



## Virtual Wildflower Hike – Part 1

*Check out Friends of Government Canyon's Facebook page to follow along to our virtual wildflower hike video!*

{1} Hi I'm Jennifer. I'm a volunteer with the Activities Committee of the Friends of Government Canyon. Because of social distancing requirements this spring, we haven't been able to have any actual guided hikes. So, we have decided to attempt a virtual guided hike. We will be going on the end **Lytle's Loop** where there are some of the prettiest flowers I've seen.

{2} This is the **Pink Evening Primrose**. They are real bee magnets. They have four large petals and large sticky anthers and a cross-shaped pistil. They are close to the end of their blooming period.

{3} This is the **Hackberry**. It is very common in the San Antonio area and is considered to be a nuisance because it is so hard to get rid of. Birds eat the berries and scatter the seeds in their droppings. It is good deer forage.

{4} This vine is **Greenbriar**. It tends to grow up trees. It has nasty thorns, so you shouldn't tear through the brush, or it will tear you back.

{5} This pretty little flower is **Prairie Brazoria**. It's in the mint family.

{7} This is **Velvet Leaf Mallow**. When it's in bloom it has a yellow-orange flower about the size of a nickel. The large leaves are soft and velvety. It's related to hibiscus.

{8} We're following **Lytle's Loop** in reverse. If you want to see the prettiest flowers sooner, you should follow Lytle's Loop in the direction of Savannah Loop. Otherwise you will spend about an hour and a half getting there.

{9} This is **Indian Mallow**. The leaves and flowers are smaller than Velvet Leaf Mallow, but it blooms about the same time--the end of summer into fall, and the flowers are the same color.

{10} This is a very established **Live Oak**. It's probably over 300 years old. It gives food and shelter to lots of birds and small mammals. Right now, it's growing in its new leaves. During oak season it drops its old leaves and produces pollen that a lot of people are allergic to. The leaves stay on all year until they drop in the spring.

{11} This is the **Texas Persimmon**. You can identify it by its silvery gray bark that comes off in paper-like sheets. It also has leaves that curl under at the edge. It produces black marble size fruit that birds and small mammals like to eat.

{12} This is **Agartita**. It has spiky leaves like holly. In spring it is covered with small yellow flowers. Later it produces tart red berries that birds and small mammals like to eat.

{13} This is called **Pearl Milkweed**. On the vine, you can see a 'pearl' in the middle of the flower; it's a green flower.

{14} This is **Two-Leaf Senna**. It's a legume like peas and beans. You can see the two leaves that fork together.

{15} This is a natural arch. It formed when a live oak fell over. The rangers cut off the branches but left the rest of the tree in place. Kids like to climb it (please don't).

{16} This is a **Golden-Eye Phlox**. You can see the yellow eye in the middle. These tend to bloom early in spring, with bluebonnets, so this is late.

{17} This is a Slender-Leaf Hymenoxys. It is a daisy relative. It's very common in the San Antonio area. It grows all over the Recharge Trail but is also found everywhere else (in Government Canyon).

{18} **Water break** - Remember, when you're out here in the heat, you should bring at least 1 liter of water per hour per person. And remember to drink it!

{19} This is called **Blue Curls**. The flower head starts out curled up and uncurls as it blooms until it looks like a caterpillar. It usually likes shade but can live on the savanna too. It is near the end of its blooming season.

{20} This is called **Silver Leaf Nightshade**. It is related to tomatoes and potatoes. It has a purple star-shaped flower with bright yellow anthers shaped like candles. You can see all the hairs on the leaf that make it look silver.

{21} This is called **False Day Flower**. It has two round purple petals and a nearly invisible [white] one. It has a pointed 'hood' behind the flower head. This is another one that usually likes shade.

{22} This is **Prairie Verbena**, or Dakota Vervain. It is very common in fields and blooms beginning in March.

{23} This is a **Texas Thistle**. It is a composite, related to dandelions. It is very attractive to bees and butterflies.

{24} This is **Indian Blanket**. [this one has gone to seed; this one is newer]. It is in the daisy family. It always has some amount of red and yellow on the flower, but the proportion depends on soil chemistry.

{25} This is a **Prairie Larkspur**. They tend to grow in taller spikes than this. This is the end of the season for this, too.

{26} These tall spiky flowers are called **Musk Thistles**. They are very attractive to bees and butterflies. Some of the older ones are going to seed. The seed is fluffy like dandelion.

{27} This is called **Engelmann's Daisy**. Engelmann and Lindheimer were botanists working in Texas in the mid-to-late 1800's so many plants are named after them. It has 6-8 petals and curly [indented] leaves.

{28} This white trumpet shaped flower is called **Alamo Vine**. It is related to morning glory. It has long pointed leaves with a jagged edge. often grows up on other plants but also trails on the ground.

{29} The burned trees you see are from the ongoing savanna restoration project. The rangers have done a series of **controlled burns** to move the landscape from woodland and brush back to savanna [grassland].

*End of Part 1. Stay tuned for the second half of our virtual wildflower hike!*