

Why 2024 will likely be a banner year for Texas bluebonnets

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Millions of bluebonnets will soon bloom across Texas, blanketing parks,

pastures and highway shoulders in that most recognizable hue.

This year will likely be an excellent year for bluebonnets and other [wildflowers](#) across the state, according to a forecast from the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center at the University of Texas at Austin.

"On a scale from one to 10, this year looks like it could be an eight, for bluebonnets in particular, if not even better," said Andrea DeLong-Amaya, the center's horticulture director.

Why the optimism? Last summer's drought followed by recent rains have created ideal [bloom](#) conditions.

During a drought, some plants die off, reducing competition in the soil and creating plenty of space for spring blooms, DeLong-Amaya explained. The [drought](#) was followed by adequate and well-spaced rainfall in the fall and winter, which is key to wildflower development.

A spate of warm days this month means the blooms, which typically peak in April, will likely start appearing soon. In fact, bluebonnets have already begun blooming in Austin, said Scott Simons, a spokesman for the wildflower center.

North Texas is typically two weeks behind Austin, so bluebonnets could start showing up in early or mid-March. If March is warm, bluebonnets will quickly pop up. If the month cools down, blooms will slow down.

"Wildflowers are all about the weather," DeLong-Amaya said. "And they are both difficult to predict."

Bluebonnets were named the state flower in 1901, beating out the cotton boll and the cactus. More than a century later, they have become an emblem of the state, and Texans flock to fields and highway shoulders to

snap pictures with the blooms every spring.

"There aren't that many places you can see oceans and oceans of bluebonnets. It's really captivating," DeLong-Amaya said. "Texans have a lot of patriotism and pride in their state, and bluebonnets are a symbol of that pride."

The flowers grow particularly well near roadways, which are home to gravelly soil with good drainage.

Home gardeners in North Texas who want to grow bluebonnets should consider installing a gravel bed, mixing pea gravel with soil to allow for better drainage and slightly lower nutrient density, according to the wildflower center.

Contrary to popular belief, it's not illegal to pick bluebonnets, although trespassing to pick the flowers certainly is. The flowers also have a short period of time to leave seeds for next year, so it's important not to disrupt their lifecycle.

"You want to be respectful," DeLong-Amaya said. "Picking one flower isn't going to ruin the world. But when you pick a flower, that's one flower someone else, whether it's a person or a bee, can't appreciate."

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