

# Possible world record flower found in Coke County

By Fred Hohmeyer

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It's the spring of the year and the earth is renewing itself. This article features what may just be the World Record Bluebonnet. I am blessed by having bluebonnets come up every year just outside of my north fence. My north fence is bordered by FM 2034 and historically the bluebonnets that come up along this two-mile stretch of highway connecting Highway 208 and Highway 158 are some of the best in the state of Texas. Folks come from long distances just to see the bluebonnets along this highway every spring.

About 15 years ago a man from the Texas Highway Department came by my ranch and showed me a photo he had taken about an hour earlier. The picture was of a huge bluebonnet that he said was growing just outside of my north gate. We drove over to where he said that he had seen the flower and it was no where to be seen. Someone had taken it (which is a violation of state law) or a deer or other animal had eaten it. I check this area every Spring and the big bluebonnet bloom has never come back. This bluebonnet was the size of about five or six normal flowers and had a stalk that was as big in circumference as your thumb. It was huge! In fact I have never seen such a large bluebonnet anywhere and perhaps the size of this bloom would be a world record if anyone is keeping records on such a thing.

As anyone from Texas knows, the bluebonnet is the Texas State Flower and has been since 1901. There are actually five different varieties of bluebonnets with two of them occurring only in Texas. Because new varieties were springing up from time to time, in 1971 the legislature changed the laws to include "any other variety of bluebonnet no heretofore recorded" and lumped all of the varieties into one state flower.

I recently read a paper put out by the Texas Cooperative Extension Service entitled, "Texas Bluebonnets-Pride of Texas" written by Jerry M. Parsons, Steve George and Greg Grant. The description of the five varieties given below was taken from this paper.

The five state flowers of Texas are:

1. *Lupinus subcarneus*, the original champion and still co-holder of the title, grows naturally in deep sandy loams

from Leon County southwest to LaSalle County and down in the northern part of Hidalgo County in the Valley. It is often referred to as the sandy land bluebonnet. The plant's leaflets are blunt, sometimes notched with silky undersides. This species, which reaches peak bloom in late March, is not easy to maintain in clay soils.

2. *Lupinus texensis*, the favorite of tourists and artists, provides the blue spring carpet of Central Texas. It is widely known as THE Texas bluebonnet. It has pointed leaflets, the flowering stalk is tipped with white (like a bunny's tail) and hits peak bloom in the late March and early April. It is the easiest of all species to grow.

3. *Lupinus Havardii*, also known as the Big Bend or Chisos Bluebonnet, is the most majestic of the Texas Bluebonnet tribe with flowering spikes up to three feet. It is found on the flats of the Big Bend country in early spring, usually has seven leaflets and is difficult to cultivate outside its native habitat.

4. *Lupinus concinnus* is an inconspicuous little lupine, from 2 to 7 inches, which combine elements of white, rosy purple and lavender. Commonly known as the annual lupine, it is found sparingly in the Trans-Pecos region, blooming in early spring.

5. *Lupinus plattensis* sneaks down from the north into the Texas Panhandle's sandy dunes. It is the only perennial species in the state and grows to about two feet tall. It normally blooms in mid to late spring and is also known as the dune bluebonnet and the Nebraska Lupine.

The iconic name *Lupinus* is derived from the Latin word *lupus*, meaning wolf. At one point bluebonnets were known as "wolf flowers" because they appeared to devour the soil as they were often found growing

in thin rocky soils which did not support any other plant life. It was later discovered that bluebonnets did not rob from the soil but rather they enhanced the soil through producing natural fertilizer which is pure and clean, namely nitrogen. Bluebonnets are legumes. The best known nitrogen fixing organisms is a bacterium called *Rhizobium* which lives on the roots of legumes such as clover, alfalfa and vetch. The Texas bluebonnet belongs to the legume or bean family (*Fabaceae* or *Leguminosae*).

According to the paper referenced above bluebonnets are probably the most important native rangeland legume in Texas, often occupying hundreds of acres of rolling hillsides during the cool fall, winter and spring months. The roots of the legumes are highly nodulated, making them important sources of nitrogen for the soil. According to the paper, bluebonnets with the help of *Rhizobium* produce as much nitrogen as soybeans, which often yield as much as 100 pounds of nitrogen per acre. While clover and vetch are preferred by whitetail deer bluebonnets are not which means that areas populated by a lot of deer do not harm the bluebonnets growing there.

The horticulturists working at the Texas Cooperative Extension Service, in cooperation with seed producers, bedding plant growers and vegetable farmers, have domesticated the bluebonnet wildflower into a multi-million dollar bedding plant. In 1982 a terminally ill entrepreneur and Texas naturalist named Carroll Abbot, known as "Mr. Texas Bluebonnet" had a dream of planting the design of the state of Texas with just bluebonnets to celebrate the 1986 Texas Sesquicentennial. This project ultimately involved thousands of people, created a multi-million dollar industry and generated tremendous publicity for Texas



**LOOK WHO'S NEW!!** Big brothers, Rhett and Reed, are excited to announce the arrival of their baby brother, Ren Asher Rangel. He arrived six weeks early on May 4, 2015, at 2:45 am. He weighed 8 pounds, 8 oz, and was 20 inches long.

Proud parents are Felipe and Tiffany of Robert Lee. Grandparents are Tracie Bruning of Robert Lee and Bruce Bruning of Pueblo, Colorado. Great-grandparents are Venita Womack of Robert Lee and Wilson and Rose Marie Bruning of Bruning, Nebraska. Ren is also welcomed by his aunt Tara Chapman of Albany, Texas, who perfectly photographed him.

A&M University. This project is still producing new products and wildflower knowledge today.

Developing different and unusual bluebonnet colors has been the main goal of this project from the beginning. The colors developed include blue, or course, white, pink, red, burgundy, maroon and other shades. What is very exciting to me is that there is a patch of bluebonnets that come up every spring about a mile from my ranch that includes all of the colors mentioned above. Some photos of this patch of bluebonnets are included with this article. I am rather secretive about the location of this bluebonnet patch as I don't want someone coming along and pulling up all of these plants and destroying this beautiful gift of nature.

I am also including some pictures of this colorful bluebonnet patch as well as some pictures of my wonderful

dog, Daisy, lying in a field of bluebonnets just outside my north gate where the huge bluebonnet bloom once grew. Also included, below, is a photo of a rocky bluff just down the road from by place where bluebonnets and other wildflowers thrive along with cactus and mesquite trees.

If you live in Texas I hope you have the opportunity this spring to drive out and around the state to view some of the beautiful bluebonnet fields that are there for your enjoyment. There are fields around my area that are solid bluebonnets and produce a blue carpet that extends as far as the eye can see. We are truly blessed to live in a state that has the bluebonnet as the State Flower.

Springtime in Texas should give us time "to smell the roses" or in this case the bluebonnets.


Until next time...Vaya con Dios!



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The next contribution date is Monday, June 15, at 12 noon to be picked up on Saturday, June 20, at 10:15 am at the Robert Lee Park Pavilion. Visit [www.bountifulbaskets.org](http://www.bountifulbaskets.org) for more information.

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