



*L to r, maypop or passionvine (*Passiflora incarnata*), plains coreopsis (*Coreopsis tinctora*), white prickly poppy (*Argemone albiflora*), zexmenia (*Wedelia hispida*), standing cypress (*Ipomopsis rubra*) and Indian blanket (*Gaillardia pulchella*)*

DOCUMENT WHATEVER IS BLOOMING NOW!

by Don Dubois

Native Plant Society of Texas/Sam Houston Chapter

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I liked your suggestion, Brenda, to occasionally document whatever is blooming now. Like you, I don't water in my backyard. But even though I grow mostly natives pretty well adapted to our weather, even these are fading out as the hot, dry season takes over.

I did find about 20 varieties (pictured above & below) hanging on and occasionally thriving in this latest hot and dry stretch in an area that receives no supplemental water. This spring was very favorable with timely rains so things looked great a couple weeks ago before the current hot dry spell began. The garden usually has peak

blooms about the 3rd week of May and then takes a hit during the June-August period before coming back to life in October.

I do water in areas close to the house and front yard, but these photos are all in the backyard beyond the reach of any watering. These plants likewise don't get any fertilizer but the soil has been improved with organic materials and is mulched to help retain moisture.



L to r, baptisia, black-eyed Susans (Rudbeckia hirta), butterfly milkweed (Asclepias tuberosa), compact prairie clover (Dalea compacta) and Gregg's mistflower (Conoclinium greggii)

Most of the plants are several years old and are well established but obviously some are annuals (partridge pea, Indian blanket, standing cypress, prickly poppy, coreopsis, etc.) and some are short lived perennials – all of which re-seed and tend to move around on their own. I can't say they are neglected but they are definitely not "coddled".

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L to r, Gulf vervain (Verbena xutha), Lindheimer's beebalm (Monarda lindheimeri), violet wild petunia (Ruellia nudiflora), obedient plant (Physostegia), partridgepea (Chamaecrista fasciculata), and rattlesnake master (Eryngium yuccifolium)

Maintenance generally involves mulching, thinning and maintaining a border so that Bermuda grass doesn't get into the planting areas. Like you, I use pine straw that I rake up from my yard as much as possible. I have gotten a lot from my neighbors who consider it a nuisance instead of a resource, although at least one neighbor has since decided it was a good use and has now adopted this practice!

I usually need additional mulch and use composted hardwood mulch I get from a nearby mulch yard. I get their oldest, most decomposed mulch. I avoid the mulch that comes in bags. It is often not well composted (poor as a mulch).

I'll need to chop back the monarda and Mexican hat soon.

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***L to r, Mexican hat (Ratibida columnifera) and three coneflowers:
giant coneflower (Rudbeckia maxima), purple coneflower
(Echinacea purpurea) and Texas coneflower (Rudbeckia texana)***

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NOTE: On selected days in fall, Don opens his Magnolia-area gardens for public viewing and butterfly tagging, teaching children and adults alike to catch, tag and release these jewels of nature. Details: donandchrisdubois@att.net

Details: themercersociety.org or facebook.com/MercerBotanicGardens/