

## What is Blooming Now?

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Despite a summer of record high temperatures and erratic rainfall, there are lots of blooming plants making a show in San Antonio area landscapes

Cenizo, also called Texas Sage has been one of the showiest blooming plants this summer. It also stimulates discussion because it is believed to predict pending rainfall. Cenizo is a renowned native plant. West of the City it is renowned as a hard to control weed that infests acres of pasture land and does not provide food for grazing or browsing animals. In San Antonio landscapes it is a drought tolerant, silver leafed plant that is covered with lavender blooms several times every summer. It also works as a hedge in full sun that blooms even if it is pruned. Deer do not eat cenizo.

There are several Cenizo selections to choose from based on plant size, leaf color, and bloom color.

One of my favorites is Lowery's Legacy. The selection was identified by horticulturist Lynn Lowery. It makes a compact 5ft. plant with gray leaves and blue/lavender flowers are very attractive when it is in or out of bloom. Lowery's Legacy is featured at the native plant garden at the Mitchell Lake Audubon Center. Other selections include 'Compacta', 'Green Cloud' (greener foliage), 'White Cloud' (white flowers), 'Silverado' (silver foliage) and 'Convent' (purple flowers).

The 'New Gold' lantana, and native or naturalized lantana with its yellow and orange or pink and crème flowers are also in bloom all over the area. The 'New Gold' is an aggressive spreading lantana that will grow to cover an area six feet in diameter. The native lantana is an upright plant that grows to about 5 feet tall and around if it froze back in the past winter. Both versions of lantana grow and bloom aggressively in full sun without supplemental irrigation. As the summer progresses they become a favorite source of nectar for butterflies and hummingbirds. They can be purchased in full bloom and transplanted into your landscape without any reduction of bloom. Deer do not eat lantana.

Poinciana (Bride of Barbados) is also an excellent butterfly plant, but it is mostly appreciated for its spectacular orange and yellow clusters of bloom that are produce above its airy, light green foliage. The blooms seem to glow with color. Poinciana freezes back each winter and is relatively slow to start growth in the spring but once the warm weather settles in they will grow to at least 5 feet tall and start blooming. In most neighborhoods, deer do not eat poinciana.

Dwarf ruellia is also called dwarf Mexican petunia. It is a groundcover that will grow in sun or shade. There is a choice between purple, pink and white blooms. The plants are aggressive enough growers to fill in the planting area if they are planted 18 inches apart, but they will not take over your whole landscape. They are not a favorite deer food, but the hungry mammals will eat dwarf ruellia during a drought. Hummingbirds and butterflies use dwarf ruellia as a nectar source.

Other plants that are blooming now include Fanick's phlox, zinnias, esperanza, thryallis, four o'clock, vinca, porter weed, milkweed, moss rose, semperfloren begonias, 'Laura Bush' petunias, mistflower, and cosmos.

