gardens, and sunny spots along the Brennecke Nature Trail.



GARDENS IN BLOOM

(week of Dec 20, 2020)

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VETERAN'S HONOR & MOONSHINE Hybrid Tea Roses

Red and white may be Christmas colors, but **Veterans Honor** and **Moonstone** are among roses with a spring bloom, as well as in South Texas' cooler winter months! Through January, enjoy roses in the large Rose Garden surrounding the Pavilion; and the Military Rose Bed by the parking area flagpole, before annual pruning in early February. Roses often bloom beautifully in fall and winter, better than in summer heat!

Veteran's Honor Hybrid Tea Rose, introduced by Jackson & Perkins in 2013, is considered the ultimate red Hybrid Tea, and a tribute to those serving our country over the years. Big shapely buds unfurl into huge blossoms of impeccable form and stunning red color. Extra-long stems make them perfect cut roses.

Moonstone is a gem of a Hybrid Tea flower with large blossoms that display beauty of its classic show form and pearly colors. Since plants do best in warm temperatures, current winter afternoons in the 70s and low 80s help this Hybrid Tea Rose flourish now in South Texas.



CEDAR ELM TREE (*Ulmus crassifolia*)

Cedar Elms are providing some fall color as leaves finally change from green to gold and light brown before, being deciduous, finally falling for winter. The leaves, only 1-1.5 inches long with serrated edges, will re-emerge in March, providing refreshing shade until next December.

Cedar Elms are native to the Coastal Bend, naturally occurring along riverbanks. Native range stretches from Northern Mexico near the Gulf, along the Texas Coast, up through East Texas into northern Louisiana and Southern Arkansas, as far as northwest Mississippi.

Among the best shade trees for our area, Cedar Elms are found several places in the Botanical Gardens, including the Sensory Garden, and as a backdrop to Rose Garden raised beds. Reaching 30-40 feet tall and 20-30 feet wide, although having no foliage in winter, they handle prevailing winds with less leaning than Live Oaks.



GARDENS IN BLOOM

(week of Dec 13, 2020)

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PANAMA ROSE (*Rondeletia leucophylla*)

Despite its common name “Panama Rose,” this member of the Madder family (Rubiaceae--along with Ixora, Pentas, Gardenia, and Coffee--actually is native to Chiapas, Mexico! It produces clusters of rose-pink tubular flowers resembling its smaller cousin Egyptian Starflower (Pentas), resulting in another common name, “Bush Pentas.” This perennial shrub typically grows 6-8 feet tall in our area, but has been noted up to 15 feet at maturity in warmer regions. It prefers well-drained humus-rich soils, liking partial shade to full sun.

Panama Rose is almost a year-round bloomer and great butterfly nectar plant, blooming in cool months when other plants may be dormant.

See a mature Panama Rose in the Butterfly Garden, on the way to the Sensory Garden.



BELLYACHE BUSH (*Jatropha gossypifolia*)

Bellyache Bush (*Jatropha gossypifolia*), also known as “black physicnut” or “cottonleaf physicnut” in other regions, is a member of the spurge or Euphorbia family (Euphorbiaceae) along with poinsettia, pencil cactus, crotons, and other *Jatropha* species. Most often recognized for its young glossy, sticky, dark maroon three-lobed leaves which turn green at maturity, the small red yellow-centered flower is not significant, but forms half- inch lobed fruit after pollination. Plants mature 5-12 feet tall, but will freeze back and re-emerge from root or seedlings during a cold winter, limiting their spread in our area.

While this plant is native to South America, Caribbean Islands, India, Mexico and deep South Texas, it's designated a noxious weed in Puerto Rico, and will rapidly reproduce from seed spread by birds if left unchecked. It is toxic to some mammals, with early toxicity symptoms including gastro-enteritis.

See Bellyache Bush in the Sensory Garden, and behind it near Butterfly Hill.



GARDENS IN BLOOM

(week of Dec 6, 2020)

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BRASSANTHE X 'MAIKAI MAYUMI' ORCHID

Brassanthe Maikai, an orchid hybrid originated by Hirose in 1944, is a cross of *B. nodosa* x *Gur. bowringiana*, considered a "primary hybrid" since a cross between two species. There are multiple varieties of this cross including the featured "Maikai Mayumi", the most awarded form, recognized 12 times between 1987 and 2014. It's light lavender flowers with purple speckles are about 2 inches wide. Flower stems can produce 6-8 flowers in clusters, with mature plants reaching up to 12-18 inches tall in bloom.

See both potted and mounted specimens of this beautiful orchid now blooming in the Samuel Jones Orchid Conservatory.



CHILE PEQUIN (*Capiscum annuum*)

This week's native plant is known for fruit color, not its flower! Chile Pequin, also called "bird pepper" or "turkey pepper," is a native hot pepper naturally found along the Eastern U.S. seaboard, Maryland to Florida, west to Arizona and Utah, and south into Central America. It is a critical fall and winter food source for birds which digest the hot fruit, then deposit seeds in nearby locations.

Plants typically remain evergreen in our area, but are deciduous in colder locations. Compact plants grow 1-3 feet tall with 1-inch spade-shaped bright green leaves. The plant forms individual tiny flowers, a fourth to half-inch wide, which form the half-inch round or slightly-elongated peppers, which turn red when mature.

Plants prefer moist soil, but survive drier conditions once established. Chile Pequins grows in a wide range of soils, including clay, sand, loams and caliche mixes, but good drainage is necessary.

Pequins are very hot having high concentrations of capsaicinoids, rated at 30,000-50,000 scoville units, 5-8 times hotter than jalapeno peppers! Wash your hands after picking, and avoid rubbing your eyes to prevent severe burning and irritation.

See Chile Pequins on Butterfly Hill, and along the Brennecke Nature Trail.



GARDENS IN BLOOM

(week of Nov 29, 2020)

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POINSETTIA (*Euphorbia pulcherrima*)

Poinsettias are tropical members of the Spurge or Euphorbia family, along with pencil cactus and crown of thorns. Euphorbias have a milky white latex sap, an irritant to skin and eyes. They are native to Southern Mexico and Central America. Naturally occurring plants may reach 10 feet, but plant breeding and use of plant growth regulators has reduced sizes of plants commercially available.

The actual poinsettia flowers are the tiny yellow centers called *cyathia*. The colorful bracts we associate as the bloom are actually leaves which attract pollinators to the small flower. Bracts change from green to colors in late fall and winter due to extended, uninterrupted nights, but most horticulturists simply call them “short-day” plants.

Poinsettias can be planted in the ground in the Coastal Bend if they are protected from cold weather, wind, and night lighting in fall. Due to these limitations, the Botanical Gardens like most residents, simply purchases these holiday favorites from professional greenhouse growers for our guests to enjoy during “Holly Days.”

See more than 80 poinsettias on full display now in the Anderson Bromeliad Conservatory, including an 8-foot tall Christmas tree crafted with 60 standard red plants. Other varieties displayed include white “Ice Crystals;” seemingly airbrushed “Picasso” petite pink form; white speckled “Red Glitter;” and elegant rounded-bract form called “Valentine” resembling a giant red rose blossom.



SKELETON-LEAF GOLDENEYE (*Viguiera stenoloba*)

Also known as *Resin Bush*, Skeleton-Leaf Goldeneye is native to dry areas from the Rio Grande Valley to Edwards Plateau and west into New Mexico. Its adaptation to dry conditions after establishment makes it a great ‘water-wise’ plant for landscapes, performing best in full sun. It naturally occurs in caliche soils, but grows in other mediums, as long as it has good drainage.

This densely-branched shrub grows into a round form 2-4 feet tall. ‘Skeleton-Leaf’ comes from deeply-serrated foliage producing a fine, almost lacy texture from a distance. In native regions, it is evergreen, holding leaves all winter. In more northern areas, it drops leaves and freeze to the base, coming back from roots. The leaves are aromatic due to essential oils, thus sometimes called *Resin Bush*.

‘Goldeneye’ refers to single 1-inch yellow daisy-like flowers blooming from May through November, more prolifically in fall, providing nectar for butterflies and pollen for bees.

See Skeleton-leaf Goldeneye in the Butterfly Garden, and Butterfly Hill behind the Sensory Garden.



Gardens in Bloom

(week of Nov 22, 2020)

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WHITE MEXICAN OLEANDER (*Cascabela thevetia*)

Mexican Oleander, a tropical shrub native to much of Mexico and Central America, is able to be pruned into a small tree. Not the traditional oleander (*Nerium oleander*) in the same plant family; it is part of the Apocynaceae or dogbane family, which also includes Vinca, plumeria, and desert rose.

The white flowering form is unusual for this plant, usually known for yellow or peach colored bell-shaped blossoms 2-3 inches long. It flowers consistently May through October, but is susceptible to heavy freezes, damaging foliage when temperatures dip to the low 20s, but with no severe dieback. Larger specimens quickly recover and re-leaf.

Mexican oleander has narrow bright green leaves 3 to 4 inches long and ¼ to ½ inch wide. Foliage grows quickly in moist soil, its rapid growth weighing down branches, requiring pruning several times a year to maintain desired form. It also is known as “lucky nut” because of the large shiny seed inside the green fruit. This variety, like most in this family, are toxic with cardiac glycosides in all plant parts.

See White Mexican Oleander at entrance to Anderson Bromeliad Conservatory. A peach form is located at Visitors Center entrance.



TEXAS FROGFRUIT (*Phyla nodiflora*)

Texas Frogfruit is a great low-growing native groundcover for local landscapes. It quickly grows to just 6-10 inches tall, producing clusters of tiny white flowers almost year-round. Closer inspection shows the individual eighth-inch white blossoms are part of longer tubular flowers with yellow throats. Blossoms emerge from green, round inch-long flower stalks which blossom for weeks, making a consistent pollinator nectar source. Narrow inch-long semi-succulent leaves are abundant year-round, drought-resistant once established.

A single plant can spread 18-24 inches across, with multiple plants creating a thick bed of lush green foliage sprinkled with white flowers. Its low-growing habit requires little pruning throughout the year except to keep outer edges in bounds.

Frogfruit is native to 23 southern states and deep into tropical Americas. As a native, it can be seen in some rarely-considered spaces, including shallow dry ditches and thinning turf areas, especially noticeable in winter when butterflies seek nectar on warm, sunny winter days. Unfortunately, keeping Frogfruit in grassy areas means living with other broadleaf weeds which cohabitate.

See Frogfruit purposefully planted in Butterfly Garden and adjacent Butterfly Hill; but also found growing naturally in many native short grassy areas at the Botanical Gardens.



Gardens in Bloom

(week of Nov 15, 2020)

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SLOPPY PAINTER CROTON (*Codiaeum variegatum* 'Sloppy Painter')

It's not the blooms which draw your eye to Sloppy Painter Croton (also known as Eleanor Roosevelt Croton), but the colorful, boldly-patterned leaves, having grown all summer, definitely get your attention! Crotons are tropical members of the euphorbia family (*Euphorbiaceae*) native to Indonesia, Malaysia, Australia and Western Pacific Islands. These woody shrubs come in a wide variety of leaf shapes and colors.

While mostly grown potted on patios, our mild winters allow crotons to be planted in the ground in protected areas. Sloppy Painter begins as a dense compact plant, but matures at 4-5 feet tall. Leaves start as simple, narrow, and about 4 inches long--but mature to inch-and-a-half wide, reaching 8 inches long, with rippled edges. When grown in sun, the yellow markings become more prominent, but they revert to nearly all green when in shade.



See pictured specimen at entrance of Anderson Bromeliad Conservatory. Other varieties are in our Tropical Garden, and in front of the Samuel Jones Orchid Conservatory.

GULF MUHLY GRASS (*Muhlenbergia capillaris*)

This native grass is a showstopper when in fall bloom, lasting September into January depending on temperature and precipitation. The rest of the year, the clumping grass has narrow gray-green leaves 24-30 inches long. But a glorious show of delicate seed heads will emerge from the clump, producing 3-4 foot flower stalks by fall, creating a shimmering pink/lavender cloud dancing back and forth in the wind!

In landscape, it can be an individual specimen, or planted in mass creating a larger impact in fall. Each spring, clumps need to be cut back to 6-10 inches tall to remove dead flower stalks and to promote fresh new leaf growth for summer months. Separating clumps is recommended every 2-3 years.



Gulf Muhly is found in many Eastern and Central states including Texas, naturally extending to Guatemala. It has adapted to a wide range of habitats including sandy soils, coastal and central prairies, sunny openings and dry, exposed ledges.

See Gulf Muhly specimens in front of the Orchid Conservatory, and in Earthkind Gardens.

Gardens in Bloom

(week of Nov 8, 2020)

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PENTAS (*Pentas lanceolate*)

Pentas, also known as *Egyptian Star Clusters*, are a great perennial for South Texas landscapes, lasting several years in pots or landscape. Although commonly grown here, they originate in the Arabian peninsula and Eastern Africa.

Colors include red, pink, white and purple.

Pentas mature at 12-24 inches depending on variety. Some older ones may grow taller, especially in shade, but newer varieties are bred for compactness, flower color and prolific blooming. Individual flowers are approximately a quarter-inch across, but clusters can be 2-3 inches making a strong impact! Individual

flowers open over time making each cluster last for months, providing consistent color in gardens. If flowering diminishes, deadhead the old blossoms to encourage new ones. Pentas prefer good drainage and regular watering, but do not like “wet feet.”

See Pentas in the Butterfly Garden and Butterfly House with *Lucky Star Violet* and *Lucky Star Dark Red* our primary varieties. Though perennial, they often are replaced after 2-3 years with new plants for more vigor and flowering.



PADRE ISLAND MISTFLOWER (*Conoclinium betonicifolium*)

Padre Island Mistflower is a low-growing groundcover form of *Conoclinium*, in the aster family (Asteraceae), with clusters of tiny light blue flowers when seen in mass has a misty or cloudy appearance, resulting in its common name. It also is known as *betonyleaf mistflower* and *betonyleaf thoroughwort* in other regions, due to the 1-inch elongated heart shape resembling *Texas Betony*.

This mistflower has thick, waxy-coated leaves and is more durable than others. Native to most Texas coastal areas, it handles wind and salt spray better than other *Conoclinium* species, an adaption making it durable in sandy, island landscapes.

Padre Island Mistflower also is a butterfly magnet, flowering throughout the year, but saving lots of blossoms for fall and winter migrating butterflies. The sturdy nature of the leaves and stems lets it keep growing during mild winters, unlike its Central Texas cousin, Gregg's mistflower (*Conoclinium greggii*), which goes dormant and freezes to ground level each year.

See Padre Island Mistflower in front of Education Station, in the Butterfly Garden and on Butterfly Hill behind the Sensory Garden. You likely will see multiple monarch and queen butterflies nectaring on this plant, so look for lots of fluttering!



Gardens in Bloom

(week of Nov 1, 2020)

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'HANNAH RAY' WEEPING BOTTLEBRUSH (*Callistemon viminalis* 'Hannah Ray')

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

Mature "Hannah Ray" trees reach 15-20 feet tall. Compared to dwarf and standard red varieties, its rapid growth creates longer thinner branches, in a graceful, slightly weeping form, especially when flowering. Leaves also are slightly thinner, longer and softer-textured than the standard red bottlebrush (*C. citrinus*), or 'Little John' dwarf.

With dark pink, nearly red flowers, closer inspection reveals not a single flower on a branch, but many flower buds opening at once, with thin petals, pistils and stamen resembling bristles--thus its common name. Flower blossoms last several weeks, with 2-3 bloom cycles a year. It can be trimmed into tree form, or pruned to a large shrub or hedge with annual cut backs. If a hedge, infrequent cutting is recommended to prevent removal of flower buds various times a year. Bottlebrush are excellent hummingbird and butterfly attractors.

See 'Hannah Ray' trees along the Bromeliad Conservatory walkway; on the Staples Street fence; and in Hummingbird Garden.



MEXICAN MINT MARIGOLD (*Tagetes lucida*)

Mexican Mint Marigold is a South Texas native herb, endemic to Mexico and southwestern United States. Also called *Spanish, Texas,* or *Mexican Tarragon*, it's used as a spice in Central American cooking, and as an alternative to French tarragon. The narrow inch-long leaves have a licorice or anise scent when crushed.

This plant is in the same genus as the traditional French and African marigold varieties used as bedding plants. Its bright yellow flowers are about one-half inch wide, but appear in clusters providing a color burst starting late summer, peaking in October/November. Its perennial nature and compact form requires little care, being drought and heat tolerant. Its bloom time and distribution makes it a natural choice for *Día de los Muertos* celebrations.

A compact mounding bush 12-18 inches tall, plants will spread over time, but can be divided every 2-3 years encouraging new growth. Mexican Mint Marigold provides nectar for migrating butterflies and pollen for native honeybees.

Besides cooking, it is used in herbal teas which may help with upset stomach, stimulating the appetite and is a diuretic. Historically, Aztecs reportedly used it as flavoring in cocoa-like drinks, as well as an anesthetic, and in ritual sacrificial ceremonies.

See Mexican Mint Marigold in the EarthKind Trial Gardens, and on Butterfly Hill behind the Sensory Garden.



Gardens in Bloom

(week of October 25, 2020)

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QUEEN EMMA CRINUM LILY (*Crinum augustum*)

“Queen Emma” is a tall crinum lily native to tropical Southeast Asia. Impressive flower stalks stretching 3-4 feet tall have numerous white and purplish flowers with long, thin petals. It can reach 6 feet with broad, strap-like leaves 3-4 feet long, growing in full sun or shade, with maroon-toned leaves in brighter light. Plants tend to form clumps with smaller “pups” emerging near the base, which can be removed to keep the plant narrower and more individual.

Crinums are swamp plants, but *can* tolerate dry soil for short periods due to their large bulb, making them a great addition to South Texas tropical gardens. Crinum lilies are among the easiest lilies which readily bloom, taking little or no care. Being tropical, they don’t need cold weather to re-bloom. Considered a Zone 10 plant, it has grown in our slightly colder Zone 9 without freezing, although protection is recommended. They also are salt-tolerant providing another coastal landscape option.

See “Queen Emma” crinums in behind the Visitor Center, as well in front of the Orchid Conservatory, and near the smaller tortoise enclosure.



TURK’S CAP (*Malvaviscus atoreus* var. *drummondii*)

Turk’s Cap probably is the most well-known native of the Cotton/Hibiscus family (*Malvaceae*). Common names include *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,” noting its small fruit.

This native shrub is distributed throughout much of Texas, as an understory plant in light shade, but also growing in full sun. The native form reaches 3-5 feet tall and about 3 feet wide, with shade-grown plants taller from stem elongation. As an understory plant, it does best in well-drained soils with organic matter, but can adapt to poorer soils.

Red 1-inch long flowers emerge from branch tips, but never fully open, resembling rolled paper. Yellow pollen on fused stamen and pistil protrude past the petals. Pollinated flowers produce nickel-sized green fruit, eventually turning red when ripe.

While the native form usually is found with red flowers, there is a readily-available pale pink, and rarer white variety, along with a variegated leaf form. A much larger “tropical” has leaves 4 inches wide and 4-6 inches long, much more pointed than on the Texas native. Flowers on this shrub are larger, heavier and more pendulous. Most biologists consider this variety to be the same species--an adaptation over time.

Turk’s Cap, an excellent wildlife food source, provides nectar for hummingbirds, butterflies, moths and other insects. The fruit, eaten by mammals including humans, reportedly has a faint apple taste, cooked or raw, according the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center (www.wildflower.org).

See native forms of red Turk’s Cap in Butterfly and Hummingbird Gardens and Oso Ridge nature trail; pink in EarthKind and Sensory Gardens.



WHAT'S BLOOMING?

(week of October 18, 2020)

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YELLOW BUTTERFLY VINE (*Mascagnia macroptera*)

While yellow butterfly vine does attract fluttering Lepidoptera pollinators, its common name comes from the papery seed pods, not insect attraction. Its dainty clusters of five-petal half-inch flowers provide color throughout summer and fall, making a stunning contrast against bright green foliage.

Native to Mexico, it sometimes is listed as a Central America native, but has been reported as far south as Brazil. It is a Zone 8 plant allowing it to grow throughout central Texas, but may freeze to the ground or need cold protection moving further north. In South Texas, our moderate winters keeping it evergreen, retaining foliage all winter, providing greenery when other vines are just brown and gray stems.

This vine can reach 15-20 feet long, making impressive showings on trellis, fence or arbor. It can grow in partial shade, but does better in hot, sunny locations.

After being pollinated, seed pods form in a unique butterfly shape. Beginning as pale yellow-green, drying to an orange-brown color, the pods then can be carefully removed and used for crafts, frequently painted and glittered.

See Butterfly Vine on trellises in the Tropical Garden providing a visual barrier from South Staples Street.



MEALY SAGE (*Salvia farinacea*)

Mealy Sage, native to Central and West Texas and New Mexico, has spread to California, Oklahoma, Louisiana, Florida, and even Ohio. It is well adapted to a wide range of soils found in prairie, meadows, roadsides, edges of forests and even dry calcareous soils of West Texas.

It typically grows 12-24 inches, reseeds and produces multiple plants creating a mound blooming short spikes of medium to light blue flowers with variations ranging to white. Usually, one to three tubular flowers open at a time on each flower spike, providing blossoms for months spring to frost. If flowering slows, removing spent flower spikes encourages more blossoms.

While the native form is shorter, one selection, *Henry Duelberg*, collected from a cemetery by noted Texas plantsman Greg Grant, was named a Texas Superstar by Texas A&M University AgriLife Extension Service. It has dark blue flowers and slightly taller, dense foliage compared to most wild varieties. Other shorter cultivars include *Victoria Blue*, *Strata*, and *Blue Bedder*, but *Duelberg* far outperforms the others. The shorter native forms can be cut back in early spring if clean-up is needed. New growth and seedlings usually emerge, making it an informal perennial option.

Heavy fall flowering makes it a great plant for color and migrating butterflies. A good pollinator plant, it attracts a wide range of hummingbirds and bees.

See shorter varieties of both blue and white Mealy Sage in Earthkind Garden raised beds. The taller Duelberg Sage grows there, and in Butterfly and Hummingbird Gardens.



WHAT'S BLOOMING?

(week of October 11, 2020)

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PLUMERIA (*Gina*, *Delight* & *Pink Ruffles*)

Plumeria, also known as *frangipani*, often used in authentic Hawaiian leis, are favorite flowers for semi-tropical climates, although native to tropical Americas. We thank our local Plumeria Society of South Texas (PSST), whose members established our early Plumeria Garden in 1996, from personal collections—caring for and expanding the exhibit ever since.

Plumeria are freeze-sensitive, so October is your last chance until spring to see our unique collection in bloom! PSST will be preparing these small trees for winter storage by removing leaves October 31; and November 7, removing plants to store them bare-root in greenhouses. While plumeria can remain outside until we reach temperatures in the mid-30s, the size of the Botanical Gardens collection requires advance-scheduling volunteers, with early November freezes catching us off guard in recent years. Plumeria will be replanted next March, re-leafing by April, with blossoms beginning in May.

Three pink variations featured this week highlight **Gina**, a dark pink blossom with yellow/orange throat. **Delight**, one of our taller plants located along the ramp, features multiple clusters of large, rounded light pink petals with a yellow/orange throat. **Pink Ruffles** begins blooming with striking fuchsia petals, gradually fading to paler pink with an orange throat.

Take the Plumeria Garden ramp up to the Willoughby Viewing Platform to admire fragrant tree-top blooms!



COWPEN DAISY (*Verbesina encelioides*)

The common name "Cowpen Daisy" came from frequent growth in cattle pens in the southwestern United States; but it's also known as "Butter Daisy" and "Golden Crownbeard" in other regions. Naturally found throughout drier areas of Texas in a variety of soils including sand, loam, clay and limestone, it's also distributed throughout much of central and western United States, and down into Tropical Americas. Native Americans and early settlers reportedly used it to treat skin ailments, but details are sketchy.

Flowers are approximately 2 inches across with 3-toothed butter-yellow petals emerging from the classic daisy center of this ray-flower, often found in small clusters. It blooms from May through October, sometimes later in our mild southern climate. This member of the Aster family (*Asteraceae*) has triangular gray-green leaves with toothed edges, plants growing 1-3 feet in height and width. While sometimes available at nurseries as small plants in spring, Cowpen daisy is most commonly propagated from seeds.

It is an excellent butterfly nectar plant, particularly for late season and fall migrating butterflies. The Xerces Society notes it particularly beneficial to native bees and honey bees.

See Cowpen Daisy in the Butterfly Garden, and Butterfly Hill behind the Sensory Garden.



WHAT'S BLOOMING?

(week of October 4, 2020)

The South Texas Botanical Gardens & Nature Center currently cannot offer Saturday morning classes, weekend Rep-Tales and Parrot Talk, or Orchid-ology series, due to State of Texas COVID-19 protocols, as well as health and safety of our guests.

Carrying out its horticulture, environmental education and conservation mission, the Botanical Gardens brings us **WHAT'S BLOOMING**, each week spotlighting a featured blooming plant in the Exhibit Area; and native in or near the Habitat and Trails area—to enjoy on a visit this week, and even consider for your landscape!

SUSAN FENDER NEWBERRY ORCHID

(*Rhyncholaeliocattleya*)

Susan Fender Newberry, a showy hybrid orchid introduced in 1992, was a cross between *Rhyncholaeliocattleya* Caesar's Head × *Cattleya* Mary Ellen Carter. It produces unique large five-inch golden-orange blossoms, with deep maroon-purple throat and highlights on two of the petals—a definite stand-out among purples, pinks and whites dominating most orchid collections.

Cattleya orchids and their *Rhyncholaeliocattleya* cousins are fairly easy to grow, producing clusters of pseudo-bulbs which the average person considers leaves. These plants flower only once on each pseudo-bulb, with many types here blooming early fall. The Samuel Jones Orchid Conservatory cattleya collection began blooming a bit earlier than normal this season. Orchid blossoms often last several weeks if conditions remain cool with plants properly watered.

See in the Orchid Conservatory.



CORAL VINE (*Antigonon leptopus*)

Coral Vine, also known as "Queen's Wreath" or "Chain of Love," produces striking fuchsia blossoms and bright green heart-shaped four-inch leaves from July or August through first freeze. The stunning pink blossoms actually are modified leaves called bracts, which hold color longer for pollinators. Bracts only are about one-half inch across, but produced in large numbers in clusters on the ends of vines, resulting in lots of bright pink color. The natural twisting nature of this vine allows it to wrap around arbors, fences and poles for support, with mature plants vining up to 40-50 feet long in our area.

The South Texas/Mexico native Zone 9 plant freezes back to the base if grown further north, but vigorously regrows 8-12 feet or more in a year. Leaves die due to cold which may leave brown stems leaves for winter. Annual cutbacks to main stems are common for landscape uses.

Coral Vine are good nectar plants, attracting plentiful hummingbirds during fall migration. When hummers pollinate the flowers, seeds may fall producing a few volunteer seedlings the next year.

At the Botanical Gardens, see Coral Vine on parking lot fences, and in the Hummingbird Garden.



WHAT'S BLOOMING?

(week of September 27, 2020)

The South Texas Botanical Gardens & Nature Center currently cannot offer Saturday morning classes, weekend Rep-Tales and Parrot Talk, or Orchid-ology series, due to State of Texas COVID-19 protocols, as well as health and safety of our guests.

Carrying out its horticulture, environmental education and conservation mission, the Botanical Gardens brings us **GARDENS IN BLOOM**, each week spotlighting a featured blooming plant in the Exhibit Area; and native in or near the Habitat and Trails area—to enjoy on a visit this week, and even consider for your landscape!

ORCHID (*Cattleya bowringiana*)

Cattleya bowringiana is one of the most consistent fall-blooming orchids. Flower stems produce clusters of 10 to 12 striking purple flowers about 2.5 inches wide lasting for several weeks in September and October. One pot easily can produce two to five flower spikes with 50-plus blossoms, making a stunning display.

C. bowringiana is native to Belize and Guatemala where it grows in a wide range of environments including tropical forests, rocky ravines and occasionally in quartz sand. Orchid growers consider it one of the easiest orchids, and a great starter plant for the novice grower. It has been widely used in hybridizing since its discovery in 1885, due to consistent blooming.



See multiple specimens of *Cattleya bowringiana* in the Samuel Jones Orchid Conservatory, and growing in pots along the walkway to our Butterfly Garden.

TEXAS SAGE (*Leucophyllum frutescens*)

This common Texas native shrub—also known as *Cenizo*, *Purple Sage*, *Texas Ranger*, *Texas Barometer Bush*, and *Texas Silverleaf*—thrives in much of south and west Texas. Natural stands of Texas Sage are visible in the caliche “hills” along I-69 near Mathis, easily identifiable while in bloom. This ideal Xeriscape (water-wise) plant is popular in commercial and residential landscapes, blooming now with recent rains, many appearing solid purple with thousands of blooms present—a survival mechanism for our semi-arid conditions.



Its silvery foliage color comes from tiny light-reflecting hairs helping protect it from dense sun. Light purple one-inch bell-shaped flowers often have white and purple spots in the throat of the blossom. Light purple is its most common color, although a wine-colored variety has become frequent, as well as solid white forms. “Green Cloud” variety has fewer leaf hairs and more chlorophyll, its foliage appearing more green than gray.

Plants typically mature at 4-6 feet tall and wide. Pruning in landscapes will produce dense branching, but in nature, they often look scraggly when growing in caliche outcroppings. Newer cultivars have more compact growth. Gardeners also should note it does not like “wet feet” requiring good drainage to prevent root rot.

Texas Sage also attracts butterflies and moths, both as a nectar plant and as the larval host plant for Calleta silk moth (*Eupackardia calleta*) and the Theona Checkerspot (*Chlosyne theona*) butterfly. Hummingbirds also sip from the flowers when blooming during fall.

See Texas Sage in Arid, Sensory and Hummingbird Gardens.

WHAT'S BLOOMING?

(week of September 20, 2020)

The South Texas Botanical Gardens & Nature Center currently cannot offer Saturday morning educational seminars, weekend Rep-Tales and Parrot Talk, or Orchid-ology series, due to State of Texas COVID-19 "gathering" restrictions, as well as health and safety of our guests.

Carrying out its horticulture, environmental education and conservation mission, the Botanical Gardens brings us **GARDENS IN BLOOM**, each week spotlighting a featured blooming plant in the Exhibit Area; and native in or near the Habitat and Trails area—to enjoy on a visit this week, and even consider for your landscape!

COMPACT BLUE PORTERWEED (*Stachytarpheta mutabilis* formerly *S. jamaicensis*)

Porterweed, a member of the Verbenaceae family (*Verbenaceae*), comes in blue, red, coral/pink, and white, blooming from spring until frost. Although frequently rated as Zone 10, it is a perennial in our slightly colder Zone 9 region, and an annual further north.

Porterweed provides dense, bushy growth up to 6 feet high and 4-6 feet wide. The blue "compact" form, also known as *Jamaican Vervain*, usually only grows to about 4-5 feet and not quite as wide as other colors. Porterweed usually grows to 3 feet the first year and to maturity the second year. It grows in full sun and partial shade, but in shade it will get taller, blooming less. Each flower spike can be 6-12 inches long with tiny half-inch flowers opening up the stalk, a few each day, replacing spent blossoms further down. A single stalk may have 120-180 blossoms from the beginning of its bloom cycle through completion, but only a few are open on each stalk during a single day. However, each branch typically is in bloom providing a lot of color over the entire bush. The long, thin, green flower stalks resembling green garden snakes may be why it is called snake plant in some regions.

Porterweed is a good butterfly and hummingbird nectar plant with consistent bloom throughout the season.

Blue and coral Porterweed is prominent in the Botanical Gardens' Butterfly Garden.



WILD OLIVE TREE (*Cordia boissieri*)

Wild Olive also goes by Mexican Olive, Texas Olive, and Anacahuita. A deep South Texas/Mexico native grown in landscapes up to San Antonio and Central Texas, they are susceptible to hard freezes further north. This great Xeriscape plant used in water-wise landscapes in South Texas need good drainage, as standing water will kill the root system.

It is a small, ornamental tree with large green leaves approximately 4 X 6 inches and a stringy, coarse bark creating an attractive trunk. Trees frequently grow 12-15 feet tall and about 15-20 feet across at maturity, producing dense shade, sometimes limiting grass growth beneath if clustered with other trees. Wild Olives have clusters of 1 ½ - 2 inch white blossoms with deep throats and yellow centers, flowering nearly year-round in our area. Blossoms have high nectar content so are great hummingbird attractors, providing a natural nectar source, particularly during fall migration. Pollinated flowers develop into green fruit resembling an olive. While technically edible, it is not very palatable. The common name "olive" is just a visual observation, with this tree in a completely different family than the common edible olives (*Olea europaea*) used in cooking.

Finding large specimen trees in nurseries can be difficult, but a 4-5 foot tree will grow rapidly in its second and third year, once roots expand.

See Wild Olives blooming in the Botanical Gardens' Sensory Garden.



GARDENS IN BLOOM

(week of September 13, 2020)

The South Texas Botanical Gardens & Nature Center currently cannot offer Saturday morning educational seminars, weekend Rep-Tales and Parrot Talk, or Orchid-ology series, due to State of Texas COVID-19 “gathering” restrictions, as well as health and safety of our guests.

Carrying out its horticulture, environmental education and conservation mission, the Botanical Gardens brings us **GARDENS IN BLOOM**, each week spotlighting a featured blooming plant in the Exhibit Area; and native in or near the Habitat and Trails area—to enjoy on a visit this week, and even consider for your landscape!

PRIDE OF BARBADOS (*Caesalpinia pulcherima*)

Pride of Barbados, or peacock flower, is a fast-growing tropical shrub with showy orange and yellow flowers on flower spikes. The extended stamen and pistils on individual flowers lend a frilly appearance. The blossoms begin both yellow and orange, turning solid orange in a couple of days. If pollinated, seed pods usually appear after flowering, but removing seeds retains blooms longer.

Although Pride of Barbados makes a spectacular summer specimen plant, it is deciduous, leaving barren branches in winter. Pairing with plants which hold their leaves through winter keeps landscape full year-round. Leaves usually reappear mid-April. Native to West Indies and Tropical Americas, Pride of Barbados will freeze to the ground in hard winters, but comes back from the base here, as it is considered root hardy to Zone 8 in Central Texas. Give this plant space—it can reach 8-12 feet once established. It attracts hummingbirds and butterflies, so is a great nectar plant, especially during fall hummingbird migration.



See Pride of Barbados in the Botanical Gardens parking area, and Earthkind Garden, since it is a Texas A&M Agri-Life Extension Service “Texas Superstar” due to successful growth in test gardens around the state.

MEXICAN BUSH SAGE (*Salvia leucantha*)

Mexican Bush Sage is native to Mexico, but considered a South Texas native. The plant has long narrow gray-green leaves and grows to three feet tall, but flower spikes sometimes extend another 12 inches higher late in the season. Purple and white flowers open from bottom of flower spikes to the top, providing blossoms for several months. As flowers die at the bottom and flower spike looks “tired”, cut off the stalk and new flowering spikes will grow.

Preferring full sun for maximum blooming, this true perennial should be cut back each spring to remain compact and full. If overgrowing the space in late summer, it easily can handle a light pruning or shaping late summer to remove stray branches, although severe summer pruning may delay fall flowering.



In full bloom right now in many gardens, it is a great hummingbird and butterfly attractor, in time for fall hummingbird migration! Available in most nurseries, it is one of Texas’ most popular “native plants” due to consistent growth, performance in landscapes, plus water-wise designation.

See Mexican Bush Sage in the main Butterfly Garden, Hummingbird Garden, “Butterfly Hill” behind the Sensory Garden, and EarthKind Garden with other Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service “Texas Superstars.”

GARDENS IN BLOOM

(week of September 6, 2020)

The South Texas Botanical Gardens & Nature Center currently cannot offer Saturday morning educational seminars, weekend Rep-Tales and Parrot Talk, or Orchid-ology series, due to State of Texas COVID-19 “gathering” restrictions, as well as health and safety of our guests.

Carrying out its horticulture, environmental education and conservation mission, the Botanical Gardens brings us **GARDENS IN BLOOM**, each week spotlighting a featured blooming plant in the Exhibit Area; and native in or near the Habitat and Trails area—to enjoy on a visit this week, and even consider for your landscape!

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

Brown Bud Allamanda, also known as Golden Trumpet and Yellow Allamanda, is a tropical shrub producing bright yellow trumpet flowers with a deep throat and flared petals. “Brown Bud” refers to the bronze on the petals’ underside, creating the “brown” color of the tight flower buds, until petals unfurl revealing the golden yellow flower up to five inches across.

Once established, Brown Bud Allamanda can grow 6 to 8 feet in a year. Semi-woody branches elongate, often needing support of a fence or trellis, leading some to consider it a vine. Technically it is not, because it lacks twisting, vining growth habit or tendrils to cling to structures. Full sun will minimize this elongated stem growth.

It has bright green, glossy leaves in a whorled attachment pattern, occurring in fours at locations along the stem. Regular fertilizing will maintain its leaves. Otherwise, there will be leaf drop and barren stems except for a few leaves and flowers near the tip. If Allamanda becomes too leggy, cut it back and new branches will emerge near the base.

Native to tropical Americas, Allamanda grows well in pots in our area, allowing it to be relocated for freezing weather. Southern coastal gardens may allow planting in the ground if able to be protected from north winds, but you still risk permanent freezing.

See Brown Bud Allamanda in the Butterfly Garden, growing in pots.



ROCK ROSE (*Pavonia laciopetala*)

Rock Rose, also known as Rose Pavonia or Rose Mallow, is a wildflower growing naturally along the Rio Grande Plains extending into the Edwards Plateau, usually found on the edge of brush in caliche soils with good drainage. Its drought tolerance and ability to grow in both sun and partial shade make it a great Xeriscape (water-wise) plant, and more-readily available in retail nurseries than most natives.

Pavonia produces an abundance of 1 to 1.5-inch flowers with five light pink petals and a tight center cluster of bright yellow stamen. This hardy member of the hibiscus and cotton (*Malvaceae*) family keeps its leaves until freezing weather resulting in leaf drop. Early spring pruning encourages dense compact growth and more flowering. It grows 3 to 4 feet in height and width.



Pavonia is a good nectar plant for butterflies and hummingbirds with consistent flowering spring through fall, including peak migration seasons.

See *Pavonia* in the Botanical Gardens Butterfly Garden surrounding the Butterfly House, and Butterfly Hill behind the Sensory Garden.

GARDENS IN BLOOM

(week of August 30, 2020)

The South Texas Botanical Gardens & Nature Center currently cannot offer Saturday morning educational seminars, weekend Rep-Tales and Parrot Talk, or Orchid-ology series, due to State of Texas COVID-19 “gathering” restrictions, as well as health and safety of our guests.

Carrying out its horticulture, environmental education and conservation mission, the Botanical Gardens brings us **GARDENS IN BLOOM**, each week spotlighting both a blooming plant in the Exhibit Area; and a native in or near the Habitat and Trails area—to enjoy on a visit this week!

PLUMERIA (*Plumeria rubra*) “Danai Delight”

Plumeria, also known as frangipani, often used in authentic Hawaiian leis, always are favorite flowers for semi-tropical climates like ours, although native to tropical Americas. In our **Plumeria Garden**, *Danai Delight* has been a strong bloomer this summer providing a stunning display of pale pink petals with dark edges and a sunny orange/yellow throat.

Plumeria need full sun and well-drained soil. They can be grown in pots, but need regular fertilization. If planted in the ground, they should be removed and stored inside during the winter, unless growing on the south side of the house protected from winter winds. If unsheltered, they do not like temperatures below 40 degrees Fahrenheit, and could be damaged by frost or freeze. Cold tolerance varies by variety and location.



Danai Delight is one of about 90 large plumeria plants / small trees featured in the Plumeria Collection at the Botanical Gardens. The Plumeria Society of South Texas originated and maintains “The Grove,” in full bloom now. The Amy Shelton McNutt Charitable Trust gifted the Willoughby Viewing Ramp and Platform, which allows close-up viewing of treetop blooms! Don’t wait too long to visit, since plants flower less approaching fall. Our plumeria are removed from the ground and stored bare-root in greenhouses starting November 1, through early March.

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

Zexmenia, also known as hairy wedelia or Texas creeping ox-eye, is a wildflower growing naturally along Rio Grande and Coastal Plains, extending into the Edwards Plateau. Preferring well-drained soils, Zexmenia provides bursts of yellow flowers from spring through early fall, popping up within short native grasses. If grown in shade, it flowers less and may become leggy. It will freeze back during cold winters, but regrows each spring, so leave dead-looking plants in the ground.

An ideal butterfly plant providing nectar for all species, it is a host plant for *Bordered Patch*, *Sierran Metalmark* and *Lacinia Patch* butterflies, so expect caterpillars to eat leaves from time to time.



Zexmenia is one native more available in retail nurseries due to dense growth habit and ability to flower in pots. Its drought tolerance and preference for sun makes it a great landscape plant growing in mounds or short shrub to heights of 10 to 30 inches depending on pruning.

Look for Zexmenia in the Butterfly Garden, along the walkway to the Hummingbird Garden, and in small patches growing naturally along the edge of native mesquite brush.

GARDENS IN BLOOM

(week of August 23, 2020)

The South Texas Botanical Gardens & Nature Center currently cannot offer Saturday morning educational seminars, weekend Rep-Tales and Parrot Talk, or Orchid-ology series, due to State of Texas COVID-19 “gathering” restrictions, as well as health and safety of our guests.

However, carrying out its horticulture, environmental education and conservation mission, the Botanical Gardens brings us **GARDENS IN BLOOM**, which each week will spotlight both a blooming plant in the Exhibit Area; and a native in or near the Habitat and Trails area—which you can enjoy on a visit that week!

GOLD STAR ESPERANZA

Tecoma stans

Gold Star Esperanza is in full bloom in summer. Also known as “yellow bells,” Esperanza produces clusters of inch-long bright yellow blossoms, covering the shrub which can reach eight feet in the landscape. It is deciduous, dropping leaves in winter, so frequently is grouped with shrubs retaining leaves all year.

Gold Star Esperanza is a Texas Superstar, recognized by Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service as a top-performer throughout the state. A cultivar with larger flowers and leaves, it produces denser growth than its native counterpart found in Northern Mexico and West Texas. It prefers good drainage, but grows in both clay and sandy soils.

After flowering, green seed pods frequently form due to pollinator activity, but can be removed to extend flowering season into fall.

Esperanza greets guests in our parking area, and in both EarthKind and Hummingbird Garden, providing nectar for butterflies and hummers.



FIDDLEWOOD

Citharexylum berlandieri

Fiddlewood is a woody member of the verbena family (*Verbenaceae*) along with lantana, verbena, frog fruit and vitex. It is sometimes referenced as “Berlandier's Fiddlewood” after French-Swiss physician Jean Louis Berlandier (1805-1850), who collected plants in Texas and northern Mexico.

Fiddlewood is a drought-tolerant plant growing naturally in well-drained clay and clay loam soils in brush thickets along the Coastal and Rio Grande plains. It has dark green, glossy foliage which can be trimmed into a dense shrub or small tree, growing best in partial shade, but can take full sun for part of the day.

It forms long clusters of tiny white, fragrant flowers several times from February through August, creating a good butterfly nectar source. After pollination, they produce orange-red berries, providing food for songbirds.

Fiddlewood is blooming beside the Butterfly House, where it screens the view and wind from exhaust fans on the Orchid Conservatory.



WHAT'S BLOOMING?

(week of August 9, 2020)

The South Texas Botanical Gardens & Nature Center currently cannot offer Saturday morning educational seminars, weekend Rep-Tales and Parrot Talk, or Orchid-ology series, due to State of Texas COVID-19 "gathering" restrictions, as well as health and safety of our guests.

However, carrying out its horticulture, environmental education and conservation mission, the Botanical Gardens brings us **WHAT'S BLOOMING**, which each week will spotlight both a blooming plant in the Exhibit Area; and a native in or near the Habitat and Trails area—which you can enjoy on a visit that week!

Firecracker Plant

Russellia equisetiformis

Firecracker Plant is a great summer bloomer in local landscapes. Clusters of tubular red flowers cover weeping branches resembling exploded strings of firecrackers. It also is an excellent hummingbird attractor plant, blooming constantly from spring migration through summer and past fall hummer migration.

Firecracker Plant works well potted or planted in the ground, thriving in full sun or partial shade. Mature landscape forms produce stems 3-5 feet tall. Severe early spring pruning helps clean out dead branches and keeps plants shorter.

A hedge of Firecracker Plant is on display as you enter the Botanical Gardens with additional plants in the Hummingbird Garden.



Mexican Orchid Tree

Bauhinia Mexicana

While most gardeners are familiar with the larger Hong Kong Orchid Tree (*Bauhinia purpurea*), there are two native Bauhinias in Texas. The Mexican Orchid Tree, from deep South Texas is a vigorous grower once established. Reaching 8-12 feet high and similar width, it is identifiable by its 2-2½ inch leaves with two distinctive points. A shorter species, Anaconcho Orchid Tree (*Bauhinia congesta*), has much smaller, rounded leaves and dwarf white flowers, and is native to far West Texas.

This small tree blossoms multiple times throughout the warm months with white flowers with long narrow petals giving it a frilly appearance. The blooms are a great nectar source attracting a wide array of butterfly species as well as hummingbirds. It can produce seedlings underneath to allow easy propagation, but it is not very common in retail garden centers.



In the Botanical Gardens, the Mexican Orchid Tree is located past the Sensory Garden, across from the Monkey Mansion Tree House entrance.

What's Blooming? (August 2, 2020)

The South Texas Botanical Gardens & Nature Center currently cannot offer Saturday educational seminars, weekend Rep-Tales and Parrot Talk, or Orchid-ology series, due to State “gathering” restrictions, guest health and safety. Carrying out its horticulture, environmental education and conservation mission, **What's Blooming**, each week will spotlight a blooming plant in the Exhibit Areas; and a native in the Habitat and Trails area—which you can enjoy on a visit that week!

LADY OF THE NIGHT ORCHID (*Brassavola nodosa*)

Lady of the Night Orchid is an graceful orchid that gets its common name from the elegant white blossoms which are fragrant at night, but not during the day. The bright white petals attract a moth with a long proboscis which pollinates the flower.

Most orchids are epiphytes, growing naturally on trees or rocks and needing little soil. This orchid is vigorous grower and grows best mounted on wood, or in a hanging situation with fir bark medium. It is native to Mexico and Central America, northern South America, and West Indies.

See multiple specimens hanging in the Samuel Jones Orchid Conservatory.



RETAMA (*Parkinsonia aculeata*)

Retama goes by multiple names including Mexican paloverde and Jerusalem thorn. This small tree is known for its vibrant green trunk and long thin leaves providing dappled shade for plants below.

Retama blooms profusely during summer and fall with delicate yellow blossoms with red/orange throats and a mildly sweet fragrance, noticeable on still mornings. A member of the legume family, it produces bean pods after flowering. It is extremely drought-tolerant, 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 types.

This fast growing tree can reach 15-20 feet tall and similar width. Its rapid growth produces weak wood frequently breaking in high winds, making it a marginal tree for urban landscapes, working better in rural landscapes where water is an issue. Retama was adopted as one of the city trees of Corpus Christi on October 2, 1957. *See along the walkway to Admin & Education buildings.*



What's Blooming?

(July 26, 2020)

The South Texas Botanical Gardens & Nature Center currently cannot offer Saturday morning educational seminars, weekend Rep-Tales and Parrot Talk, or Orchid-ology series, due to State COVID-19 “gathering” restrictions, as well as health and safety of our guests. Carrying out its horticulture, environmental education and conservation mission, we have a new feature, **GARDENS IN BLOOM**, which each week will spotlight a blooming plant in the Exhibit Section; and a native in the Habitat/Trails area—which you can enjoy on a visit that week!

ADENIUM CRIMSON STAR

The Velvet-Leaf ‘Crimson Star’ Desert Rose actually is a cross between the common desert rose (*Adenium obesum*) and a rare velvet leaf dwarf variety (*A. swazicum*). Its narrow gray-green leaves have a velvety texture; and the dark crimson flowers have narrower petals than the common desert rose.

(see in patio area in front of Orchid Conservatory)



SPINY HACKBERRY

(a.k.a. Desert Hackberry, Grajeno, Chaparral)

Desert hackberry (*Celtis pallida*) is one of the most common native shrubs in local brush land. Native to South Texas and Chihuahuan Desert, this extremely drought-tolerant shrub grows between eight and 20 feet tall with a multi-stemmed trunk, producing tiny yellow flowers after summer rains, followed by small edible orange berries.

Fruit provide food for a variety of birds and mammals. White-tailed deer browse the stems and foliage. It also is a larval host plant for American Snout butterfly (*Libytheana carinenta*) and great nectar plant for other butterfly species.

Commonly growing as an understory shrub, in poor soils, with full sun or partial shade, it is important for erosion control; and can be used as native “green screen” for its dense growth and thorny branches.

(see along Brennecke Nature Trail)

