

BELL COUNTY MASTER GARDENER
Tip of the Week
By Beverly Wickersham
“Getting to Know Our Roadside Wildflowers”
First in a Series

The following wildflowers are among our earliest spring bloomers. Look for them as you drive on city streets or state highways and take pleasure in being able to call them by one of their common names and/or by the species name.

PRAIRIE VERBENA, DAKOTA VERVAIN, SWEET WILLIAM

Verbena bipinnatifida (Verbenaceae) Vervain Family

Prairie Verbena is one of our earliest spring bloomers. This low, trailing, or creeping perennial forms mat-like colonies covering large areas. The lower creeping branches take root wherever a joint touches the ground. The flowers are rich in nectar and attract many species of butterflies.

PINK EVENING PRIMROSE, SHOWY PRIMROSE, BUTTERCUP

Oenothera speciosa (Onagraceae) Primrose or Buttercup Family

One of our showiest and most abundant wildflowers, this sprawling plant grows from 6 to 24 inches tall, has a few erect stems but more often displays long, reclining stems. The flower color varies from white to rose-pink. This perennial plant forms extensive colonies and provides vivid displays. The flowers may open in the morning or evening depending on populations.

ENGELMANN'S DAISY, CUT-LEAFED DAISY

Engelmannia pinnatifida (Asteraceae) Sunflower Family

This plant common to our lawns, fields and roadsides resembles the sunflower, but has the daisy characteristic of closing the flower heads at night and opening them in bright sunlight. A member of the Sunflower Tribe of the Daisy Family, this plant is related to many well-known garden plants: Zinnia, Cosmos, and Dahlia. Allowing the plant to bloom and go to seed in you lawn and garden will assure many more of these showy plants the following spring.

The generic name honors George Engelmann (1809-1884), a German-American botanist based in St. Louis who discovered and described many new plants in the West during the middle and late 1800's.

OLD PLAINSMAN, WOOLLY-WHITE, WILD CAULIFLOWER

Hymenopappus scabicosaeus (Asteraceae) Sunflower Family

This single-stemmed plant grows up to 3 feet tall and forms large colonies in the calcareous clay soils of the Central Texas area. The flowers are fragrant and are excellent for cutting.

