

WHAT'S HAPPENIN' ON THE HILL
NATURAL HISTORY OF HAYS COUNTY
Beacon Hill, Buda, Texas
February 2021

SURVIVING AN ARCTIC BLAST

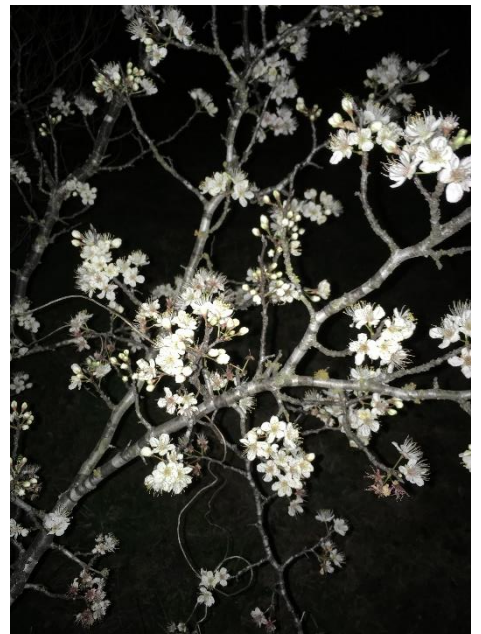
February can be an unpredictable month for plants and wildlife here on Beacon Hill. As the month began, certain plants had sprung forth as if to test the late winter air. As their flowers unfurled, little prepared them for the impending Polar Express that would put a pause to their springtime plans. February 2021 was about to change expectations for all. These two plants were blooming when the record cold hit.

TENPETAL ANEMONE, *Anemone berlandieri*, is an herbaceous native perennial found from NE Mexico through the Hill Country north to Kansas and east to Florida. The three-part basal leaves are found throughout the winter and are followed in early spring by a solitary flower 1 ½ inches wide atop an ~ 1-foot stalk. The flower lacks petals, but the sepals are a beautiful white, pink or violet color, and the fruit that follows sets seed aloft on the breeze, which lends another common name – Windflower. The genus name is derived from the Greek word anemos – wind. The species name honors one of the earliest Texas plant collectors, Jean Louis Berlandier, a Frenchman who worked for the Mexican Boundary Commission starting in the 1820's. He collected not far from Hays County on expeditions to San Antonio and Gonzales, as well as along the San Saba River.



Windflower- a member of the Buttercup family (Ranunculaceae).

MEXICAN PLUM, *Prunus mexicana*, is a small, single-trunked native tree known for its early season, fragrant white flowers that attract butterflies and bees. It grows from NE Mexico through the eastern Great Plains, Ohio River Valley and the South. It is one of more than a dozen *Prunus* species from Texas, including an almond, several cherries, and other shrub & tree-form plums. This drought tolerant plant is recognizable by its silver exfoliating bark. The clouds of white flowers develop into purple fruit in late summer and are sought out by birds and mammals, as well as people who enjoy preserves. *Prunus* is the ancient name for plum, and the species name was given by 19th century curator of Harvard University's Gray Herbarium, Sereno Watson, referring to its southwestern range.



Mexican plum is a member of the Rose family (Rosaceae).

By Eric Beckers, Natural Heritage Committee
Hays County Historical Commission