

TEXAS * *Wild* FLOWERS

TXDOT'S WILDFLOWER LEGACY

FOR MORE THAN 90 YEARS, the Texas Department of Transportation has worked to conserve and preserve the state's wildflower species. Texas was among the first states to implement a program of planting wildflower seeds along the state's rights of way.

In the early 1900s, rights of way often were completely cleared during the roadbuilding process. After the Texas Department of Transportation was organized in 1917, TxDOT officials began to notice that wildflowers were among the first vegetation to return. The wildflowers helped prevent soil erosion and looked attractive.

In the 1930s, TxDOT's policy was to preserve as many native trees and shrubs in the right of way as possible and the department hired its first landscape architect. By 1934, the custom of stopping mowing—except when required for safety—until after the spring flowering season ended and the plants had reseeded became policy.

Since then, TxDOT has planted millions of wildflower seeds. During the early years, this process included collecting seeds for the next year's planting. Today, the department buys and sows about 30,000 pounds of wildflower seeds each year along more than 800,000 miles of right of way.

The Wildflower Program works to create roadsides that blend into their surroundings with grasses and wildflowers that help conserve water, control erosion and provide a wildlife habitat. The result is miles of beautiful color.



TRAVEL INFORMATION DIVISION
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TEXAS
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THE TRAVEL MAGAZINE OF TEXAS



TEXAS * *wild* FLOWERS

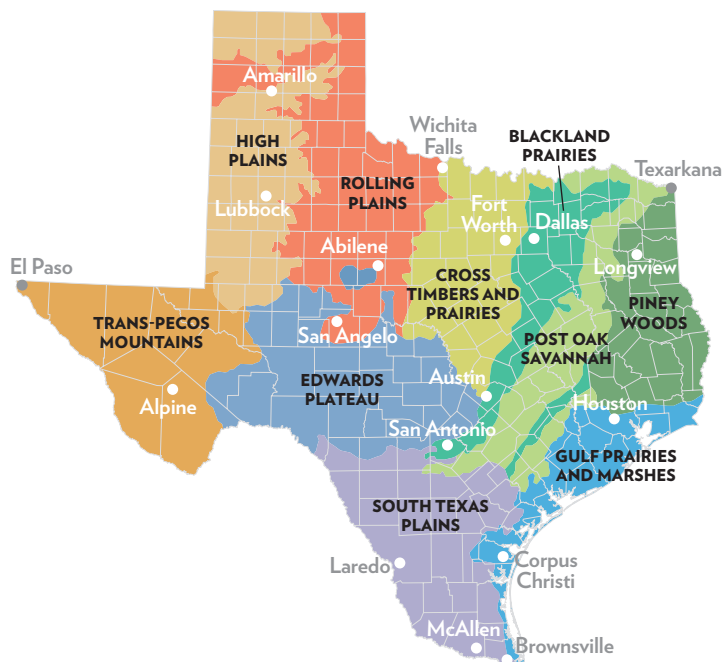
Most years, spring wildflower season arrives in Texas heralded by blankets of colorful blooms unfolding across fields and lining roadways. A sense of excitement fills the air as the first blossoms are spotted and websites begin recording the locations of sightings. Specifically when, where and how abundant they will be depends on a number of factors—including rainfall, freezes, warm fronts and sunshine. In general, the most amazing spreads of wildflowers are found March through May with peaks in April and in the summertime after good rains. Other wildflowers bloom at varying times throughout the year, such as goldenrod and purple gayfeather, which flower in the fall. We hope the information in this guide will assist you in planning your wildflower-related travels.

TEXAS
HIGHWAYS™
THE TRAVEL MAGAZINE OF TEXAS

FOR MORE WILDFLOWER information, pick up the March issue of *Texas Highways* magazine. For additional information and more detailed drives, visit texashighways.com and search Wildflower Drives.

All photos provided by the Texas Department of Transportation Communication Division and the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center (wildflower.org).

Regions



Source: Gould, F. W., Hoffman, G. O., and Rechenhith, C. A. 1960. Vegetational areas of Texas, Texas A & M University. Texas Agricultural Experiment Station, Leaflet No. 492 (here modified by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department).

Vegetational Areas of Texas

Texas has more than 268,000 square miles of land and water with variations of climate and topography that result in wildly diverse habitats. The state's vegetational areas are generally broken into 10 natural areas (ecoregions). There are a number of parks and preserves where travelers can view native plants of the ecoregion and enjoy wildflowers in the spring.

PINEY WOODS is an area of rolling terrain with pines, oaks and tall hardwoods in the east to northeastern part of the state. The four national forests and the Big Thicket Nature Preserve manage and protect habitats characteristic of this ecoregion. Wildflowers can be found in the Matlock Hills and Sandy Creek Ravines of Sabine National Forest, Black Branch Barrens and Boykin Springs of Angelina National Forest, and five units of the Big Thicket.

GULF COAST PRAIRIES AND MARSHES region runs along the Texas coastline from Orange to South Padre Island. It includes barrier islands, salt grass marshes, oak parklands and river bottomlands. Padre Island National Seashore and nine national wildlife refuges protect the coastal plants and wildlife. Wildflowers at Padre Island include Rio Grande phlox, Texas prickly pear, sea lavender and beach evening primrose.

POST OAK SAVANNAH stretches from the northern part of South Texas to north of Texarkana. It is a transitional area for plant and animal species that is typified by oak woodland interspersed with grasslands. Lake Somerville State Park contains post oaks, and the railway passes through yaupon, post oak, hickory, black jack oak and water oak forests. Though not in this ecoregion, the Post Oak Preserve in Seagoville protects one of the last stands of Post Oak Savannah.

LET'S GET STARTED! Below are some of the more common Texas wildflowers. Most of these are found throughout the state, but some may be specific to a region. Texas has more than 5,000 species of flowering plants. To find out more about wildflowers, visit wildflower.org/plants.



TEXAS BLUEBONNETS (*Lupinus texensis*) blanket large portions of the state in early spring. All six species that grow in Texas are the official state flower.



INDIAN PAINTBRUSH (*Castilleja* spp.) varies in color from scarlet to orange, cream, yellow and occasionally purple. Paintbrushes grow throughout the state and bloom in early spring.



PINK EVENING PRIMROSE (*Oenothera speciosa*) opens at dusk in northern parts of the state. In the rest of the state, blooms stay open all day. Usually, they bloom from April to June.



COREOPSIS (*Coreopsis tinctoria*), or tickseed, often blankets whole fields and roadsides. It blooms from May to August in the eastern half of the state.

BLACKLAND PRAIRIES is named for the deep, fertile black soils. This region consists of a gently rolling landscape with most vegetation related to farming and ranching. Remnants of the Blackland Prairies are preserved in the Clymer Meadow Preserve (appointment only) in Hunt County, Parkhill Prairie in Collin County, Cedar Hill State Park in Cedar Hill and Rosehill Park in Garland. Wildflowers at Cedar Hill include bluebonnets, antelope horns, bluebell and fleabane.

CROSS TIMBERS AND PRAIRIES ecoregion is marked by dense areas of trees combined with irregular plains and prairies. It is west of the Blackland Prairies and northeast of the Edwards Plateau. Tandy Hills Natural Area in Fort Worth protects the native prairie with more than 500 native wildflower and plant species. The Bob Jones Nature Center and Preserve in Southlake protects the eastern Cross Timbers ecosystem on about 750 acres.

SOUTH TEXAS PLAINS is filled primarily with thorny brush/scrub mixed with grasslands and, in the Rio Grande valley, subtropical woodlands. The land ranges from nearly level to rolling plains. Choke Canyon State Park has dense thickets of mesquite and blackbush acacia that are often joined by abundant wildflowers in the spring.

EDWARDS PLATEAU is known for springs, stony hills and steep canyons. This Central Texas area has juniper/oak woodlands, mesquite savannah and some grasslands. The Balcones Canyonlands National Wildlife Refuge, Inks Lake State Park and Enchanted Rock State Natural Area are among the parks that nurture the natural habitat of this region and offer brilliant wildflower shows during the spring.

HIGH PLAINS ecoregion, in the Panhandle, is characterized by a high plateau separated from the Rolling Plains by the Caprock Escarpment. Its vegetation is primarily cropland with mesquite and juniper. The Buffalo Lake National Wildlife Refuge preserves shortgrass prairie with wildflowers, like poppies, flowering cactus and sunflowers blooming from April through



early June. Muleshoe, the state's oldest national wildlife refuge, also protects the shortgrass prairie.

ROLLING PLAINS ecoregion is cut into gently rolling hills and broad, flat areas by several rivers and numerous tributaries. This portion of the Panhandle resembles a mesquite-shortgrass savannah. Around Lake Meredith National Recreation Area, travelers will find the Shortgrass Prairie Ecosystem and, in the spring, wildflowers such as Blackfoot daisy and chocolate daisy.

TRANS-PECOS MOUNTAINS ecoregion in West Texas is considered a complex region, ranging from desert valleys with creosote-tarbrush scrub to mountain slopes with pinion pine, junipers and oaks. Big Bend National Park, Franklin Mountains State Park and Guadalupe Mountains National Park conserve portions of this natural habitat and offer wildflowers, including two- to three-foot-tall bluebonnets, Mexican gold poppies and late-blooming perennials, respectively.

Ecoregion source: Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, tpwd.texas.gov.



LEMONGRASS (*Monarda citriodora*), also called horsemint, grows abundantly throughout most of Texas, in many different colors. Various species flower from May to September.



WINECUP (*Callirhoe digitata*) is found in most parts of the state, except the west. The delicate burgundy flower blooms in early spring on sandy soils in open woods and scrublands.



INDIAN BLANKET (*Gaillardia pulchella*), also called firewheel, flowers across much of the state from April to June. When viewed in mass, it resembles brightly woven tapestries.



WHITE PRICKLY POPPY (*Argemone albiflora*), an abundant, nettle-like plant of Central and South Texas, blooms profusely in April.

SOME COMMON TEXAS

Wildflowers



STANDING CYPRESS (*Ipomopsis rubra*) ranges from East Texas west to Gillespie and Taylor counties. The bloom's column of scarlet trumpets displays from May to July.



BEACH MORNING GLORY (*Ipomoea imperati*) forms large mats and helps stabilize the coastal dunes. Blooming from April through December, the flowers open each morning and close in the afternoon.



BLACK-EYED SUSAN (*Rudbeckia hirta*) is a prairie species found throughout Texas. Its bright yellow flowers with a chocolate brown center bloom from May through September.



WILD PHLOX (*Phlox drummondii*) occurs in post oak prairies and in South Central Texas. Red is the most common color, but they may be shades of pink and purple. Phlox blooms in early spring.



BLUEBELLS (*Eustoma exaltatum*) bloom from June to September. Don't pick them! Bluebells have almost disappeared in part from indiscriminate picking.



PRICKLY PEAR CACTUS (*Opuntia* spp.) grows throughout Texas. The yellow to deep purple flowers form edible, pear-shaped fruits that turn dark red as they ripen in late summer and fall.



GAYFEATHER (*Liatris* spp.), also called blazing star, grows in open areas throughout the state. Blooming from late summer to fall, the purple or pink spikes contrast strikingly with prairie grasses.



SPIDER LILY (*Hymenocallis liriosme*) has fragrant flowers with dramatic white petals. Requiring a generous source of water, it grows in ditches, beside ponds and on coastal prairies.



DOGWOOD (*Cornus florida*) blossoms herald spring throughout much of East Texas. The small, graceful trees grow beneath towering pines and hardwoods.



TEXAS THISTLE (*Cirsium texanum*) grows in all areas of the state except the Panhandle. It is similar to the Scottish thistle. Butterflies and bees love the flowers, which bloom from April to August.



MEXICAN HAT (*Ratibida columnifera*) is so named for its resemblance to the traditional Mexican sombrero. Common throughout most of Texas, it blooms from May to July and later with favorable weather.



CARDINAL FLOWER (*Lobelia cardinalis*) is found in the eastern half of the state. They often grow along stream banks and bloom from May to December, depending on the rains.



“Where *flowers bloom*, so does *hope*.”

—Lady Bird Johnson



BLACKFOOT DAISY (*Melampodium leucanthum*) thrives on calcareous soils of West and Central Texas. A low-growing perennial, black-foot daisies flower from early spring through fall.



SAND VERBENA (*Abronia ameliae*) blooms from April to August on dry plains, sandy hills and beaches in southern Texas. Sand verbena is actually in the four o'clock family.



TAHOKA DAISY (*Machaeranthera tanacetifolia*) also known as tansy aster, grows abundantly in the sandy soils of West Texas or the Panhandle. Tahoka daisies bloom from late spring to summer.



OCOTILLO (*Fouquieria splendens*) is a native of West Texas, blooming in April and May, as well as sporadically after rains. During dry periods, it looks dead and leafless.



HUISACHE DAISY (*Amblyolepis setigera*) blooms from April to June in Central and South Texas. This daisy often grows in thick blankets beneath huisache, hence its name.



CEDAR SAGE (*Salvia roemeriana*) inhabits shady, moist to dry areas of Central Texas. It is often found in cedar brakes, oak woods and canyons. Cedar sage blooms from March to July.



YUCCA (*Yucca torreyi*), or Spanish dagger, grows over much of Texas, but it is most common in western areas. A huge mass of white blossoms appears in spring and sometimes after fall rains.



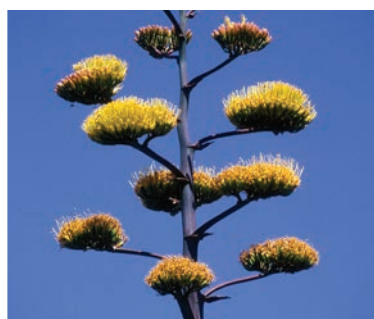
BLUE-EYED GRASS (*Sisyrinchium* spp.) blankets roadside pastures with blue to purple blooms on sunny days April to May. Common in East Texas and the Gulf Coast.



CENIZO (*Leucophyllum frutescens*) thrives in western Texas. Although it also is called Texas sage, it is not a true sage. After rains, it becomes engulfed by masses of lavender blossoms.



FLEABANE (*Erigeron philadelphicus*) is a common flower on sandy soils throughout most of East Texas, usually along roadsides and streams. It flowers early in the spring, persisting until late summer.



AGAVE (*Agave* spp.) grows in the Chihuahuan Desert of Southwest Texas. It is sometimes called the century plant, as each plant only flowers once in its lifetime, which may take many years.



TURK'S CAP (*Malvaviscus arboreus* var. *drummondii*) is a shade-loving shrub found in South and Central Texas. It blooms from late spring into early fall.

SOME COMMON TEXAS

Wildflowers



STRAWBERRY CACTUS (*Echinocereus stramineus*) grows on dry soils throughout Texas and blooms in early summer. This is one of many cactus species in Texas.



SWAMP MALLOW (*Hibiscus moscheutos*) is one of the most showy Texas species in the mallow family. Native to tropical areas along the Gulf Coast, swamp mallow also inhabits low areas of East Texas.



SPIDERWORT (*Tradescantia gigantea*) has a dainty, three-petal flower and blooms throughout the state in spring. Color variations include white, blue, pink and purple.



GOLDENROD (*Solidago* spp.) is mistakenly thought to cause hay fever. The real culprit, ragweed, blooms at the same time. Most Texas species of goldenrod flower in late summer and fall.



MAGNOLIA (*Magnolia grandiflora*) evergreen trees grow wild in East Texas bottomlands and in yards throughout the state. They bloom April to June.



SLEEPY DAISY (*Xanthisma texanum*) grows mainly in South and Central Texas. At night or on cloudy days, the flowers close up, and the daisy seems to "sleep." It blooms from late spring to early fall.



WILD AZALEA (*Rhododendron canescens*), sometimes called swamp honeysuckle, thrives in the wet woodlands of East Texas. Large pink and white petals appear before the leaves in early spring.



LANTANA (*Lantana urticoides*), a three- to five-foot shrub, grows in various habitats throughout the state. Under favorable conditions, its blossoms flower from spring until the first frost.



CROSSVINE (*Bignonia capreaolata*) blooms March to May and is found in East Texas and parts of westernmost Central Texas. The vines can climb up to 50 feet.



ERYNGO (*Eryngium leavenworthii*) is not a true thistle, though just as prickly. They are late summer and fall blooming annuals found in rocky prairies in all but far western and southern Texas.



TEXAS MOUNTAIN LAUREL (*Sophora secundiflora*) is an evergreen shrub found in Central and Southwest Texas. In early spring, it produces clusters of purple flowers with a distinct grape fragrance.



GRASS PINK (*Calopogon tuberosus* var. *tuberosus*) is one of many orchids found in the Big Thicket area in Southeast Texas. Orchids are becoming more scarce as their habitats disappear.



“It is not necessary to *know the name* of a flower in order to *appreciate it.*”

—from *Texas Wildflowers: A Field Guide* by Campbell and Lynn Loughmiller



MOUNTAIN PINK (*Centaurea beyrichii*) thrives on the limestone hills of Central Texas and westward. Blooming in early summer, the flower stalks branch to form a perfect bouquet.



CHOCOLATE DAISY (*Berlandiera lyrata*) grows in Central and West Texas on rocky, limestone soils. Chocolate daisy blooms from June to October and can have a chocolate aroma.



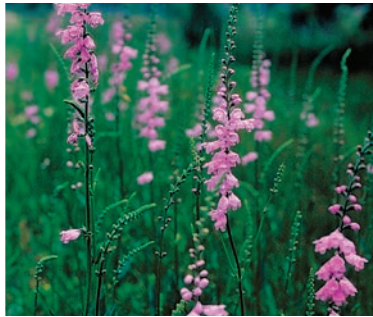
BASKET FLOWER (*Centaurea americana*) has straw-colored bracts underneath the flower that resemble a woven basket. They grow throughout most of Texas and bloom from June to July.



NODDING PENSTEMON (*Penstemon laxiflorus*) blooms from April to May in various shades of white and pink. The bell-shaped flowers also are called fairy thimbles.



HUISACHE (*Acacia farnesiana*) means “many thorns” in Nahuatl. It is a small tree that grows in South and Central Texas. Its fragrant, orange-yellow flowers bloom from January to April.



OBEDIENT PLANT (*Physostegia pulchella*) is an endemic species, found mostly in the wet bottomlands of East Texas. Obedient plant blooms from April to June.



RAIN LILY (*Cooperia pedunculata*) appears like magic a few days after heavy rains, from spring to summer. The blossom opens slowly at dusk, expands during the night and is in full flower the next morning.



PRAIRIE VERBENA (*Glandularia bipinnatifida*) is one of the most abundant wildflowers in the state. They bloom most profusely in the spring, though they may flower at other times.



ANTELOPE HORNS (*Asclepias asperula*) grow in meadows from the Blackland Prairies to the Edwards Plateau. Blooms may be spotted from March through October.



TEXAS DANDELION (*Pyrrhopappus carolinianus*), or false dandelion, grows commonly over the eastern half of the state. It blooms in the mornings from March through May.



MEXICAN GOLD POPPY (*Eschscholzia californica* ssp. *mexicana*) has a Spanish name *Amopalo del Campo*. It grows in the Trans Pecos and blooms after winter rains, usually from March to May.



AMERICAN LOTUS (*Nelumbo lutea*) is a close relative of the sacred lotus of Egypt. It grows in quiet waters of South and East Texas, blooming June through September.

TAKE TO THE ROAD. Driving Farm-to-Market, Ranch-to-Market and county roads during the spring wildflower season, after summer rains in desert areas and during the late summer/fall blooming season can net some of the most spectacular spreads of wildflowers. Those who seek a preplanned route might consider taking one of the following wildflower drives. Since wildflowers are unpredictable, a call ahead to the local chamber of commerce or convention and visitors bureau will help determine the best time to take the trip and the most productive routes.



CUERO AND DEWITT COUNTY

Southeast of San Antonio lies a 132-mile loop that takes in **Cuero** and DeWitt County, the Wildflower Capital of Texas, along with **Goliad, Helena, Gillett, Nixon** and a side trip from **Westhoff** along Cheapside Road. Keep an eye out for bluebonnets, Indian paintbrush, Mexican hats, Indian blankets, lazy daisies, phlox, winecups and coreopsis. Consider a detour to Goliad State Park to look for bluebonnets, Indian paintbrush, phlox, lantana and winecups. In Cuero, stop by the Chamber of Commerce (cuero.org) for a map of more than 800 miles of wildflower trails and current updates. Those who want to see blooms at a slower pace can check out a wildflower bicycling tour in Cuero during April. For those who prefer to paddle, the Guadalupe Valley Paddling Trail offers a view of wildflowers growing along the Guadalupe River.



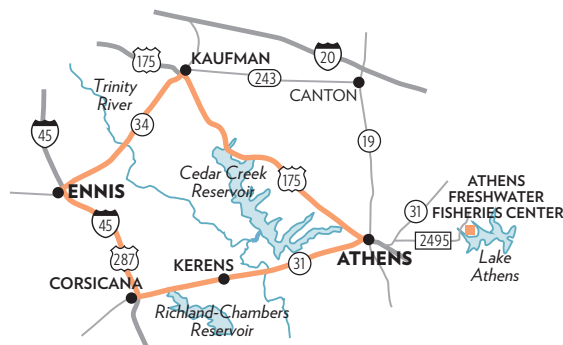
WILDFLOWER ETIQUETTE AND SAFETY

- Respect private property. Do not enter without permission.
- Do not trample or pick the wildflowers. Many of the wildflowers are annuals that will not return without these seeding processes.
- If you pull over, choose a safe area, and do not stop/park in areas that prohibit parking. Make sure all four wheels are completely off the roadway and the car is facing the same direction as traffic on that side of the road. Do not obstruct traffic movement.

The right of way is a dangerous place—please make sure to be safe.

NORTH TEXAS

This 120-mile trail makes a nice loop past open fields and pastures, over the Trinity River and along the tree-lined roads near Athens. It takes in the cities of **Ennis, Kaufman, Athens, Kerens** and **Corsicana**. In Athens, The Texas Freshwater Fisheries Center has 10,000 square feet for seasonal wildflower displays. Look for bluebonnets, Indian paintbrush, Arkansas lazy daisies, winecups, wild verbena, horsemint, pink evening primrose, larkspur and other wildflowers. If the loop hasn't provided enough wildflower viewing, consider spending some additional time in Ennis, home to the "Official Texas Bluebonnet Trail," during April for some of the state's best bluebonnet viewing. The Ennis Garden Club monitors 40 miles of roads around the city, checking each week for the best bluebonnet spots. The Ennis Convention & Visitors Bureau also provides information on the routes (visitennis.org/bluebonnet.htm).





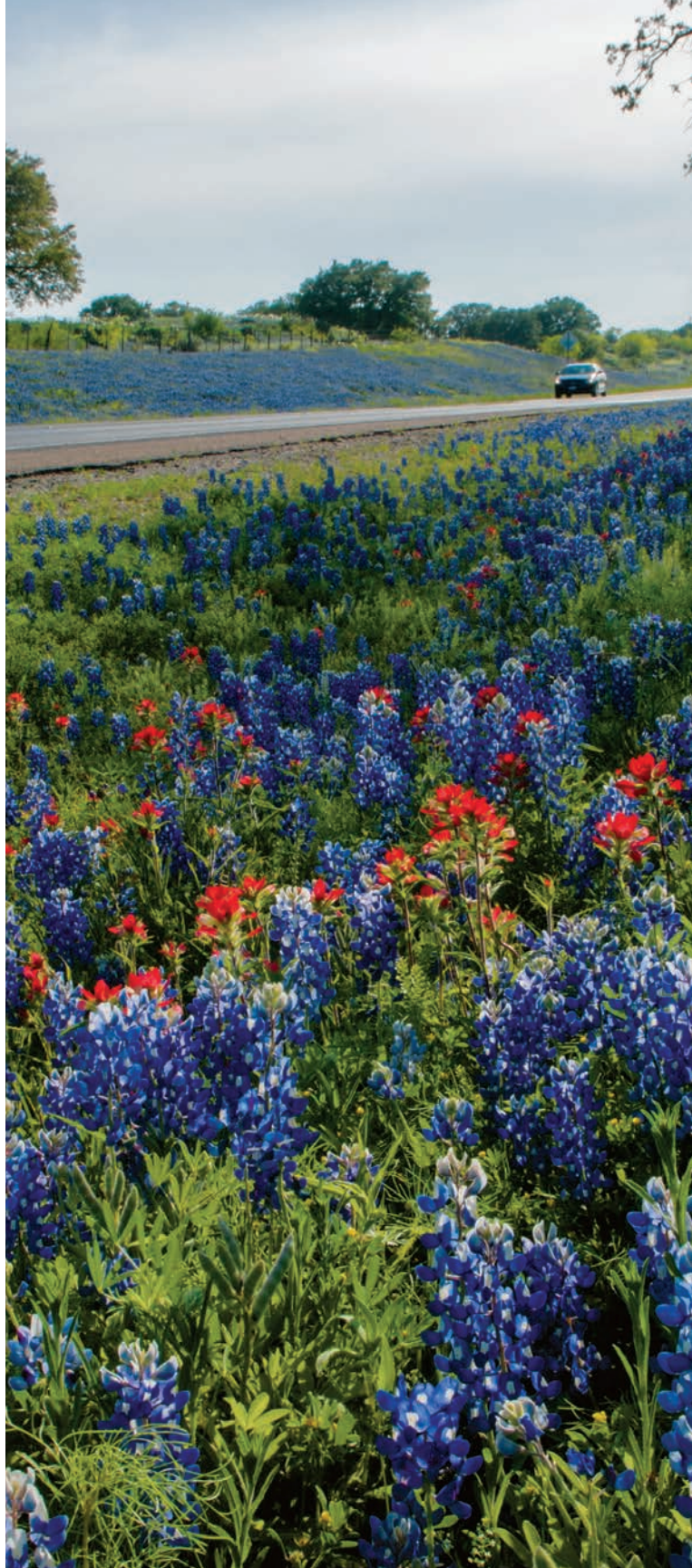
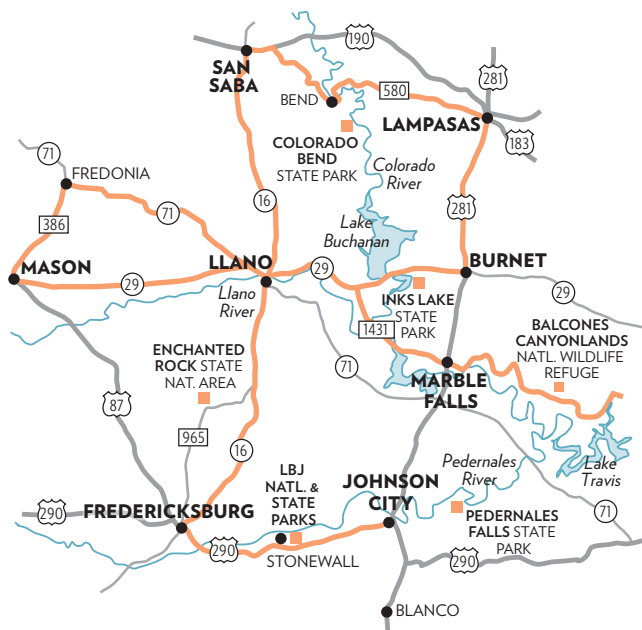
PIONEERS brewed a cough medicine from lemonmint. Mountain pink was called quinine weed because the dried plants were used to reduce fevers. Coreopsis, also called tickseed, was used in mattresses to ward off ticks and fleas.

Drives

HILL COUNTRY

The Hill Country is blessed with a bountiful bouquet of wildflowers each spring when the weather cooperates. Almost any portion of this route offers the possibility of spotting glorious displays. The roads between **Marble Falls, Burnet, Lampasas, San Saba, Mason, Llano, Fredericksburg** and **Johnson City** are some of the most tried-and-true trails. Along the routes look for bluebonnets, Indian paintbrush, pink evening primroses, daisies, winecups, prairie verbena and goldeneye phlox. Enjoy the drive along gently rolling hills past granite boulders, pastures and trees. Driving the whole route would cover almost 300 miles and is best enjoyed over several days, but choosing any smaller section should provide plenty of opportunities to see wildflowers and stop at some of the attractions and towns along the route.

For more festivities, consider planning a trip when Burnet holds its Bluebonnet Festival in April (burnetchamber.org). For more area information, go to visitfredericksburgtx.com and marblefalls.org.





WILDFLOWER ROUTES are based on Melissa Gaskill's wildflower drive articles for *Texas Highways* magazine. For additional and more detailed drives, visit texashighways.com and search Wildflower Drives.

Picking the Bluebonnet

WHEN THE TEXAS Legislature sat down to select the state flower in March 1901, it wasn't a straightforward decision. The National Society of Colonial Dames of America in Texas requested the bluebonnet be named. In the state House of Representatives, there were some other ideas. State Representative Phil Clements suggested the cotton boll as the "white flower of commerce" because cotton was big business at the time. State Representative John Nance Garner, who later became vice president, supported cacti's durability so passionately that he gained the nickname of "Cactus Jack."

There are several stories regarding how the bluebonnet gained its success. One story says when one legislator asked what a



bluebonnet looked like, the NSCDA members sent for (or brought with them) a painting of bluebonnets to show the Legislature and, presumably, the flower's appearance impressed the legislators so much that it was approved. Another version suggested the women gave the Legislature a bluebonnet painting to sway their opinion. A third version says Tyler native Ellen Boren Robertson, who

convinced the NSCDA Texas chapter to champion the bluebonnet, and her friends picked bluebonnets and placed one on the desk of each senator and representative.

However it came about, the legislators were convinced and selected the *Lupinus subcarnosus* in March 1901 as the state flower.

What they did not realize was they chose a dainty version,

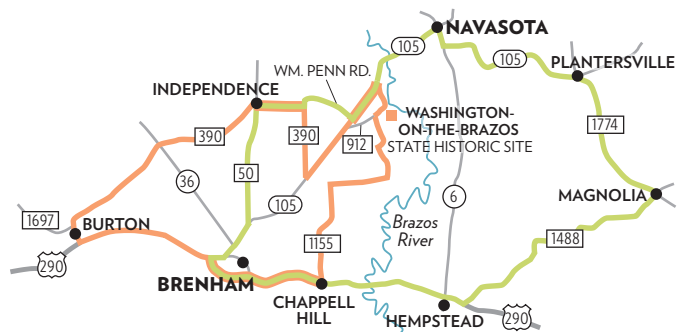
and the discussion was not over. Shortly after the 1901 vote, arguments began that the showier *Lupinus texensis* should have been selected. After years of controversy, the 1971 Legislature equitably decided that both bluebonnets, along with "any other variety of bluebonnet not heretofore recorded," are the state flower. There are actually six different species of bluebonnets that grow in the state, two of which are known to only grow naturally in Texas.

THE SIX STATE FLOWERS:

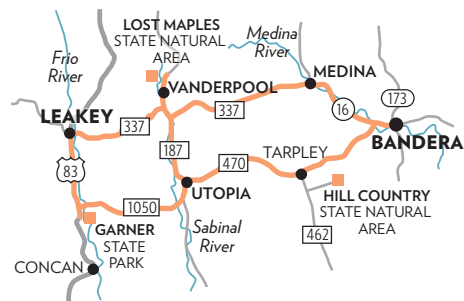
- *Lupinus texensis* grows in Central Texas and is the most commonly known.
- *Lupinus subcarnosus* grows in South Texas.
- *Lupinus havardii* grows in the Big Bend area.
- *Lupinus concinnus* is found in the Trans-Pecos region.
- *Lupinus plattensis* grows in the Texas Panhandle.
- *Lupinus perennis* grows in eastern Texas

Drives

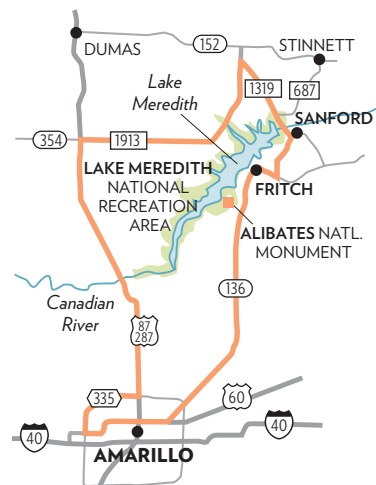
WASHINGTON AND GRIMES COUNTIES This area has two routes that often provide glorious spreads of wildflowers. One is an 80-mile loop from **Brenham to Burton, Independence, Washington and Chappell Hill** then back to Brenham (visitbrenhamtexas.com). Along the route, travelers may spot bluebonnets, Indian paintbrush, thistles, purple coneflower, verbena, beardtongue, skullcaps, prairie parsley, yellow wild indigo, blue-eyed grass, rattlesnake master, blanket flower and rosinweed. The second—about a 105-mile loop—starts in Brenham but takes a more easterly route that transitions from stands of oaks to forests of pine along FM 1774 and includes **Navasota, Plantersville, Magnolia and Hempstead**. Take note of the jog in the road at Navasota that takes drivers along the access road for SH 6 to get to the adjoining portion of SH 105.



WESTERN HILL COUNTRY This 120-mile figure-eight-shaped loop, which takes in the Texas Hill Country River Region, is a beautiful drive anytime of the year. It is especially outstanding when wildflowers bloom throughout the region and with the fall foliage changes at the Hill Country State Natural Area and Lost Maples State Park. The trip can easily be divided into smaller loops of 50 miles—taking in **Utopia, Leakey and Vanderpool**—or 70 miles through **Bandera, Utopia, Vanderpool and Medina**. Look for bluebonnets, Indian blanket, evening primrose, penstemon, mountain laurel, Blackfoot daisy and redbud trees. Golden dalea, thistle, prickly pear, skeleton plant, agarita and Mexican hat may be in bloom at the Texas Hill Country State Natural Area. Cardinal flowers, Mexican hats, phlox, prairie verbena and sages may be found at Lost Maples. For more area information, go to visituvaldecountry.com or banderacowboycapital.com.



AMARILLO AND LAKE MEREDITH Along this 135-mile loop through the Panhandle, look for sunflowers, tansy mustard, Gordon's bladderpod, winecups, big top prairie clover, gayfeather, daisies and yucca. While in **Amarillo** (visitamarillo.com), consider a stop at the Wildcat Bluff Nature Center to see yellow puccoon, antelope horns, prairie verbena, prickly poppy, purple coneflower and more. Farther north, Lake Meredith National Recreation Area sees such wildflowers as Blackfoot daisy, lace cactus, chocolate daisy, star thistle and copper globe mallow. Check the recreation area's calendar for wildflower-related activities like a ranger-guided tour of the Alibates Gardens. Just north of **Sanford**, travelers may choose to take FM 3395 (not pictured), for an alternate drive just north of the recreation area between RM 1319 and FM 1913.



TO HELP IDENTIFY wildflowers along the way, consider picking up one of the many helpful Texas wildflower guides or go to wildflower.org.

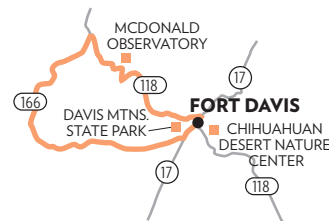


DYC (damn yellow composite) refers to any of the numerous species of yellow flowers in the Aster family. They can be difficult to tell apart in the field. Outside of the orchid family, this is one of the largest plant families, with more than 20,000 species.

BIG BEND COUNTRY This route makes a 230-mile scenic loop through **Alpine, Terlingua, Lajitas, Presidio** and **Marfa**. Inexperienced travelers might think the Big Bend is a desert and mountainous area devoid of wildflowers. However, there are plenty of desert blooms to look for—blind cactus, rainbow cactus, strawberry pitaya, ocotillo, yucca and sotol—along with bluebonnets (a larger version than seen in the Hill Country), catclaw and desert marigolds. Those who detour to the east along FM 170 into Big Bend National Park may find bluebonnets, cacti, yuccas, huisache and mountain laurel among other blooming plants. The park has two flowering seasons—spring and late summer—though some plants will bloom in warm weather after a significant rainfall. Since the flowers can be so dependent upon rain, in drier years, travelers may want to look for unpaved roads, canyons and arroyos, which may have areas of accumulated moisture to feed the flowers. US 385 from **Marathon** provides a scenic 40-mile drive to or from the national park. For more area information, go to visitbigbend.com.



DAVIS MOUNTAINS The 75-mile Davis Mountains Scenic Loop provides a visual treat throughout the year. The Davis Mountains area is considered a “sky island,” isolated from similar mountain ranges, that contains flora and fauna that exist nowhere else in Texas. Wildflowers here tend to put in an appearance with the late summer rains. Along the loop, look for agaves, beargrass, purple feather dalea, Mexican buckeye, flameleaf sumac, scarlet bouvardia, yellow bladderpods, white-flowered peppergrass and purple verbena. Consider a stop at Davis Mountains State Park, which can have blooming shrubs of scarlet bouvardia, trompillo, sumacs, Apache plume, cholla, yucca, catclaw acacia and agarita. Flowers may fill the park in years of abundant rainfall. When near **Fort Davis**, (fortdavis.com) travelers can turn southeast onto SH 118 for a short drive to visit the Chihuahuan Desert Research Center, which features plants of the Chihuahuan Desert.



BRAZORIA COUNTY The coastal areas of Texas have their share of blooms. This scenic drive explores the beauties of Brazoria County. It includes a 70-mile loop (FM 1462 to SH 36, to FM 2004 to SH 288) through **West Columbia, Angleton, Lake Jackson** and **Brazoria**, with tendrils leading to a state park and two national wildlife refuges. Brazos Bend State Park hosts an incredible variety of wildflowers, including spider lily, floating bladderwort, basket flower, black-eyed Susan, bluebonnets, morning glory vine and wild indigo. At Brazoria National Wildlife Refuge, look for sea oxeeye daisy, tropical sage, coreopsis, yellow thistle and spider lily. At the San Bernard National Wildlife refuge, keep an eye out for sea oxeeye daisy along with irises and water lilies. For more wildflowers, continue driving south to Quintana Beach County Park to look for them growing amongst the dunes.



AT TEXAS HIGHWAYS, the products we sell only tell half the story. We are excited for our readers to meet the makers behind the products and learn about what inspires the creative process. Our **True Texas** products celebrate exceptional creativity by highlighting Texas-based artisans. shop.texashighways.com

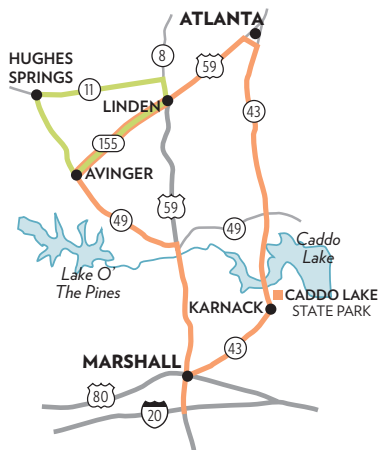


THE TRANS-MOUNTAIN
Road (Loop 375) through
Franklin Mountains State
Park in El Paso reaches an
elevation of 5,120 feet. Fields
of Mexican gold poppies are
usually found on the eastern
slope during spring.

Drives

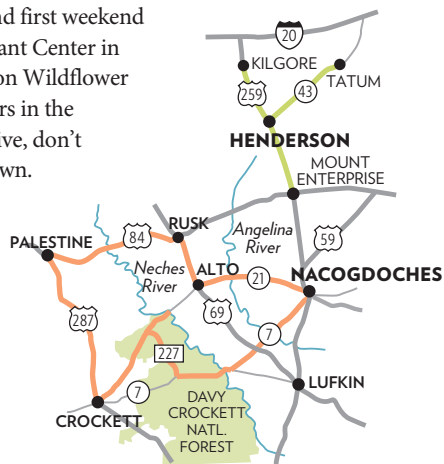
NORTHEAST TEXAS

The communities of **Linden**, **Avinger** and **Hughes Springs** host the Wildflower Trails of Texas (wildflowertrailsof texas.org), celebrating yellow-fringed orchids, lobelia, coralbean, coreopsis, Indian paintbrush, phlox and other wildflowers. The celebration includes the Wildflower Trails of Texas Festival in Linden, which is generally held the fourth weekend of April. The 40-mile triangle among the three cities can serve as a warm up before expanding the trip into a 128-mile exploration of Northeast Texas wildflowers by adding the towns of **Atlanta**, **Karnack** and **Marshall**. Along the expanded route, look for coneflower, dogwoods, field pansy, Indian blanket, spiderwort, crimson clover, bachelor buttons, Mexican hats, bluebonnets and wild indigo. A detour at Karnack to Caddo Lake State Park leads to potentially blooming dogwoods, redbuds and mayapple and the potential to find water horehound, jack-in-the-pulpit, green dragon and wild violets, among other wildflowers.



EAST TEXAS

The beautiful wildflowers and flowers found in East Texas have their own appeal. This **Palestine**, **Rusk**, **Alto**, **Nacogdoches** and **Crockett** route offers the benefit of seeing dogwood and redbud trees along with winecups and other wildflowers. In Palestine, visit the 254-acre Davey Dogwood Park when the trees are covered in blooms or visit for the Dogwood Festival the last two weekends of March and first weekend in April. Stop at the Pineywoods Native Plant Center in Nacogdoches to view the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Demonstration Garden, and though flowers in the Ruby M. Mize Azalea Gardens are not native, don't pass up the opportunity to visit while in town. (In March, tours are often offered on Saturdays as part of the Azalea Trails activities.) Further north, the **Henderson** Department of Tourism (visithendersontx.com) offers three driving routes to explore Rusk County's history and scenic beauty, highlighting crimson clover, Indian paintbrush, coreopsis and evening primrose.





THE BIG THICKET of Texas originally covered 2- to 3-million acres in the area now known as the Piney Woods. It is considered one of the most biologically diverse areas in the world. To learn more, visit [nps.gov/bith](https://www.nps.gov/bith).

Lady Bird's Wildflowers

LADY BIRD JOHNSON will forever be associated with wildflowers from working with highway beautification to establishing the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center. We enjoy the tangible results of her efforts today.

Her work went beyond beautification. Lady Bird realized that encouraging natural beauty had greater consequences, including preservation of the land and feeding the soul.

"Some may wonder why I chose wildflowers when there

are hunger and unemployment and the big bomb in the world," Lady Bird once said. "Well, I, for one, think we will survive, and I hope that along the way we can keep alive our experience with the flowering earth. For the bounty of nature is also one of the deep needs of man."



Born Claudia Alta Taylor, Lady Bird grew up in East Texas and spent summers in Alabama. Many credit her time spent out-

doors as a child, especially watching wildflowers bloom each spring, for the development of her environmental passion.

In a 1993 article in the *New York Times*, Lady Bird indicated that it wasn't until her husband, Lyndon B. Johnson, was elected president, and especially after his Great Society speech in 1964, that she was inspired to preserve the environment.

Her work contributed to the passage of the Highway Beautification Act of 1965 and led the Johnson Administration to be one of the most active in promoting conservation, signing into law almost 300 conservation and beautification measures.

Later, when Lady Bird returned to Texas, she noticed the changes of urban growth. She became concerned that native plants and wildflowers were at risk of extinction. At age 70, she decided to act.

In 1982, Lady Bird and actress Helen Hayes founded the National Wildflower Research Center, which conducts research and provides education. Lady Bird donated funding and 60 acres of land in Austin to establish the organization and later helped it find its current location, which has grown from 43 acres in 1995 to 284 acres. In 1997, the research center was renamed the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center.

Lady Bird, who died in 2007, left a legacy that reduces pollution, encourages environmentalism, preserves national parks, protects native wildflowers, and renews urban areas.

Events

FUN WITH FLOWERS. Wildflower season is always a magical time in Texas. To get the most out of a bountiful season of blooms, why not also make plans to visit one of the many festivals celebrating the state flower (and others)? We've rounded up some tried-and-true events, along with local trails to help you find the best wildflower drives.

CELEBRATING THE STATE FLOWER

Though the blooms themselves depend on rain and at least a little luck from year to year, one thing is certain each spring—you can always count on a few wildflower festivals to make a welcome appearance.

On the second weekend in April, **Chappell Hill** hosts its annual **Bluebonnet Festival**, named the Official Bluebonnet Festival of Texas by the Texas Legislature. The event features live entertainment, historical tours, food and vendors from morning to early evening, when you'll want to get out for a sunset drive of wildflower country. The surrounding area can put on an impressive show, and the local visitor bureau's Wildflower Watch website (visitbrenhamtexas.com/getaways/wildflower-watch) points visitors to the most colorful spots.

Not to be outdone, **Burnet** and **Llano** counties share the title of "The Bluebonnet Capital of Texas" and celebrate the annual **Burnet Bluebonnet Festival**. Visitors can enjoy an air show, grand parade, carnival, car show, live music and entertainment, street dances, a pet parade and more. The festival is usually held on the second weekend in April to coincide with what is often the peak of the Hill Country's well-known wildflower displays.

The **Wine and Wildflower Journey** also makes a great case for visiting some of the Hill Country's wineries at the height of spring scenery. From early- to mid-April, visitors can sample wines at any of the area's participating wineries (remember to bring a designated driver!), get discounts on wine bottles and take home a packet of wildflower seeds as a reminder of the trip. Tickets are available on the Texas Hill Country Wineries website at texaswinetrail.com/tickets. If your journey takes you to **Fredericksburg**, also plan to make a stop at the **Wildflower Celebration** at Wildseed Farms or join the fun at the Bluebonnet Tractor Ride, both during April.

In North Texas, **Ennis** claims the state's official "Bluebonnet City" title and welcomes visitors to drive 40 miles of **Bluebonnet Trails** in the area. As part of this celebration of

the state flower, the city also hosts the Bluebonnet Trails Festival on the third weekend in April. The event includes arts and crafts, food, music and children's activities. Find information about the trails and festival from the Ennis Convention and Visitors Bureau or visitennis.org/bluebonnet.htm.

DON'T FORGET THE DOGWOODS

It's true that Texas has a lot of ground to cover when it comes to wildflowers, but if you're in East Texas, don't forget to look up in the trees, too. In **Palestine**, the dogwood trees put on their best show in late March and into April during the **Dogwood Trails Celebration**, which features a lively roster of activities including wine tastings, cooking classes, historical tours, train rides, a gospel music festival and Easter celebrations. Tips on the best places to see dogwood blooms can be found at **Dogwood Bloom Watch** (dogwoodbloomwatch.blogspot.com), or find the local visitor center at www.visitpalestine.com for more information.

About two hours south on U.S. 287 in **Woodville**, the blooming of the dogwood trees has been celebrated since 1940 and now spans three weekends of activities. In March, festivities begin with the **Festival of the Arts** and continue on the last weekend


of March with events showcasing the area's Western heritage. The first week in April is the **Dogwood Queen's Weekend** with a festival, parade, a 5K run, historical play, booths and fireworks. Details can be found at tylercountydogwoodfestival.org.



FOR MORE TEXAS EVENTS,

go to texashighways.com/events.

To order a printed copy of the quarterly *Texas Highways Events Calendar*, go to texashighways.com/freepubs. It's free!



TEXAS STATE PARKS and natural areas are located throughout the state and offer the possibility of seeing a variety of blooms. texasstateparks.org. The state's national parks and forests also offer a variety of wildflower viewing experiences. nps.gov.

WILDFLOWER

Events

AUSTIN: **National Wildflower Week** at the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center, May. **Texas Native Plant Week**, October. wildflower.org

BURNET: **Bluebonnet Festival**, April. bluebonnetfestival.org

CHAPPELL HILL: **Official Bluebonnet Festival of Texas**, April chappellhillhistoricalsociety.com/bluebonnet-festival

EL PASO: **Poppies Fest**, April. archaeology.elpasotexas.gov

ENNIS: **Bluebonnet Trails Festival**, April. visitennis.org

FREDERICKSBURG: **Bluebonnet Tractor Ride**, April. rustyiron.org

FREDERICKSBURG: **Texas Hill Country Wine and Wildflower Journey**, April. texaswinetrail.com

FREDERICKSBURG: **Wildflower Celebration at Wildseed Farms**, April. wildseedfarms.com

GEORGETOWN: **Red Poppy Festival**, April. redpoppyfestival.com

HENDERSON: **Rusk County Wildflower Trails**, April. visithendersontx.com

LINDEN, AVINGER and HUGHES SPRINGS: **Wildflower Trails of Texas Festival**, April. wildflowertrailsoftexas.org

NATALIA: **Bluebonnet Festival**, March. nataliabluebonnetfestival.com

PALESTINE: **Dogwood Trails Celebration**, March-April. visitpalestine.com

SAN ANTONIO: **Fiesta Wildflower Ride**, April. fiestawildflower.com

TYLER: **Azalea and Spring Flower Trail**, March-April. visittyler.com/azaleatrail

WOODVILLE: **Tyler County Dogwood Festival**, March-April. tylercountydogwoodfestival.org

OTHER FLOWERS CELEBRATED:

DALLAS: **Dallas Blooms**, February-April. dallasarboretum.org

HOUSTON: **Azalea Trail**, March. riveroaksgc.org

NACOGDOCHES: **Azalea Trails**, March-April. nacogdochesazaleas.com

TYLER: **Texas Rose Festival**, October. texasrosefestival.com

LUCI AND
FAMILY G

WILDFLOWERS

On site



BEEES, BUTTERFLIES and hummingbirds—our plant pollinators—are attracted to wildflowers like lemonmint and cardinal flower for their nectar. The tall flower stalk on the century plant attracts bats, birds and insects. Milkweed is the host plant for the monarch butterfly.

TAKE TIME TO VISIT. There are a number of facilities and parks throughout Texas that preserve its native plants and have display gardens or wildflowers. Most of the centers also offer information to help people learn more about the state's native plants.

LADY BIRD JOHNSON WILDFLOWER CENTER

Designated the state botanic garden and arboretum by the Texas Legislature, The University of Texas at Austin Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center is committed to inspiring the conservation of native plants in natural and designed landscapes. The native plant gardens, arboretum and natural areas are home to more than 900 species of Texas native plants and are filled with abundant wildlife.



Red Columbine

Visitors can enjoy playtime in the Family Garden, stroll in the Arboretum, and visit the full-service cafe and gift store. The center's website has the country's largest online guide for identifying native wildflowers shrubs and trees.

* 4801 La Crosse in Austin.

512/232-0100

wildflower.org

WILDFLOWER CENTER AFFILIATES AND PARTNERS

The **Armand Bayou Nature Center**, founded in 1974, preserves 2,500 acres of wetlands prairie, forest and marsh habitats in Pasadena. Walk the Discovery Loop or Prairie Loop to view the prairie and look for wildflowers.

* 8500 Bay Area Blvd. in Pasadena.

281/474-2551 • abnc.org

The **Botanical Research Institute of Texas** started in 1987 to house the Southern Methodist University Herbarium and has grown to include more than 1 million plant specimens, plus 125,000 books and journals. The institute conducts tours, shows exhibits and hosts events.

* 1700 University Drive in Fort Worth.

817/332-4441 • brit.org

WILDFLOWERS

On site

The **Chihuahuan Desert Research Institute**, established in 1974, has a desert botanical garden, cactus and succulent greenhouse, interpretive exhibits and more than three miles of hiking trails. Spring wildflowers bloom late March through May. More wildflowers bloom during monsoon season (July into August).

✱ 43869 SH 118 near Fort Davis.

432/364-2499 • cdri.org

The **Fredericksburg Nature Center** boasts a unique blend of 11 habitats found nowhere else in Texas. Take a self-guided tour (pick up copies in the Park Office or find on the website).

✱ Inside Lady Bird Johnson Municipal Park.

fredericksburgnaturecenter.com

Mercer Botanic Gardens has 60 acres of maintained gardens with a walking trail system, Remembrance Walk for memorials and honorariums, ponds, visitors center and a courtyard plaza. The arboretum has playgrounds, a picnic area, hickory bog and boardwalk, cypress swamp, maple collection and miles of walking trails.

✱ 22306 Aldine Westfield Road in Humble. 713/274-4160

hcp4.net/parks/mercerc

The **Pineywoods Native Plant Center** features 42 acres of gardens that offer a unique mix of uplands, mesic mid-slopes and wet creek bottoms. The Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Demonstration Gardens has more than 200 species of wildflowers, trees and shrubs native to Texas and the Southwest.

✱ 2900 Raguette St. in Nacogdoches.

936/468-1832 • sfagardens.sfasu.edu

The **Sibley Nature Center** has 49 acres dedicated to educating people about the flora, fauna and history of the region. Visit the center to see the exhibits, sit in the wildlife viewing area to watch birds and blooming flowers, and walk the nature trail.

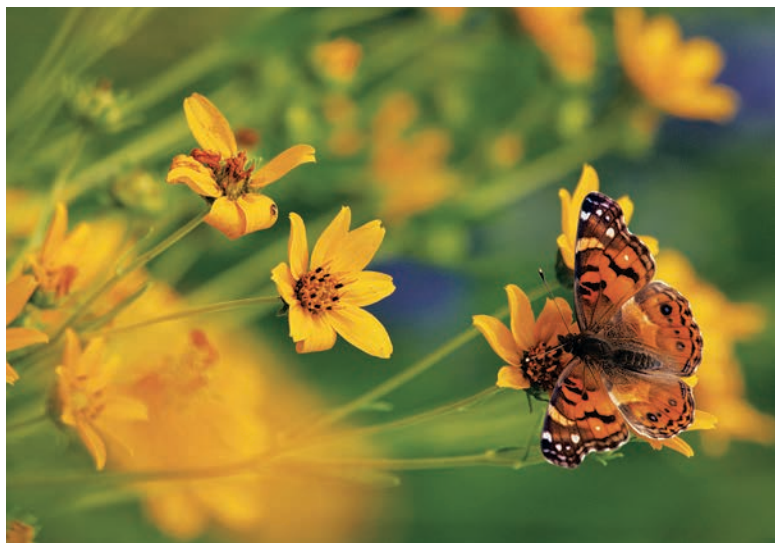
✱ 1307 E. Wadley Ave. in Midland.

432/684-6827 • sibleynaturecenter.org

The **Texas Discovery Gardens** in Dallas' Fair Park features a 7.5 acre organic garden with native and adaptive plants plus the two-story Rosine Smith Sammons Butterfly House and Insectarium. It seeks to teach effective ways to restore, conserve and preserve nature in the urban environment.

✱ 3601 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.

214/428-7476 • txdgc.org



The **History Center** collects, preserves and makes available the history of eastern Texas, including gardens with native plants. See redbuds and native wisteria in the spring, cardinal flowers in the summer, gulf muhly in the fall and American beautyberry in winter.

✱ 102 N. Temple in Diboll (south of Lufkin).

936/829-3543 • thehistorycenteronline.com

TEXAS PARKS

Texas State Parks offer a way to see the wildflowers from both park roads and hiking trails. State parks and natural areas are located throughout the state and present the possibility of seeing a variety of blooms, including beach evening primrose at Mustang Island SP, mountain laurels at Colorado Bend SP, Mexican redbud at Enchanted Rock SNA, golden phlox at Government Canyon SP, and prairie spiderwort at Ray Roberts Lake SP. Visit TPWD's website, texasstateparks.org, or like the agency on Facebook to see updates.

The state's **national parks** also offer a variety of wildflower viewing experiences. Look for ocotillo and yucca blooming in the spring and cenizo during the late summer at Big Bend National Park. Visit Guadalupe Mountains National Park to look for low-growing perennials hiding among the rocks, grasses and flowering cacti. The Lyndon B. Johnson National Historical Park has recorded more than 70 species. Big Thicket National Preserve manages 112,000 acres with the potential to find hundreds of wildflowers. Find more information on each park at nps.gov.

The Lower Colorado River Authority's **McKinney Roughs Nature Park** near Bastrop is a wonderful place to visit during the spring. Explore close to 18 miles of hiking trails in the park that include wildflower meadows. Keep an eye out for agarita, antelope horn and turk's cap. Call 512/303-5073 or visit lcra.org.

MORE SITES TO VISIT:

AMARILLO: **Wildcat Bluff Nature Center** wildcatbluff.org

ARANSAS PASS: **Newbury Park Hummingbird Garden**
aransaspass.org

ARLINGTON: **River Legacy Living Science Center** riverlegacy.org

ATHENS: **East Texas Arboretum & Botanical Society**
easttexasarboretum.org

AUSTIN **Nature and Science Center** austintexas.gov/ansc

BAY CITY: **Matagorda County Birding Nature Center** mcbnc.org

BAYTOWN **Nature Center** www.baytownnaturecenter.org

BEAUMONT: **Tyrrell Park, Beaumont Botanical Gardens**
beaumontbotanicalgardens.org

BOERNE: **Cibolo Nature Center** cibolo.org

CORPUS CHRISTI: **South Texas Botanical Gardens and Nature Center** stxbot.org

DRIPPING SPRINGS: **West Cave Preserve** westcave.org

EL PASO: **Chihuahuan Desert Gardens** museum.utep.edu

FORT WORTH **Nature Center and Refuge** fwnaturecenter.org

HOUSTON **Arboretum and Nature Center** houstonarboretum.org

KERRVILLE: **Riverside Nature Center** riversidenaturecenter.org

KINGSVILLE: **Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Research Institute**
ckwri.tamuk.edu

LAJITAS: **Barton Warnock Visitor Center**
tpwd.texas.gov/state-parks/barton-warnock

MCKINNEY: **Heard Natural Science Museum and Wildlife Sanctuary**
heardmuseum.org

NEW BRAUNFELS: **Lindheimer Home** nbconservation.org

ORANGE: **Shangri La Botanical Gardens and Nature Center**
starkculturalvenues.org/shangrilagardens

SAN ANTONIO **Botanical Garden**: sabot.org

SONORA: **Eaton Hill Nature Center & Preserve**
eatonhillnaturecenter.org


SPRING: **Jesse H. Jones Park & Nature Center** hcp4.net/parks/jjp

WESLACO: **Valley Nature Center** valleynaturecenter.org

WICHITA FALLS: **River Bend Nature Center**
riverbendnaturecenter.org

WILDSEED FARMS near Fredericksburg grows and harvests wildflower seeds. With 200 acres of wildflower fields, it is hard to not stop for a visit. The Wildflower Market Center has walking trails, pick-your-own bouquet fields, seeds for sale, a gift shop and biergarten.

* 100 Legacy Drive. 800/848-0078
wildseedfarms.com



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