



Outdoor learning environments (OLEs) stimulate the 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 OLEs, schoolyard classrooms, and backyards. The plants highlighted are approved for childcare licensure and balance qualities that engage children with plant selection and care practicalities.

TEXAS  
PARKS &  
WILDLIFE

# 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

OLE! TEXAS  
OUTDOOR LEARNING ENVIRONMENT



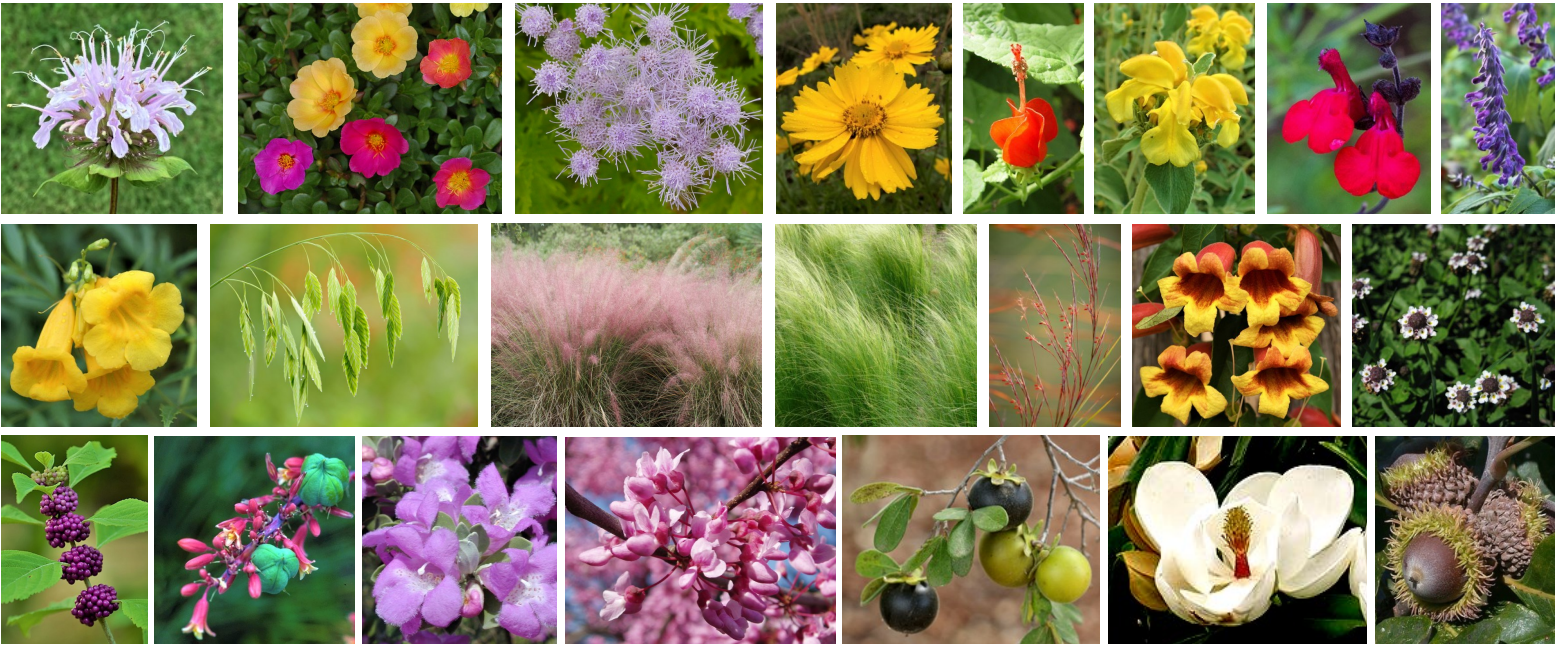
OLE! Texas is an initiative of the Texas Department of State Health Services in partnership with other state agencies, universities, and organizations across Texas. For more information and a full partner listing, visit [dshs.texas.gov/ole](https://dshs.texas.gov/ole).

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

*This list is intended to provide general information only. OLE! Texas partners disclaims 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](https://www.aapcc.org)*







Child Friendly Native Plants		Sensory	Interaction & Movement	Building Materials	Easy Care	Durability
Common Name	Scientific Name					
ANNUALS						
Bee Balm	Monarda didyma	T, V, S, E	P	X		C
Purslane	Portulaca oleracea	V	P	X	X	H, P
PERENNIALS						
Gregg’s Mistflower	Conoclinium greggii	T, V	B			
Lance-leaved Coreopsis	Coreopsis lanceolata	V	Play, P, H, B	X	X	H,D
Turk’s Cap	Malvaviscus arboreus	V, E	P, H	X		H, D, P
Jerusalem Sage	Phlomis fruticosa	T, V, S	P	X	X	D, DR
Autumn Sage	Salvia greggii	T, V, S, E	P, H		X	H, D, HT
Mexican Bush Sage	Salvia leucantha	T, V, S	P, H	X	X	H, P
Gold Star Esperanza	Tecoma stans	T, V, S	Hide, P, H		X	
GRASSES						
Inland Sea Oats	Chasmanthium latifolium	T, V, H	M	X	X	S, P
Gulf Muhly	Muhlenbergia cappillaris	T, V, H	Hide, high M	X	X	H,D
Mexican Feathergrass	Nassella tenuissima	T, V	High M	X		D, DR, Cn
Little Bluestem	Schizachyrium scoparium	T, V	Maze edging	X	X	
VINE/GROUNDCOVER						
Crossvine	Bignonia capreolata	V	H	X	X	HT
Frogfruit	Phyla nodiflora	T, V			X	HT, Cn
SHRUBS/TREES						
American Beautyberry	Callicarpa americana	V	Play, S	X	X	S
Red Yucca	Hesperaloe parviflora	T, V, H	P	X	X	D, Cn
Texas Sage	Leucophyllum frutescens	V, S	Play		X	H, D
Redbud	Cercis canadensis	V	Hide, H, B, S	X	X	
Texas Persimmon	Diospyros texana	T, V, E	Play/hide, P	X		H, D
Little Gem Magnolia	Magnolia grandiflora	T, S	Play/hide			
Bur Oak	Quercus macrocarpa	T, V	Sit under	X		D

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

Movement 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