



Mia and Sophie in the bluebonnets

Flower Power!

Where Katy Families Go to Find Beautiful Bluebonnets in Bloom

You don't have to live in Texas long to know that spring means wildflowers. Whether you're looking to spend a leisurely Sunday afternoon with the family, or hunting for the perfect photograph, you don't have to travel too far from Katy to enjoy some beautiful fields along the way.

Bluebonnet (and other Wildflower) Sightings

Beginning late March through early May, many Katy families pack up the kids, camera, and a picnic and make it a day of fun wildflower hunting. Some popular routes include heading down south towards Rockport or Cuero in DeWitt County which claims to be the "Wildflower Capital of Texas." They have many ongoing programs for families and individuals during the spring months. Heading west on Highway 290 towards Brenham and College Station, it's not unusual to see cars pulled off the highway and shutterbugs snapping away. If you decide to join them, be sure and pull over in a safe spot that is well away from the highway.

Written by Brenda Thompson



Drake loves running through the flowers

You can simply get out and walk the fields in areas like Brenham



Make it a Road Trip!

For a truly spectacular display of bluebonnets and other wildflowers, heading to the Hill Country may provide the biggest payoff. There are two major wildflower trails in the central Texas area, both east or west of I-35 from Austin or the Hill Country area. There are so many stops along the way that you may just want to make a weekend out of it for the whole family! Plan a stop at one of these wildflower hotspots.

Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center

Located in southwest Austin, the center's mission is "to increase the sustainable use and conservation of native wildflowers, plants and landscapes." They offer a large variety of programs for visitors of all ages such as garden tours, spring and fall plant sales, and seasonal activities year round.

Burnet Bluebonnet Festival

Each spring, Burnet, a small town nestled on the edge of the spectacular Texas Hill Country about 50 miles northwest of Austin, hosts their annual Bluebonnet Festival. The festival features a pageant, carnival, car show, arts and crafts, fun run, parade, music and more in the bluebonnet capital of Texas.

Wildflower Photography Tips & Tricks

Want to get a really memorable photo of your cuties in the bluebonnets? Candace Byers Photography offers these tips:

CHOOSING YOUR SPOT. Public spots are the best way to go, as long as you are safe and off the highway. Do not go onto private land without permission; you will be trespassing and can even be fined for this.

CRITTER CONCERNS. Always check for fire ants before sitting or standing in the bluebonnets. Even more dangerous are snakes. Remember, technically bluebonnets are a weed and snakes like to hide in them.

CHOOSING THE RIGHT OUTFIT. White always photographs beautifully in the bluebonnets, and believe it or not, so does turquoise.

GETTING THE BEST LIGHT. Try to take photos very early in the morning, or as close to sunset as possible. Try to avoid the harsh sun after 9:30 a.m. If it's a cloudy day, you're in luck--you can take your photos any time of day, and they will come out beautiful.

CAPTURING YOUR CUTIES. The number one tip for taking photos of children is trying to take them as early in the morning, after breakfast of course, as you can. Children, as a rule are happier in the mornings. If they are too young, make funny noises, or have a noise making toy handy. Bubbles are also nice to have around.

TIMING IS KEY. This is really for the parents, not the children. So make sessions short and sweet; 10-15 minutes is a good rule. At the end, reward their excellent behavior with a big kiss and possibly a treat.



An advertisement for Kimberly Holt Photography. It features a close-up photograph of a baby with light blonde hair and blue eyes, wearing a white shirt. The baby is looking slightly to the side. On the left side of the image, the text "Kimberly Holt Photography" is written vertically in a white, cursive font. On the right side, the words "Families", "Children", "Babies", and "Events" are listed vertically in a white, sans-serif font. At the bottom, the contact information is provided: "281.915.4864", "KimberlyHoltPhotography.com", and "Kimberly@KimberlyHoltPhotography.com". A small copyright notice "© 2008 Katy Magazine" is visible on the right edge of the image.

Wimberly is a Little Piece of Heaven

You might continue your look at area wildflowers with a drive west to the small town of Wimberley, near San Marcos. Wimberley is filled with activity during the spring months including this year's 10th Annual Butterfly Festival at the Emily Ann Theatre. The first Saturday of the month, April through December, brings Market Days with more than 450 booths of arts, crafts and housewares, making it Texas' second largest flea market. Or enjoy the many quaint shops in the town square. From Wimberley, you can also take a scenic drive along the Devil's Backbone, often called one of the state's most beautiful drives.

Fredericksburg's Wildseed Farms

Head further west to Fredericksburg on U.S. 290 and you'll discover Wildseed Farms, the largest working wildflower farm in the U.S. Aside from their extensive wildflower, grass, herb, and exotic garden variety seeds available through their catalog, they also feature a large nursery of live plants, gifts, and birdhouses. Their flower fields in bloom in "The Meadows" make for great photographic opportunities. Depending on the season, you may find a field of poppies or lavender in the spring or a field of cosmos or zinnias in the summer. The Butterfly Haus captivates old and young alike with the miracle of live native Texas butterflies hatching. Learn about the individual species as well as the plants that they love best.

Visiting Beautiful Boerne

Head south to Boerne, about 30 miles northwest of San Antonio. You can check out the wildflowers along the way or stop awhile at the Cibolo Wilderness Trail and Nature Center. More than 100 acres of the existing Boerne City Park, this natural habitat shows the development of a reclaimed prairie and marsh. You'll find several walking trails, including historic farm, prairie, creekside, and marsh loop trails that wind past native plants and wildflowers as well as birds and animals native to the Hill Country.

Finding that Perfect Spot

Before you reach for the keys, take a few minutes to check out these resources to pinpoint the best sites for maximum flower power!

Texas Department of Transportation Wildflower Report

lone-star.net/wildflowers/txdot.html

800-452-9292

Updated regularly to report spectacular wildflower sightings by region.

Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center

wildflower.org

512-292-4200

Learn about the preservation of our native Texas wildflower species, attend programs, take tours and more at this informative center.

DeWitt County Wildflower Association

"The Wildflower Capital of Texas"

dewittwildflowers.org

361-275-2112

Lots of events this spring! Join the camera club for wildflower photo tips, take a motorcoach tour of area historical sites, take a cycling tour or go on a self-guided tour using their free wildflower route map.



If you're inspired by all the greenery, be sure to stop by the Cibolo Wilderness Trail Plant Sale and Festival in mid-spring.

Take Some Time to Smell the Flowers

Whether your quest leads you to find that perfect photo-op or the fun weekend getaway to the Texas Hill Country you're looking for, your springtime travels will take you along some of the prettiest highways you've ever seen. It's surely worth the drive! **KM**

BRENDA THOMPSON is freelance writer, volunteer and mother. She has lived in Texas for 28 years. She enjoys spending time in the Hill Country visiting family and has been to several of the places mentioned here. She can't wait to take this year's photos of her own two children in the Texas wildflowers.

Jessica age 9

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