



October 2020 Newsletter

Welcome to the Friends of San Antonio Natural Areas (FOSANA) e-newsletter! We share natural areas news, the Friends' efforts, and opportunities to get involved in volunteering or educational programs at San Antonio's natural areas parks. Please check our website, www.fosana.org, for periodic updates and program information.

Fall's Bouquet of Sustenance and Beauty

Jayne Neal and Jyotsna Sharma

We readily identify spring as a time of flowering. But fall has its own set of blooming plants which are not only beautiful, but provide sustenance for birds, bees, and butterflies. Moreover, some of the plants now in bloom are also butterfly larval food sources. Look high and low and you will be surprised at the variety of fall flowering plants.

At ground level, you may see carpets of [straggler daisy \(*Calyptocarpus vialis*\)](#) with its tiny yellow blooms. It particularly [attracts sulphurs and skippers](#). Look a little higher and you may see a splash of the purple flowering oxalis (*Oxalis drummondii*). An interesting feature of this little plant are the 3 heart-shaped leaflets that also have a thin line of purple.



Flowering oxalis (*Oxalis drummondii*)



Other purple blooming flowers: wild petunia (*Ruellia nudiflora*) and gayfeather (*Liatris mucronata*)

And during this season, be sure and take time to notice all the grasses in bloom. Among those you may see in the parks' open areas are the official state grass of TX, sideoats grama (*Bouteloua curtipendula*), hooded windmill grass (*Chloris cucullata*), little bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*), big bluestem (*Andropogon gerardii*), green sprangletop (*Leptochloa dubia*), and Texas cupgrass (*Ericloa sericea*). The seeds of many of these grasses provide food for birds - those that migrate as well as our year-round residents.



Texas tridens (*Tridens texanus*)



Green sprangletop (*Leptochloa dubia*)



Little bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*)



Bristle grass (*Setaria* sp.)

Move a layer up and you will see Lindheimer's senna (*Senna lindheimeriana*). This yellow flowering plant not only provides nectar to butterflies and bees, but the seeds are an important food for birds. Sennas are also [larval food sources](#) for the sleepy orange, tailed orange, and little yellow sulphur butterflies (Jim Brock and Kenn Kaufman, Field Guide to Butterflies). Frostweed (*Verbesina virginica*) is also in this mid-layer level, adding its white flowers to the mix of color. Pipevine butterflies, monarchs, and great purple hairstreaks are among the [butterflies that nectar on frostweed](#). One of the showier plants in this mid-level is snow on the mountain (*Euphorbia marginata*). While its flowers are tiny and white, the leaves are what really catch your attention with their striking streaks of green and white.

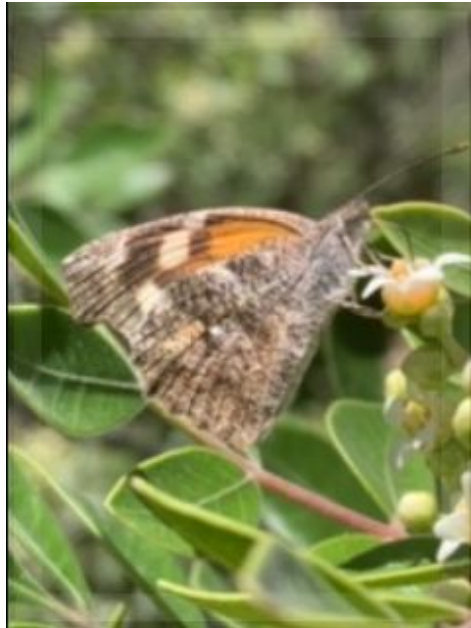
As you look a bit higher you will see evergreen sumac (*Rhus virens*) with its creamy white flowers. Evergreen sumac is very fragrant, and butterflies flock to it. Watch later for the appearance of the fuzzy red berries which provide food for birds. Also look for the white flowered spikes of Texas kidneywood (*Eysenhardia texana*). Kidneywood flowers are a nectar source for adult butterflies, and kidneywood is also a [larval food for the dogface butterfly](#).

While fall's flowers are beautiful, these plants also provide sustenance and protection to migrating hummingbirds and monarch butterflies. For example, studies have shown that the migration of hummingbirds is [likely correlated with the blooming](#) of plant species. The sweet nectar provided by the flowers is a source of sugar and additional nutrients such as [vitamins, oils, and amino acids](#).

Monarch butterflies are among the most noticeable migrants in south Texas. These amazing creatures have a migration that goes from Canada to Mexico, and there is concern about monarchs' declining numbers. While much emphasis has been placed on planting milkweed, and this is important during their reproductive stages, [Recent research](#) from Cornell University shows that the different life cycle stages of the monarch have different food needs. Some research also shows that in the fall as they migrate south, more attention needs to be paid to the fall flowering plants that provide fuel and sustenance. Look for monarchs on evergreen sumac, frostweed, and different species of eupatorium including crucita (*Chromolaena odorata*). A detailed list of plants in the southwest that provide nectar for monarchs is available from the [Xerxes Society](#).

The Snouts Are Back!

In this case, the snouts refer to butterflies. Every year around this time, the American snout butterfly (*Libytheana carinenta*) appears. Its common name derives from its long snout-like palpi at the front of the head. Some years, there are huge clouds of snouts (sometimes darkening the sky), other years the numbers are much smaller. [Studies](#) show that the number of snouts seems to be correlated with cycles of rain and drought, and that the butterflies are not really migrating but moving between patches of suitable habitat. Look for them now on flowers, but you may also see them fluttering close to the ground.



Snout nosed butterfly on flower

So you see, Fall provides a beautiful bouquet rich and varied for birds, bees, butterflies, and all of us if we just take time to look.

Education

Last weekend was [National Public Land's Day](#), and instead of volunteering, we celebrated with a grab and go seed ball activity for kids at Friedrich and Hardberger. If you missed the activity, you can still download the wildflower identification sheet [here](#). This was intended to be used with the Ladybird Johnson wildflower seed packets. With lots of seed mixes out there, it's important to ensure the seeds you choose are native to our area. So, why seed balls? If you haven't enjoyed the messy fun of seed balls with kids, I highly recommend trying this at home. Check out NASA's site for a lesson plan [here](#) and Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center for a video tutorial [here](#). There's certainly no one-way to create seed balls but obtaining the right seed mixture for your area is especially important. Secondly, the clay mixture is one ingredient that holds the moisture and protects the seeds from drying out or getting eaten by animals. The soil contains the nutrients needed for the seed to grow. When it rains, the seeds begin to sprout inside the ball.



Seed Balls with native seeds ready for planting

For those who may not know, National Public Land's Day was created by the National Environmental Education Foundation in 1994 to encourage volunteerism on public lands, helping to restore America's public lands and trails. While volunteer and education programs are still on hold, we continue to create meaningful content to encourage families to connect with nature. Be sure to continue checking FOSANA's web site under "Education Resources". Each week we'll be adding more content, including lessons and videos.

Nicole McLeod (Nicole.McLeod@sanantonio.gov)

The Big Give

A big THANK YOU to everyone who donated to FoSANA during the Big Give campaign. Your support is needed now more than ever as the community increasingly leans on the Natural Areas for a source of relief during this quarantining period. Your generous donations also help further our mission of promoting San Antonio's natural areas by creating additional educational content that's now available on our website under the "Education Resources" tab. We have a lot of projects in the pipeline, so please keep checking back for new material. Thank you for making these projects possible. We couldn't do it without you!

- FoSANA Board Members

Covid-19 in Parks

When the city imposed a strict lockdown in early March to stay at home unless working in essential services, normal social interactions came to a halt with the closing of gyms, coffee shops, bars and restaurants. We were encouraged to stay home and walk in our neighborhoods. For most people who are accustomed to going to work, the [lockdown has been stressful](#), but to cope with the lockdown it helps to be resilient, broadly defined as the ability to recover from or adjust easily from adversity. Though there are certain [traits of resilient people](#), a good way to build resilience is by [walks in nature](#) - but stay with a small group, wear a mask, and maintain a social distance from others.

Although park trails remain open, we should continue to practice social distancing and avoid groups. Walking in parks also reminds us of the resilience of ecosystems to extreme temperatures we experience in South Texas. With the exception of a few sprinkles, the past few weeks have seen little rain in Bexar County, yet the parks are blooming with several native plants that can tolerate the heat and drought. The wildflower gardens and the open grassy areas always have some flowers blooming.

IF you feel you MUST hike on trails, keep group size very small, and ALWAYS stay on the designated trails. Failure to do so endangers yourself, others, and the ecosystem.

If you're unable to do that, enjoying nature right where you live is recommended. Discover nature in your neighborhood and you may notice that with less traffic noise you can hear the sound of birds. Take time to identify the trees in your neighborhood using this [TAMU identification guide](#).

If you see people failing to maintain 6' distance or vandalizing parks properties, please call 311 and/or the police non emergency line at 210-207-SAPD.



We hope that you will follow the recommendations of the National Recreation and Parks Association that emphasize the importance of social distancing in Park trails.

Please pick up your own trash and deposit it in trash bins at park entrance.



Thank you for helping us protect the Natural Areas and the health of our San Antonio community.

Are you connected to San Antonio Natural Areas on social media?

You can like us on [Facebook](#).

Find us on [Instagram](#) @sanaturalareas.

Are you a member of Friends of San Antonio Natural Areas (FoSANA)?

Please support FoSANA on the preservation and educational outreach of natural areas around San Antonio by joining or renewing your membership [online](#) today.

Your membership this year will help us continue to

- offer over 400 environmental programs for families and adults at the Natural Areas.
- serve over 14,000 families and adults through education and outreach programs.
- coordinate over 400 volunteer programs and 7,500 volunteer hours supported trail maintenance, habitat conservation and restoration, and native landscapes and gardens.

Plus, when you renew your membership, you'll receive our monthly newsletter that provides updates on natural areas happenings and timely information on upcoming events. Should you need any assistance or have any questions or comments about your membership, please feel free to email us at friendsofsanaturalareas@gmail.com.

Sincerely,
FoSANA Board

Friends of San Antonio Natural Areas is dedicated to promoting stewardship of San Antonio's Natural Areas, and to the understanding and appreciation of nature through educational and scientific programs.

For the latest updates and more activities, please see the calendar on the FOSANA website.

[Friends of San Antonio Natural Areas Website](#)
