

What is Blooming Now?

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Star jasmne, butterfly rose, pomegranate, vinca and zinnias are blooming now.

If you have star jasmine (also called confederate jasmine) growing in the landscape, you are enjoying the small white blooms (1 inch in diameter) and the fragrance. Star jasmine is generally used as a decorative vine in San Antonio, but it can also be used as a groundcover or as a shrub. As a leaning evergreen vine with support from a fence or trellis it can grow to 20 feet tall in full sun or partial shade. Prune the growth tips to train star jasmine as a shrub. Plant it on 3-foot centers and trim back the upright shoots to train it to be a groundcover. Star jasmine is attractive to bees as a nectar source and is not eaten by the deer in most situations. It is drought tolerant.

Butterfly rose (*mutabilis*) is an old-fashioned rose that is blooming now. That it is blooming is not unusual, because it is often in bloom 8 or 9 months of the year. Grow *mutabilis* in full sun and give it plenty of space. It will want to grow to 10 feet tall and 12 feet in diameter. The blooms are single petaled and 2.5 inches across. The flowers start out yellow, change to pink, and finally turn crimson. Butterfly rose is one of the tough modern and old-fashioned roses that qualifies as a xeriscape plant. It will survive and bloom without supplemental irrigation.

Pomegranates are known for their nutritious fruit that ripens later in the fall, but right now they are noticeable for their orange blooms. Depending on the plant, the blooms may be showy through both April and May. Some of the ornamental selections of pomegranate are small, 3-foot plants, but many fruit producing and naturalized plants are dense shrubs 14 feet tall. In most neighborhoods the deer do not eat pomegranate foliage, blooms, or stems.

A few years ago, gardeners had to wait until late June to plant vinca. The problem was that the plant was susceptible to aerial phytophthora, a fungal dieback disease. It destroyed the plants if there was moisture in the flower bed or even cool moist air in the evening. Now, plant breeders have introduced a variety "Cora" that is resistant to aerial phytophthora. Vinca can be planted and is in bloom right now. Transplants from the nursery will stay in bloom until cold weather arrives sometime after Thanksgiving. The flower colors to choose from are red, pink, lavender and white. Plant vinca in full sun. Butterflies use vinca as a nectar source but their main claim to fame are their drought tolerance and the fact that they are deer resistant.

Another hot weather annual that is in bloom now is zinnia. It is not as drought tolerant as vinca, but zinnias have a long list of other attributes. The plants blooming now are transplants from area nurseries

that include the hybrid selection 'Dreamland' It produces a dense, rounded 4inch bloom in red, pink, yellow, lavender, white, and orange. They are attractive in the flower bed and make good cut flowers. Zinnias are also a favorite nectar source for butterflies, bees, and hummingbirds. If you want a taller flower than "Dreamland" produces, consider growing "Cactus" or "California Giant" zinnias from seed. Let your zinnias go to seed and they will provide replacement plants for the bed and also provide feed for cardinals, lesser goldfinches and other seed-eating birds. For a more drought tolerant zinnia the Profusion Series is also available at area nurseries.