

What is Blooming Now?

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We have experienced temperatures in the low 20s this winter which has affected plant blooming patterns.

If you are in a neighborhood with deer you probably have primrose jasmine planted. The evergreen plants will grow to 8ft. tall and 10 ft. around with weeping branches. This time of the year they are usually covered with waxy yellow blooms that are the size of quarters. The freezes caused some foliage damage and reduced the bloom volume but the tough plant is quickly growing through it. Primrose jasmine grows in sun or shade.

Another shade tolerant deer-proof plant that is blooming now is Sandankwa viburnum. Sandankwa grows to about 6 feet tall and 6 feet in diameter. The key to Sandankwa's landscape appeal is its shiny evergreen foliage, not the off-white blooms but the blooms are visible now and will be followed by berries that will quickly be eaten by the birds.

This seems to be the time of the year for plants that aren't eaten by the deer to bloom. Paperwhites are in that category. The fragrant white flowers are borne on top of lush clumps of foliage that really perk up the shrub borders where they are planted. Notice that I did not say pleasantly fragrant! Some gardeners are very anxious to get them out of the house

because of their strong smell! Related to daffodils, many of the paperwhites growing in San Antonio landscapes originated as forced bulb bouquets given as holiday gifts. After the flowers faded in the house, the bulbs were just planted in a corner of the yard.

Cemetery iris is another deer-proof plant that is blooming. They have white blooms on stalks that rise above the sword-like foliage. The blooms are attractive but the foliage serves as an excellent groundcover year-round. Obtain a brace of cemetery iris from a neighbor thinning out their bed. Plant the rhizomes 18 inches apart in full sun with the rhizome level with the soil surface. They are very drought tolerant. About the only thing that kills them is soggy soil. To reduce the chance of lingering moisture, do not mulch the planting.

One group of plants that benefited by the cold weather are your----- fruit trees. In fact if you have low-chill peach varieties such as Florida King or Springold peaches they are blooming now. They received enough cold weather so far this winter to reload their chemistry and stimulate the bloom. If we don't experience any late freezes the blooming peaches should be producing fruit by late April.

Higher chill varieties such as Junegold and La Feliciana will begin their bloom later if we get some additional weather in

the 32 to 45 degree range. The selection of fruit trees is good at area nurseries now if you want to consider planting peaches, plums, pears, or apples. Visit plantanswers.com for recommended varieties and planting specifications. Fruit trees require full sun to prosper and the deer will eat them.

In the winter flower garden what is blooming depends a lot on the micro-environment of the garden. In some situations even pansies lost their bloom to the freezing temps. In more sheltered gardens pansies and even stocks and dianthus are still blooming. Some gardeners report that they covered their cyclamen with agricultural fabric and they emerged with most of their blooms intact.