

# Got Veggies? Protect Them from Pests with Native Texas Flowers!

by MARGARET GNEWUCH  
Native Plant Society of Texas  
[npsot.org/wp/houston](http://npsot.org/wp/houston)

Vegetables depend upon beneficial insects when attacked by destructive plant pests. In her book, *Attracting Beneficial Bugs to your Garden*, Jessica Walliser writes that plants under attack by plant pests release chemical signals. If beneficial insects are nearby, they respond to the chemical signal and eliminate attacking pest.

Native flowers not only attract beneficial insects but keep them around by providing food and shelter. You can intermingle natives and vegetables or plant a flower border because they have same full sun preference.

## Vegetable pests that beneficial insects love to eat:

- **Asparagus beetles** - damsel bugs, ground beetles, ladybugs, lacewings
- **Cabbage worms** - syrphid flies, big eyed bugs, damsel bugs, parasitic wasps
- **Corn ear worms** - big eyed bugs, ground beetles, parasitic wasps, lacewings, minute pirate bugs, spiders
- **Colorado potato beetles** - ladybugs, robber flies, tachinid flies, assassin bugs, parasitic wasps, ground beetles, damsel bugs, lacewings
- **Cucumber beetles** - assassin bugs, parasitic wasps, tachinid flies
- **Mexican bean beetles** - tachinid flies, assassin bugs, ladybugs, robber flies, parasitic wasps
- **Squash vine borers** - ground beetles, parasitic wasps
- **Tomato hornworms** - assassin bugs, parasitic wasps

**Native flowers that beneficial insects eat:**



**Lanceleaf Coreopsis (*Coreopsis lanceolata*)**

Forms a fluffy round mound of lance shaped leaves topped with golden flowers on long stems. Yellow disk flowers, yellow ray flowers with notched edges; Lacewings, Syrphid flies, Parasitic wasps.

***Carolyn Fannon,***

***Wildflower Center photos***



**Blue Sage**

**( *Salvia azurea* )**

has spikes of blue flowers spring through fall.

**Carolyn Fannon,  
Wildflower Center photos**



**Rattlesnake Master**

( *Eryngium yuccifolium* )  
 Spiky round whitish flower heads and yucca like spiny foliage.

*Wildflower Center photo*



**Seaside Goldenrod**

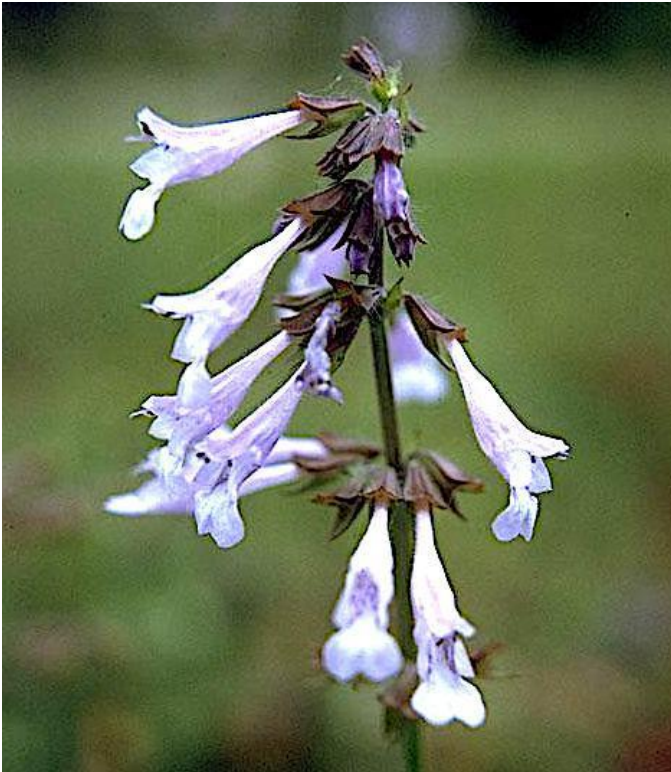
( *Solidago sempervirens* )  
*Well-behaved, yellow flower plumes, resists salt spray; Ladybugs, Minute pirate bugs, Parasitic wasps and Lacewings.*

***Carolyn Fannin photo***



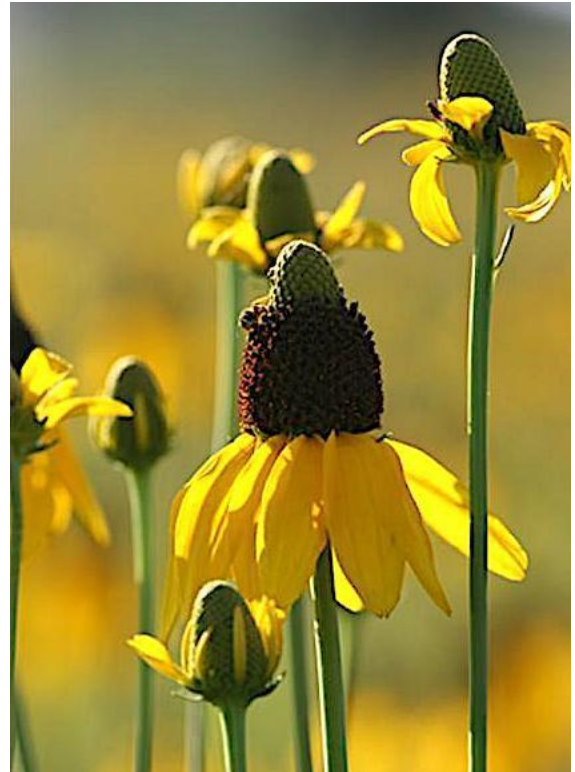
**Indian Blanket**

( *Gaillardia pulchella* )  
*Vivid red ray flowers and yellow petals, blooms through warm months, reseeds, attracts butterflies"*



**Lyre-leaf sage**  
( *Salvia lyrata* )

*Stalks of dainty lavender trumpets in spring.  
Leaves hug the ground can naturalize in your  
lawn if you don't mow too low.*



**Texas Coneflower**  
( *Rudbeckia texana* )

*Only found in coastal counties of Texas and  
Louisiana, yellow ray flowers May-November  
hang down like a skirt around brown cone*



**Milkweed**

*Flowers have slippery central disk, monarch's legs slide into slits and pick up tiny saddlebags of pollen. Good for our area:*



**Aquatic Milkweed (left)**  
*( Asclepias perennis )*

White to pink flowers and  
**Green Milkweed ( Asclepias viridis )** Green flowers with purple hoods; Ladybugs.



**White Leaf Mountain Mint**  
*( Pycnanthemum albescens )*

Masses of tiny white flowers June through September surrounded by white leaves which make mint tea; Lacewings.  
*James Garland Holmes photo*

[npsot.org/Houston](http://npsot.org/Houston)