

Plants that Bloom After a Rain

Of course, all flowering plants need a certain amount of moisture in order to form blooms, but then most plants have a certain season in which they bloom, and no amount of extra water in other seasons will cause them to bloom. Some plants bloom almost continuously over a period of months.

Certainly, the amount of rain or lack thereof has an effect on the number and duration of blooms for many species.

But then there are some species that can usually be counted on to bloom several days to two weeks after significant rainfall events, and may do so several times throughout the year.

Cenizo or purple sage, is one such native plant that comes to mind. This is a common landscape shrub with gray-green leaves that typically becomes covered with small purple blooms a week or two after a good rain. It is evergreen and, in most locations, is not usually browsed by deer.

Desert willow is a light, airy, shrub or small tree native to the western edge of the Hill Country and further west. It has long narrow leaves and is quite xeric. After a good rain it has beautiful orchid-like bluish-pink flowers with purple stripes.

Retama is another light, airy shrub or small tree more common in the southern part of the Hill Country and south and west. Its leaves are compound with long, substantial rachis and many tiny leaflets. It may drop these leaves in drought times and regrow them after rain returns. It blooms profusely soon after a rain with many bright, yellow, 1-inch flowers. Retama is armed with small curved thorns.

Kidneywood is a multi-trunk irregular shaped shrub with compound leaves made up of many tiny leaflets. In droughts, it can drop its leaves and regrow them after rain. After a rain it puts up flower stalks at the end of branches which then produce many tiny white flowers which are visited by bees. It may be browsed by deer.

Beebush, or whitebrush, is an aromatic shrub that can be found in thickets in places around the Hill Country. It puts up spikes branching at the base of leaves which are covered with scented white tiny blooms. Bees love them but deer don't usually browse them heavily. It is said to be toxic for horses.

In addition to the larger shrubs and small trees above, a number of small shrubs bloom after rains as well. Here are some of them.

Damianita is a small, basketball-shaped, much branched shrub with dark green leaves which burst forth with many yellow blooms after a rain that are quite striking against the dark green leaves. It is quite xeric.

Zexmenia is a fairly common small shrub in at least the southern half of the Hill Country. It has a rather open growth habit. It puts up 2 to 3-foot stems with ¾-inch yellow blooms. Deer do not usually browse this plant.

Black dalea is another xeric small shrub that can be rounded or spreading from 1 to 3 feet tall. It can be covered with purple and white blooms after a rain.

Rosemary, while not native, but certainly widely grown by gardeners, is an evergreen shrub that can either have an upright growth habit up to 3 or 4-feet tall or it can be have a more spreading growth form. It's tiny blueish or lavender blooms after a rain attract bees and butterflies, especially in early spring. It can, however, be very volatile in a fire.

Two common wildflowers that can bloom multiple times after a rain are mealy blue sage and two-leaved senna, neither of which are eaten by grazers or browsers. Mealy blue sage can grow to 1 to 3-feet tall and blooms along the top of the stems with clusters of violet and blue flowers.

Two leaved senna have unique leaves consisting of two apparent long slender leaves joined at the base to make a "V" sign. Its blooms are 1-in yellow near the top of the stem. This wildflower is toxic for livestock.

Although many folks don't often think of grasses as blooming, they certainly do, they just may be inconspicuous and short lived. But we see the results of rainfall on greases that put up seed heads after a rain. In fact, most grasses green up and respond to rainfall probably faster than most other plants.

Until next time...

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