



by Tom Collins, HCMG, TMN

## My Favorite Flora Books

Let me introduce myself. My name is Thomas “Tom” Collins. I’m a sixth generation Texan, who was born in San Antonio, raised in Helotes, went off to college (Texas A&M), followed by a tour in Vietnam, back to Lake Jackson Texas where I worked for Dow Chemical for 31 years. While there we raised two children (well actually my wife did), and we both decided to retire back to our roots. I am a Brazoria County Master Gardener and a Texas Master Naturalist (Founded the Cradle of Texas Chapter and now a member of the Hill County Chapter).

My passion is birding and butterfly watching. My wife and I have traveled all over the world chasing birds. Over the years we have built a large collection of bird and naturalist history books. I am also interested in and study flora, mammals, dragonflies, moths, fungi, and fossils.

While growing up in the Hill Country, I learned a lot about nature. My mother was a naturalist who used her ancient and monster Audubon book to keep notes on birds, an even older book to keep her flora records, and who annually re-read her first edition of Roy Bedicheck’s *Adventures with a Texas Naturalist*.

While in the Cradle of Texas Master Naturalist Chapter, I would occasionally write reviews on books I owned. Over the years, I have collected a lot of natural history books - good and not so good. I take time to read every page of any book I buy no matter how difficult that can be. My belief is that if you want to learn the natural history around you, then first you need a good library of books. Then you need to read and use them. Write in them, get them dirty and wet, bend page corners, press your leaves in them, make your own notes, and keep them with you no matter where you go.

Here are my favorite Hill County flora books by category from the thirty-two flora books I currently own.

### Wildflowers

*Wildflowers of the Texas Hill Country*; Marshall Enquist; Lone Star Botanical, first edition, April 1989. The best wildflower book for the Hill Country. I use it all the time. It is arranged by taxonomy.

*Wildflowers of Texas*; Geyata Ajilvsgi; Shearer Publishing, revised edition March 2003. Love her book — it fits in the hip pocket of my jeans — but hate pronouncing her name. More of a general Texas field guide and does not fully cover the Hill Country. It is arranged by flower color.

### Grasses

*Grasses of the Texas Hill Country*; A Field Guide; Brian and Shirley Loflin; Texas A&M University Press, April 30, 2006. An easy-to-use book for the Hill County grasses. One of the first grass books with photos in color, plant and inflorescence.

*Common Texas Grasses, An Illustrated Guide*; Frank W. Gould; Texas A&M University Press. More of a scientific book, line drawings and no photos, but it still is an excellent reference book

*Know Your Grasses*; Dr. Barron S. Rector; Texas A&M TCE publication. A simple guide with line drawings showing full plant and close-ups of inflorescence.

### Trees / Shrubs and Woody Vines

*Trees, Shrubs, and Vines of the Texas Hill Country*; Jan Wrede; Texas A&M University Press. I found this book very useful on my ranch. The introduction is lengthy, but it has excellent photos and reasonably good descriptions.

*Texas Trees: A Friendly Guide*; Paul W. Cox, Patty Leslie; Corona Publishing Co.; New edition, August 1988. I have used this book all over Texas and love it. It does not cover woody vines, but is still fun to own. Lots of natural history information to go along with the tech stuff.

### Landscapes and Native Gardens

*Native Texas Plants, Region by Region*; Sally and Andy Wasowski; Gulf Publishing; 2 Sub edition, May 25, 2002.

If you can find this book, buy it. It’s a wonderful book to read with great pictures and guides on how to landscape based on where you live. It includes forbs, grasses and woody plants native to Texas, and how and where to plant them. May be out of print in its original version. I have a few others, but this is by far the best.

### Plant Propagation

*How to Grow Native Plants of Texas and the Southwest*; Jill Nokes; University of Texas Press; Revised edition, May 15, 2001. This is the bible on how to propagate almost any native Texas flora species. Be prepared for a lot of technical directions. It includes collection and storage of plant material, and propagation includes seeds, cuttings, and transplants. Every MG should own a copy if you are interested in natives and how to grow them.

And by the way, buy yourself a copy of Roy Bedicheck’s book, *Adventures with a Texas Naturalist* (University of Texas Press, 1975) Every Texan should own a copy.