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.
**Vestegational Areas of Texas**

Texas has more than 208,000 square miles of land and water with variations of climate and topography that result in a wildly diverse landscape. 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.

**WILDFLOWER Regions**

Texas 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 Cymer 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, and mesquite apple blossoms.

**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 preserves the eastern Cross Timbers ecosystem on about 750 acres.

**SOUTH TEXAS PLAINS** includes barrier islands, salt grass marshes, oak parklands and riverine 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 trachsus passes through yuypaw, 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.

**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 Cymer 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, and mesquite apple blossoms.

**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 cressote-bush desert scrub to mountains 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, www.tpwd.texas.gov.

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**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 learn more about wildflowers, visit www.wildflower.org/plants.
**STANDING CYPRESS** (Ludovicia dives) forms large mats and的帮助 stabilize the coastal dunes. Blooming from April through December, the flowers open each morning and close in the afternoon.

**BEACH MORNING GLORY** (Gymnostachys littoralis) 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 fulgida) is a prairie flower that grows in open areas throughout the state. Blooming from May to December, depending on the rains. Black-eyed Susans are so named for their resemblance to the traditional Mexican sombrero. It is sometimes called the Mexican sombrero.

**WILD PRINCE** (Passionflower) blooms in open areas throughout the state. Blooming from April through December, depending on the rains. It grows in all areas of the state except the Panhandle. It is so named for its resemblance to the traditional Scottish thistle. Butterflies and bees love the flowers, which bloom from April to August.

**BLACKFOOT DAISY** (Ratibida columnifera) blooms in open areas throughout the state. Blooming from April through December, depending on the rains. A low-growing perennial, black-foot daisy flower from early spring through fall.

**SAND VERBENA** (Abronia villosa) 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.

**MEXICAN HAT** (Lobelia cardinalis) thrives on calcareous soils of West and Central Texas. Its bright yellow blossoms appear in part hand half of the state. They often grow along stream banks and blooms from May to July. It is commonly called the Mexican hat.

**CARDINAL FLOWER** (Lobelia cardinalis) is so named for its resemblance to the traditional Scottish thistle. It blooms from May to July and later with favorable weather.

**SPIDER LILY** (Hymenocallis liriosme) blooms from April through June. Don’t pick them! Spider lilies have almost disappeared in part indiscriminate picking.

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

**TRUMPET FLOWER** (Mammospermum floridanum) blooms in open areas throughout the state. Blooming from April to August, it is a native of southern Texas. It is also known as San Antonio milkweed.

**CEDAR SAGE** (Salvia roemeriana) inhabits rocky, 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 elephantipes), also known as Spanish spear, grows abundantly in the sandy soils of West Texas or the Panhandle. Tahoka daisies bloom from late spring to summer.

**TURK’S CAP** (Malvaviscus arboreus) is a shade-loving shrub found in the east half of the state. It is sometimes called the Mexican sombrero. It is often found in cedar brakes, oak woods and canyons. Yucca is so named for its resemblance to the traditional Mexican sombrero. It is sometimes called the Mexican sombrero.

**CENizo** (Lobelia cardinalis) is so named for its resemblance to the traditional Scottish thistle. It blooms from May to July and later with favorable weather.

**SAND verbENA** (Abronia villosa) 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.

**DOGWOOD** (Cornus viscosa) blooms hand spring through much of East Texas. The small, puffy trees grow beneath flowering pines and hardwoods.

**TEXAS THISTLE** (Cirsium texanum) is a common flower on sandy soils throughout much 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.

**DORSET SAGE** (Salvia roemeriana) inhabits rocky, moist to dry areas of Central Texas. It is often found in cedar brakes, oak woods and canyons. Yucca is so named for its resemblance to the traditional Mexican sombrero. It is sometimes called the Mexican sombrero.

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“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
WILDFLOWER DRIVES

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 DE WITT COUNTY
Southeast of San Antonio lies a 132-mile loop that takes in Cuero and De Witt County, the Wildflower Capital of Texas, along with Goliad, Helena, Gillett, Nixon and a side trip from Westoff 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 (www.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.

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 larkspur, 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 (www.visitennis.org/bluebonnet.htm).

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.

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.
HEN 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 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 (www.burnetchamber.org). For more area information, go to www.visitfredericksburgtx.com and marblefalls.org.

Hill Country Drives

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.

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Picking the Bluebonnet

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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 cremnus is found in the Trans-Pecos region.
- Lupinus platensis grows in the Texas Panhandle.
- Lupinus perennis grows in eastern Texas.

WILDFLOWER ROUTES are based on Melissa Goddard’s wildflower drive articles for Texas Highways magazine. For additional and more detailed drives, visit www.texashighways.com and search Wildflower Drives.
WILDFLOWER
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 (www.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 flowers 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 F.M. 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 Texas 6 to get to the adjoining portion of Texas 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, Leaky 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 visituvaldecounty.com or www.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 (www.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 F.M. 3395 (not pictured), for an alternate drive just north of the recreation area between R.M. 1319 and F.M. 1913.

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

PDF (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.
WILDFLOWER Drives

BIG BEND COUNTRY: This route makes a 300-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—bхаt 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 F.M. 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. U.S. 385 from Marathon provides a scenic 40-mile drive to or from the national park. For more area information, go to www.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 agartera. Flowers may fill the park in years of abundant rainfall. When near Fort Davis (www.fortdavis.com) travelers can turn southeast onto Texas 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 (F.M. 1462 to Texas 36, to F.M. 2004 to Texas 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 oxeye daisy, tropical sage, coreopsis, yellow thistle and spider lily. At the San Bernard National Wildlife refuge, keep an eye out for sea oxeye 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.

SHOP TEXAS HIGHWAYS! The Gift Shop at texashighways.com is your one-stop shop for the perfect Lone Star-themed clothing, books, accessories and more. Look for the True Texas line, which highlights the exceptional creativity and quality of Texas-based artisans.
EAST TEXAS

The beautiful wildflowers and flowers found in East Texas have their own appeal. This Palcline, Rusk, Alto, Nacogdoches and Crockett route offers the benefit of seeing dogwood and redbud trees along with winecups and other wildflowers. In Palcline, 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 through 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 Festival the last two weekends of March and first weekend in April.) Further north, the Henderson Department of Tourism offers three driving routes to explore Rusk County’s history and scenic beauty, highlighting crimson clover, Indian paintbrush, coreopsis and evening primrose.

NORTHEAST TEXAS

The communities of Linden, Arvinger and Hughes Springs host the Wildflower Trails of Texas (www.lindewnildflowertrails.net), celebrating yellow-fringed orchids, lobelia, 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.
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 (www.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 Trail 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 http://texaswinetrail.com/trails. 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 www.bluebonnettrails.org.

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 (http://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 www.tylercountydogwoodfestival.org.

FOR MORE TEXAS EVENTS, go to www.texashighways.com/events. To order a printed copy of the quarterly Texas Highways Events Calendar, go to www.texashighways.com/freepubs. It’s free!
WILDFLOWERS

Events

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

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

CHAPPELL HILL: Official Bluebonnet Festival of Texas, April. www.chappellhillmuseum.org

CUERO: Wildflower Bike Ride, April. www.wheelbrothers.com

CUERO: Wildflower Tour, March–May. www.cuero.org


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


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

FREDERICKSBURG: Texas Hill Country Wine and Wildflower Trail, April. www.texaswinetrail.com

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

GEORGETOWN: Red Poppy Festival, April. www.RedPoppyFestival.com

HENDERSON: Rusk County Wildflower Trails, April. http://russcountyazaleas.com

KEMP: Wildflower Festival, April. www.cedarcreeklake.com

LINDEN, AVINGER and HUGHES SPRINGS: Wildflower Trails of Texas Festival, April. www.lindenwildflowertrails.net


PALESTINE: Dogwood Trails Celebration, March–April. www.visitpalestine.com

SAN ANTONIO: Fiesta Wildflower Ride, April. www.festawildflower.com

TYLER: Azalea and Spring Flower Trail, March–April. www.visittyler.com

WOODVILLE: Tyler County Dogwood Festival, March–April. www.tylercountydogwoodfestival.org

OTHER FLOWERS CELEBRATED:

DALLAS: Dallas Blooms, February–April. www.dallasarboretum.org

HOUSTON: Azalea Trail, March. www.riverOaksgardenclub.org

NACOGDOCHES: Azaleas Trail, March–April. www.nacogdochesazaleas.com

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

Bee, 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.

The Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center, a research unit of the University of Texas at Austin, demonstrates the beauty and importance of native plants. Founded in 1982, this botanic garden is dedicated to conserving native plants, especially endangered species, conducting research and educating people about the importance of native landscapes. It displays 650 native Texas plant species in gardens, meadows and nature trails. Explore the visitor gallery, café and gift store, and obtain information about how to plant and grow wildflowers. They also have an online native plant guide to help with identifying wildflowers.

✽ 4801 La Crosse in Austin. 512/232-0100 www.wildflowers.org

The Armand Bayou Nature Center, founded in 1974, preserves 2,500 acres of wetlands prairie, forest and marsh habitats in Pasadena. Activities at the center include a once-a-month prairie wildflower tour and hayride to explore the transforming prairie landscape.

✽ 8500 Bay Area Blvd. in Pasadena. 866/417-5818 • www.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 has tours, shows exhibits and hosts events.

✽ 1700 University Drive in Fort Worth. 817/332-4441 • www.brit.org

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

WILDFLOWER CENTER AFFILIATES AND PARTNERS

WILDFLOWER CENTER
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).

**22306 Aaldine Westfield Road in Humble. 713/274-4160 www.hcpx.net/community/parks/mercer**

The Pinxwwoods 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 the region and the Southwest. 2900 Bagot St. In Nacogdoches. 936/488-1832 • npgc.fasu.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. 432/644-6087 • www.sibleynaturecenter.org

The Texas Discovery Gardens has more than 200 species of wildflowers, and varieties 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 Robert Lake SP. Visit TPWD’s website, www.tpwd.texas.gov, or like it on Facebook to see updates.

The state’s national parks also offer a variety of wildflower viewing experiences. Look for scentless and yucca blooming in the spring and cactus 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 72 species. Big Thicket National Preserve manages 112,000 acres with the potential to find hundreds of wildflowers. Find more information on each park at www.nps.gov. For more information about cities and attractions in Texas, visit TravelTexas.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 Robert Lake SP. Visit TPWD’s website, www.tpwd.texas.gov, or like it on Facebook to see updates.

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**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 www.wildseedfarms.com

**MORE SITES TO VISIT:**

- **AAARLLO**: Wildsact Bluff Nature Center www.wildsactbllf.org
- **ARANAS PASS**: New Braunfels Hummingbird Garden www.arranaspass.org
- **ARLINGTON**: River Legacy Living Science Center www.riverlegacy.org
- **ATHE**: East Texas Arboretum & Botanical Society www.easttexasarboretum.org
- **ALSTTH**: Nature and Science Center www.ci.austin.tx.us/alsttc
- **BAY CITY**: Matagorda County Birding Nature Center www.mcbnc.org
- **BAYTOWN**: Nature Center www.baytownnaturecenter.org
- **BEAUMONT**: Tyrrell Park, Beaumont Botanical Gardens http://beaumontbotanicalgardens.org
- **BOERI**: Cibolo Nature Center www.cibolo.org
- **CORPUS CHRISTI**: South Texas Botanical Gardens and Nature Center www.stbot.org
- **DRIPPING SPRINGS**: West Cave Preserve www.westcave.org
- **EL PASO**: Chihuahuan Desert Gardens www.museum.utep.edu
- **FORT WORTH**: Nature Center and Refuge www.fwsfortworthcenter.org
- **HOUSTON**: Arborietum and Nature Center www.houstonbometum.org
- **HUMBLE**: Mercer Arboretum and Botanical Gardens www.sjpka.txs.net/mercer
- **KERRVILLE**: Riverside Nature Center www.riversidenuaturalcenter.org
- **KINGSVILLE**: Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Research Institute http://ckwri.tamuk.edu
- **LAJTAD**: Barton Warnock Visitor Center http://txparks.state.tx.us/bartonwarnock
- **MCKINNEY**: Heard Natural Science Museum and Wildlife Sanctuary www.heardmuseum.org
- **NEW BRAUNFELS**: Lyndon B. Johnson National Historical Park www.nps.gov

**SITES TO VISIT:**

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