

Festival of Flowers Event

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The twentieth annual Festival of Flowers Event takes place today (May 27) at the San Antonio Shrine Auditorium on Loop 1604 near Stone Oak Parkway (901 N Loop 1604). The overall theme is Rain Gardens. A Rain Garden is a basin 6 to 9 inches deep placed and planted to intercept runoff from your roof and hardscape. The structure conserves water and reduces pollutants that would reach our streams and groundwater. The Bexar County Master Gardeners have put together models of the gardens at the Festival of Flowers so you can see how easy and attractive it is to use the tactic on your own landscape.

In addition to Rain Gardens, the Festival of Flowers will include the usual features that have made the event so popular. SAWS will provide a free xeriscape plant to adult attendees as long as the supply lasts (1000 plants). The plants this year are *Salvia greggii*, Turk's cap, inland sea oats, rosemary and muhly grass.

The Plant Exchange is very popular. Over 1200 plants exchange hands in the 6 hours (9am-3 pm) of the activity. If you have never participated in the Exchange visit www.SAFestivalofFlowers.com for the easy to follow rules. The basic idea is that you bring in established containers of excess plants from your garden to get credit towards taking possession of the excess plants that other gardeners have brought in. As you might expect there are some plants that are not accepted because of over-supply. Prickly pear and aloe vera are in that category.

There are many retail and non-profit vendors at Festival of Flowers. They offer plants and gardening accessories for sale, and provide gardening information. What you will not find at the Event are home furnishing exhibits. The Festival of Flowers is a gardening exclusive event—no combination windows, hot tubs or kitchen knives.

Among the exhibitors will be the Gardening Volunteers of South Texas. Their inventory of plants for sale will include "Alamo Fire" crape myrtle, "Xena" (pink) brugmansia, "Golden Girl" *Salvia greggii*, lemon fig, "Butterscotch" esperanza and other unique plants from their test plots. It is expected that milkweeds for the Monarch butterflies will also be available from some of the vendors.

Consistent with the Festival theme of Rain Gardens, the slate of speakers at the Festival leads off with Lee Marlowe at 9:30 am. Ms. Marlow is the Rain Gardens expert at the San Antonio River Authority. SARA has a number of informative handouts on the topic. She will be followed by Nancy Masterson of the Guadalupe County Native Plant Society speaking on "Native Plants for Landscape Themes". Next, author Judy Barrett will speak on the topic "Yes, You Can Grow Roses". The last speaker, Jenny Peterson, is also an author. She will make a presentation on "The Garden that Heals, Using Your Garden as a Resource for Life's Common Challenges". Both Judy Barrett and Jenny Peterson will be available at the "Ask the Experts" booth to answer questions and sign their books after their presentations.

Again this year the San Antonio Daylily Society will conduct its annual show at Festival of Flowers. The blooms are spectacular and daylilies are easy to grow in San Antonio. The volunteers at the show will have all the information and the plants that you need to add this underused plant to your landscape. If herbs are your gardening thing, there will be several herb vendors selling their plants and a "Cooking with Herbs" demonstration will be offered.

After lunch Bob Webster will facilitate the Organic Gardening Roundtable. You are also invited to chat with Dr. Jerry Parsons and me between noon and 2 pm as we broadcast Milberger's Gardening South Texas radio show from the event.

There is a \$6 admission fee for adults. Children are free. Parking is free. Join your fellow gardeners and gardening personalities at the Festival of Flowers at the San Antonio Shrine Auditorium at 901N Loop 1604 between 9am and 5 pm today, May 27.