

## Some of the Most Common Wildflowers of the Hill Country

If you ask folks to name the most common wildflowers of the Hill Country, many people will name the most famous, showy wildflowers, especially spring blooming ones such as bluebonnet, Indian blanket, Indian paintbrush, Engelmann's daisy, Plains coreopsis and maybe a few others.

But if instead the question is to name the wildflowers that are found on the most properties, a completely different list will likely be produced. The flowers on this list are not necessarily the most showy and most are not found covering huge areas like we often see bluebonnets and Indian blankets in the spring. Some are hardly noticeable at all.

One reason why many of the flowers that would be on the most common list can be found on nearly all properties with native habitat is that they are not generally eaten by white-tailed deer. So they survive even on properties with high deer populations.

In the last 15 years, I have visited several hundred different properties in the Hill Country, and many of the flowers that I have seen most often are listed below. You may not have all of them, but if you have any natural area, you probably have some of them.

Mexican hat or upright prairie coneflower is a multi-stemmed, erect brown and yellow coneflower that can grow up to 3 feet tall. It is common in overgrazed pastures. It can be a biennial or perennial and it blooms from May through August.

Mealy blue sage is a perennial erect multi-stemmed 2 to 3 foot shrub-like forb that puts up multiple spires of violet-blue ½ inch to 1 inch flowers. It blooms from April through July.

Prairie verbena is a perennial, low-growing forb with two-inch clusters of light-purple blooms at the end of multiple stems. It blooms from March to October.

Frostweed is an erect 2 to 5 foot perennial that produces single or only a few stems. Leaves are simple, toothed, oval with pointed tips from 2 to 6 inches long and 2 to 4 inches wide. The stem has prominent "wings". Clusters of dull-white to greenish-white flowers form large flower heads from August to November. It is usually found growing in the shade of trees. On the first hard freeze of the year, the stem will split and exude pure white ribbon-candy-like frozen sap at the base.

Queen's delight forms rounded clumps up to two feet in height and across. This perennial forms inconspicuous spikes of tiny yellow-green flowers from April to September. It is a perennial

Cowpen daisy is an annual that efficiently reseeds itself. It generally grows to 2 to 4 feet tall with 4 inch long triangular toothed gray-green leaves. It puts up 1 ½ inch wide sunflower-like blooms with, usually, 12 petals from April to November.

Rabbit tobacco is a very short (1-4 inches) semi-shrubby perennial with tiny leaves covered with white hairs that give the plant a gray appearance. The tiny flowers are white to pale pink. It blooms from April to June.

Silver-leaf nightshade is a one to three foot perennial forb. The leaves are 1 to 4 inches long, lanceolate and covered with white hairs giving the appearance of being gray or silver. The blooms have five petals, violet to purple, with yellow centers. The fruit is a ½ inch yellow berry.

Snow-on-the-mountain is a single-stem four-foot tall annual with branching in the top half resembling a candelabra. The leaves are green with white margins. Flowers are inconspicuous in clusters at the end of the stems. The sap of this plant can be very irritating to the skin and eyes, so be careful around it.

Here are several more common forbs: bluets, damianita, frogfruit, skeleton plant, 4-nerve daisy, Texas vervain, and zexmenia.

Gardeners should take note that none of these plants listed here are really what we would call deer favorites. In reality, deer eat what is available to them, and if nothing better is available they will eat at least some of nearly everything. But in most areas, you should be able to grow most of these plants without deer being a problem. For more information on all of the above, go to the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center website, [www.wildflower.org/plants/](http://www.wildflower.org/plants/).

Until next time...

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