

## Little-known facts behind our everyday botanical landscape ...

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### TEXAS MOUNTAIN LAUREL

(*Sophora secundiflora*)

This hardy evergreen shrub with wisteria-like flowers redolent of grape Kool-Aid produces brilliant red “mescal beans” used by pre-historic inhabitants of Texas as a deliriant and intoxicant as far back as 8400 BCE.



The bright seeds were bartered as decorative beads as far as Montana—making the beans one of the most extensively traded export items from our state.

**RATTLESNAKE MASTER**  
*(Eryngium yuccifolium)*

Even experienced naturalists mistake this plant's leaves for a yucca, or it's bloom for a thistle, but this perennial is actually a member of the carrot family. Native tribes throughout the Plains and Eastern U.S. employed decoctions of its tuberous root for all sorts of ailments, but especially, as the common name suggests, for snakebite. Ancient footwear also documents its use for fiber. An indicator species for (the vanishing) tall-grass prairie, this plant has striking features and should be grown in gardens more frequently.



**YAUPON HOLLY**  
*(Ilex vomitoria)*

Don't be fooled by the Latin name. This evergreen holly that grows throughout the Southeastern U.S. is one of only about 10 plants in the world –and the only one in the United States – that contains useable amounts of caffeine.





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Yaupon tea, extensively enjoyed by Native Americans and colonists throughout the South, almost vanished as a commodity, but it is currently enjoying a revival in multiple drinks and other products.

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** Matt Warnock Turner contact: [drmattturner.com](http://drmattturner.com)  
For the "rest of the story..."