



Hot weather flowers

In my neighborhood recently, all the Texas rangers bloomed at once. It was pretty – and startling – to see them suddenly flower, whether they were pruned into those nasty balls and squares we complain about, or if they were allowed to maintain their natural flowing form. The number and arrangement of flowers were different. Those victims of extreme pruning had a thin shell of blossoms just at branch tips. The ones that had not been pruned into any rigid geometry produced flowers along the whole length of the branches.



Texas Ranger in bloom at Cooperative Extension's Demonstration Gardens

Not only Texas rangers bloom in summer. Even as the season closes, we in the desert southwest still appreciate the heat, and the plants that survive so well. There are surprisingly many! Oleanders flower like mad in all their colors: white, pink, magenta. Not everyone likes oleanders because they are overused, and need to be kept away from children, pets and horses, but what a delight to the eye when temperatures are high.

One of my favorite shrubs is the leguminous Bird of Paradise, not the tropical plant of the same name; the two couldn't be more dissimilar. The tropical plant does best in tropical areas that have less direct sun and **much** more water than southern Nevada. That tropical plant has big leaves and gorgeous flowers – not for Southern Nevada gardens. The desert plant thrives under our conditions. It produces either orange or yellow flowers with dramatic red stamens. Amend the soil with a small amount of compost, plant it in full sun and water it infrequently. The **only** way to kill it is to put it in a place with poor drainage, which destroys it.

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Is there any home or office in southern Nevada without lantana growing? The hotter it gets, the more these plants bloom, and the flowers attract butterflies. Once there were only red and yellow multicolored varieties, but now you can find deep maroon flowers, as well as blue, yellow or white.

Red yucca starts blooming in early summer and keeps going into fall. This native of the Chihuahuan desert does quite well under our conditions, and hummingbirds **love** it.

One group of plants that should be used more is the genus *Cordia*, Texas wild olive. They come from Texas, although not an olive. It is also known as Mexican olive. They have deep green foliage, lovely white flowers, and produce a fruit that birds eat. There are several related plants. All are wonderful evergreen shrubby trees that grow well, under certain conditions:

First, they will not survive excess water. Surrounding one with high water use plants will kill it. Place it in your desert landscaping.

Next, they like lots of sun, so plant them in a very bright spot.

Finally, they need to be protected from the cold. If temperatures drop into the mid 20's, be prepared to see some branch dieback.

You can enjoy these blooming plants until at least mid fall, and they can be planted as long as the weather is reasonably warm.

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