What is Blooming?

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In addition to the lushness of the greenery, there are lots of plants blooming.

Texas Mountain Laurel is a favorite plant of gardeners and landscapers in the San Antonio area. It only blooms for a few weeks every spring but the purple blooms are showy and the bloom fragrance is very noticeable. The fragrance reminds me of the old grape bubble gum we used to buy for a penny. I have heard others describe the fragrance as that of grape Kool-Aid. The evergreen native grows slowly but may eventually reach 20 ft. tall. It is very drought tolerant. In fact one of the ways to kill them is to plant it in a situation where the soil remains soggy. Grow Texas Mountain Laurel in full sun in well-drained soil. In addition to the issue of over-watering, the Texas Mountain Laurel attracts a small caterpillar that will eat new foliage in the spring. The damage is not a major problem but for new plantings, Bt will control it. Follow label instructions. Texas Mountain Laurel is featured at many retail nurseries.

Cemetery iris are blooming now. The most exclusive definition limits the name Cemetery Iris to the long-lived white flowered iris but I have a tendency to include the blue iris (Blue Flags) that are often found with the white iris on old home sites or at cemeteries. Because of their long life Cemetery Iris often end up growing in the shade when surrounding trees grow larger. They do best, however, planted in full sun. Plant Cemetery Iris so that the top of the rhizome is even with the soil surface. They are not fussy about soil except that they won’t survive in soggy situations. Iris are one of the few plant species that don’t respond well to mulch. Like Texas Mountain Laurel, Cemetery Iris are drought tolerant and are not eaten by deer. Cemetery Iris is not usually sold in nurseries. Find a gardener that will give you some rhizomes when she/he thins out her bed.

There are a number of Dayflower species, the most prominent species that is blooming now is Asiatic Dayflower, Commelina communis. It is described as an invasive exotic weed or a naturalized wildflower depending on your outlook. Recognize Dayflower by its small two-petaled blue blooms covering the lush 2-3 ft. high foliage. If you attempt to control Dayflower with a string-mower you soon become splattered with the moist foliage. Round-up does not seem to faze it but Dayflower can be prevented with a pre-emergent herbicide. The best strategy may be to enjoy the blooms along with the butterflies. They will last until warm weather arrives.

Most of the Salvias are hot weather plants that will have blue blooms later in the year, but right now the Salvia greggii is blooming. The most noticeable colors are red and pink but salmon and white are also available. Salvia greggii is a woody ornamental that can grow to 6 feet tall. It seems to be more attractive if it is pruned back every 2-3 years to form a 2-3 ft. plant. Salvia greggii is a favorite butterfly and hummingbird plant that is not eaten by the deer. It is drought tolerant with some shade tolerance. In addition to this spring bloom period, Salvia greggii has a long autumn bloom period. It is often called autumn sage.

If you live in a neighborhood blessed with deer, the yellow waxy blooms of the Primrose Jasmine are probably evident. The plant is evergreen with a weeping shape that can grow to 8 feet tall and 12 feet around. Because it is deer-proof, Primrose Jasmine is used extensively for a tall groundcover and hedge in neighborhoods with deer. The leaves have 3 leaflets and are dark green. In a drought it will sometimes drop its leaves but the plants always seem to recover. Plant Primrose jasmine in shade or full sun. It blooms more in the sun.