



Outdoor learning environments (OLEs) encourage diversity of children’s play experience and contribute to healthy development. Plants offers a variety of experiences and discoveries by stimulating their senses, providing loose parts for creative play, and encouraging children to crawl, jump, and tunnel as they connect to the natural cycles around them.

This flyer is intended to help parents, educators, and designers select plants that can be used to enhance learning experiences in early childhood programs, schoolyard classrooms, and backyards. The plants highlighted are approved for childcare licensure and balance qualities that engage children with plant selection and care practicalities.



Child Friendly Native Plants of Texas

- * **Sensory:** Create a rich sensory experience by incorporating varied textures, scents, colors, and sounds
- * **Interaction & Movement:** Establishes secret places to hide and exciting pathways to investigate, while drawing children into the space with the movement of waving grasses and the flight of butterflies
- * **Building Materials:** Provides countless materials and loose parts to incorporate into creative play and create structures for exploration or relaxation
- * **Easy Care:** Low maintenance needs or low water requirements
- * **Durability:** Tolerates environmental conditions, losing parts, or physically capable of regenerating under rough treatment



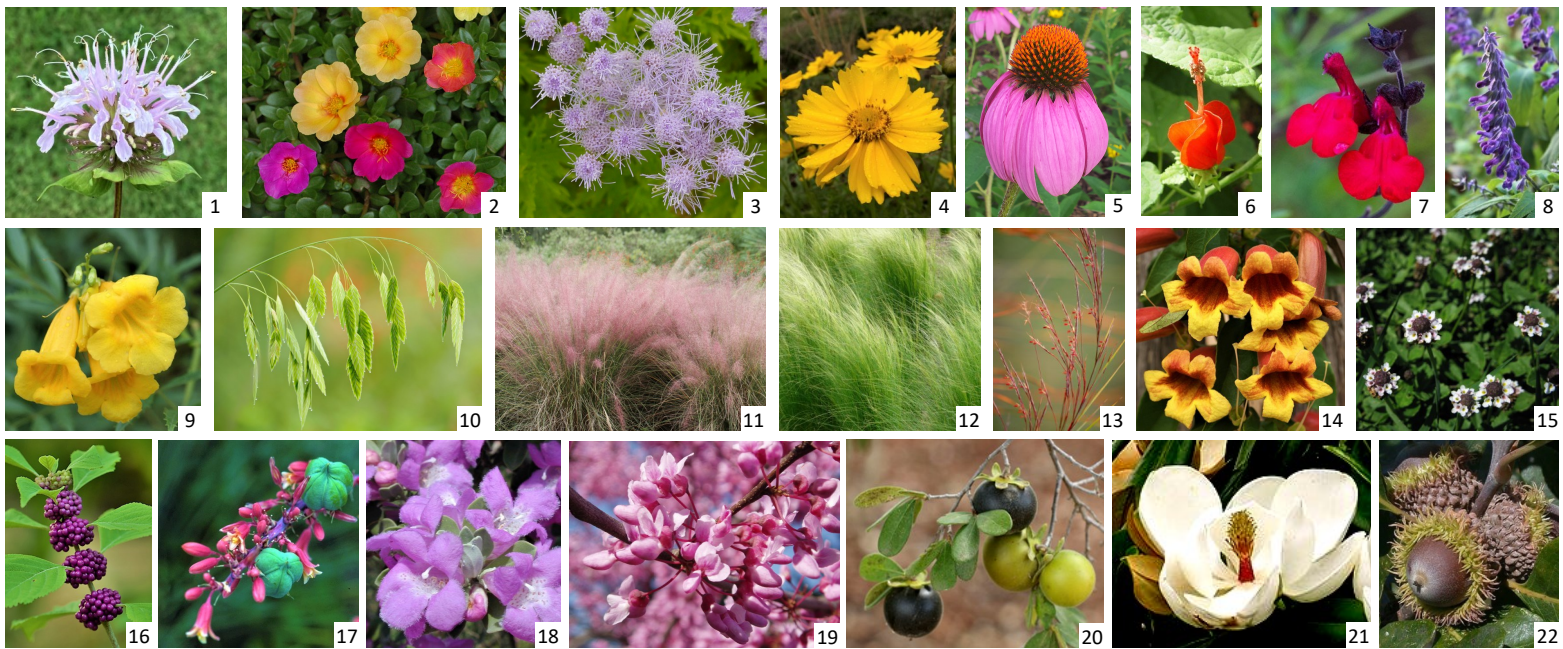
Look for Child Friendly & Native icons on the TNLA Plant Database



OLE! Texas is an initiative of the Texas Department of State Health Services in partnership with other state agencies, universities, and organizations across Texas. For more information and a full partner listing, visit dshs.texas.gov/ole.

- Texas Nursery & Landscape Association - Landscape Guide: tnlaonline.org/best-of-texas-landscape-guide
- Texas Parks and Wildlife - Teaching children outdoors: tpwd.texas.gov/education/resources/parents-and-teachers
- Texas Department of Agriculture - Farm Fresh Challenge resources: squaremeals.org/FandNResources/TexasFarmFresh
- Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center - Dig Deeper: wildflower.org/project/outdoor-learning-environments

This list is intended to provide general information only. OLE! Texas partners disclaim any liability or responsibility for any allergy, sensitivity, illness, or injurious effect that any person or animal may suffer as a result of the information herein. For information or concerns about the toxicity of plants, contact the local Poison Control Center in your area. www.aapcc.org



Child Friendly Native Plants

Common Name	Scientific Name	#	Sensory	Interaction & Movement	Building Materials	Easy Care	Durability
ANNUALS							
Bee Balm	<i>Monarda didyma</i>	1	T, V, S, E	P	X		C
Purslane	<i>Portulaca oleracea</i>	2	V	P	X	X	H, P
PERENNIALS							
Gregg's Mistflower	<i>Conoclinium greggii</i>	3	T, V	B			
Lance-leaved Coreopsis	<i>Coreopsis lanceolata</i>	4	V	Play, P, H, B	X	X	H, D
Purple Coneflower	<i>Echinacea purpurea</i>	5	T, V, E	P, H, B, S	X	X	H, P, Dr, Cn
Turk's Cap	<i>Malvaviscus arboreus</i>	6	V, E	P, H, S	X	X	H, D, P, S
Autumn Sage	<i>Salvia greggii</i>	7	T, V, S, E	P, H		X	H, D, Ht
Mexican Bush Sage	<i>Salvia leucantha</i>	8	T, V, S	P, H	X	X	H, P
Gold Star Esperanza	<i>Tecoma stans</i>	9	T, V, S	Hide, P, H		X	
GRASSES							
Inland Sea Oats	<i>Chasmanthium latifolium</i>	10	T, V, H	M	X	X	P, S
Gulf Muhly	<i>Muhlenbergia capillaris</i>	11	T, V, H	Hide, high M	X	X	H, D
Mexican Feathergrass	<i>Nassella tenuissima</i>	12	T, V	High M	X		D, Dr, Cn
Little Bluestem	<i>Schizachyrium scoparium</i>	13	T, V	Maze edging	X	X	
VINE/GROUNDCOVER							
Crossvine	<i>Bignonia capreolata</i>	14	V	H	X	X	Ht
Frogfruit	<i>Phyla nodiflora</i>	15	T, V			X	Ht, Cn
SHRUBS/TREES							
American Beautyberry	<i>Callicarpa americana</i>	16	V	Play, S	X	X	S
Red Yucca	<i>Hesperaloe parviflora</i>	17	T, V, H	P	X	X	D, Cn
Texas Sage	<i>Leucophyllum frutescens</i>	18	V, S	Play		X	H, D
Redbud	<i>Cercis canadensis</i>	19	V	Hide, H, B, S	X	X	
Texas Persimmon Little	<i>Diospyros texana</i>	20	T, V, E	Play/hide, P	X		H, D
Gem Magnolia Bur Oak	<i>Magnolia grandiflora</i>	21	T, S	Play/hide			
	<i>Quercus macrocarpa</i>	22	T, V	Sit under	X		D

Sensory: T - Touch, V - Visual, S - Smell, H - Hearing, E - Edible

Movement (M) from Wildlife: P - Pollinators, H - Hummingbirds, B - Butterflies, S - Songbirds

Durable: Tolerance for C - Cold, H - Heat, D - Drought, P - Picking, Ht - High traffic, S - Shade; Dr - Deer resistant; Cn - Container