

Winter Rains in Texas Bring Good Spring Wildflower Show

Timely rains last fall and this winter have benefited early spring wildflowers, which will likely put on a good show in much of Texas despite last year's drought, according to the senior botanist at The University of Texas at Austin's Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center.

"The seeds left behind by annual wildflowers such as bluebonnets don't care if it's the worst drought in recorded history, as long as they get bouts of rain at the right time for germination and growth," said Damon Waitt, who also is the center's senior director.

The bumper crop of wildflowers in 2010 also helped add to the seed stockpile in Texas soils that can be revived by recent rains. Rain showers should provide decent viewings in regions of North, Central and East Texas. However, it is possible that the Panhandle, South and West Texas won't fare as well.

Among the early sightings of wildflowers this year are: Carolina jessamine blooming in North Houston along FM 1960, and along Woodlands Parkway between Interstate 45 and Kuykendahl Road; hundreds of trout lilies blooming in Dogwood Canyon and elsewhere around Dallas; Texas mountain laurel trees blooming in Dripping Springs and Austin; and patches of stiff green thread spotted in north San Antonio, such as along U.S. 281 above North Loop 1604.

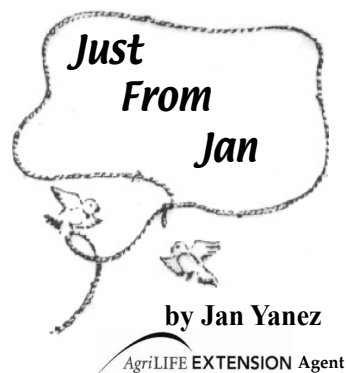
Complementing these sightings will be a bumper crop of Texas bluebonnets and other wildflowers at the Wildflower Center and sites such as Brenham and the Mercer Arboretum & Botanic Gardens in Houston. Bluebonnet rosettes the size of dinner plates are hugging the ground at the Wildflower Center, and Texas mountain laurel, windflower, plains fleabane and Mexican plum trees are already blooming.

Other early spring bloomers will include Indian paintbrush, winecup and Indian blanket. Center staffers will mark peaceful spots for taking bluebonnet photos. And a sneak peak of bluebonnets growing on site is available online via live broadcast.

Regions that missed pre-season rains may still have drought-tolerant wildflowers that bloom. For instance, Fendler's bladderpod may become noticeable soon near Amarillo. A Wildflower Center plant conservationist has also seen a few Big Bend bluebonnets and yucca prepping to open blooms in the national park. The outlook may not be great for many tree species, such as Mexican plum and Texas redbud in Central Texas, though.

"Trees had such a tough year in 2011. They may not have the energy resources to put on a significant flowering display this year," Waitt said, adding that perennial wildflowers may share that predicament.

For public sightings, visit the Wild About Texas Wildflowers website, contact the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) at 1-800-452-9292, or view TxDOT's online flora map. To learn more about wildflowers nationally, search the Wildflower Center's Native Plant Information Network.



Eating Out and Choosing Fast Foods

Fast food can be heart-healthy food if you know what to look for and order, and have the will power to follow through. With a little bit of effort, you can ensure that the fast-food meals you choose fall within a healthy dietary pattern.

Follow these fat-sensible tips when making your fast-food choices:

- Find out the nutritional content of fast-food items by visiting the chain's Web site to help identify the healthiest choices. Some restaurants post this information near the counter or provide it in pamphlet form.

- Pass on "value-size" servings that enable you to choose greater portions of food for a slightly greater price. "Super-sizing" a food item inevitably increases the amount of fat, added sugars, sodium and calories you consume.

- Skip the sides, which are usually deep-fried. For a healthier side dish, order a side salad or fruit cup.

- Choose a baked potato over French fries, but have it with vegetables or fat-free or low-fat sour cream or margarine instead of butter, full-fat sour cream



Little More Tender! Robert Lee Care Center residents enjoyed Elvis (aka Harvey McFadden) Valentine Party February 15. The live performance brought back memories of the 50's and 60's with some of Elvis's original songs. Everyone enjoyed chocolate covered strawberries and punch during the entertainment. Elvis places a scarf around Ettie Hubbard while singing "Love Me Tender" to her.

or cheese.

- Choose grilled chicken sandwiches often – they're a much healthier option than breaded, fried-chicken sandwiches and usually significantly leaner than the meats used in most burgers.

- Avoid ordering sandwiches with double meat. A single serving of meat is 2–3 ounces (about the size of a deck of cards) and a single meat patty is usually well over a single serving.

- Avoid adding bacon to sandwiches, because it's high in fat and calories and has very few nutrients. Order pickles, onions, lettuce, tomatoes, mustard and ketchup instead to add flavor without fat.

- Steer clear of fried fish sandwiches. Choose fish sandwiches where the fish is baked, broiled or grilled.

- Try asking for a wheat or whole-grain bun, as some places do offer them.

- Hold the mayonnaise and other calorie-laden

sandwich sauces (e.g., "special sauce").

- Drink water, diet soda or skim or low-fat milk. Regular sodas are loaded with sugars and calories.

Organization offers free trees

The Arbor Day Foundation is making it easier for everyone to celebrate the arrival of spring through planting trees.

Join the Arbor Day Foundation in March 2012 and receive 10 free white flowering dogwood trees.

"White flowering dogwoods will add year-round beauty to your home and neighborhood," said John Rosenow, chief executive and founder of the Arbor Day Foundation. "Dogwoods have showy spring flowers, scarlet autumn foliage and red berries that will attract songbirds all winter."

The free trees are part of the nonprofit Foundation's Trees for America campaign.

The trees will be shipped postpaid at the right time for planting, between March 1 and May 31, with enclosed planting instructions. The 6- to 12-inch trees are guaranteed to grow or they will be replaced free of charge.

Arbor Day Foundation members also receive a subscription to Arbor Day, the Foundation's bimonthly publication, and The Tree Book, which contains information about tree planting and care.

To become a member of the Foundation and receive the free trees, send a \$10 contribution to TEN FREE DOGWOOD TREES, Arbor Day Foundation, 100 Arbor Avenue, Nebraska City, NE 68410, by March 30, 2012. Or join online at arborday.org/March.

ATTENTION AREA GOLFERS

Bronte Longhorn Golf Club
is looking for
NEW MEMBERS!

When joining for 3 months, 1 month's dues are FREE - a \$105

value for just \$70!

Call 325-473-2156 today!

Offer ends April 30, 2012.

Cano's

Diamonds - Gold - Coins

West Texas Largest Buyers of Quality Coin and Jewelry Estates.

Always buying -

Estate Jewelry, Gold and Silver coins,

All dimes, quarters, and half dollars before 1964

Sterling silverware and holloware

Art, collectibles, bronzes • Stamp collections • Loose Diamonds

Military collectibles • Fine Watches • Paper Money Collections

We offer private appointments in our office, your home, bank or attorney's office.

William Cano, USAF, Retired

Honesty - Reliability - Integrity

Lifetime Member - American Numismatic Association

Member - Texas Numismatic Association

Diamonds Graduate - Gemological Institute of America

Member - Jewelers of America

Monday - Friday 10 am to 5:30pm

Saturdays by Appointment



1016 West Beauregard • San Angelo, Texas 76901

325-944-2021 • canos.jewelry@verizon.net