

Texas Blue Bells - *Eustoma exaltum russellianum*

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Texas Blue Bells are having a fabulous year! They appear during our hottest season and are too often mowed down. Their blooms are iridescent and velvety. Blues and purples are the most common colors but pinks and whites also occur. I remember first seeing them as a child. My Aunt Stell was a school teacher in Hope, Texas that had a two room independent school near Yoakum and always noticed wildflowers. She brought in a bouquet in the heat of summer and I was amazed. Long ago thriving colonies along river banks and open grassy fields were common. Blue bells were one of Lady Bird Johnson's favorites.



I have heard blue bells described as a weak perennial. The seed is as fine as ground pepper. The foliage is bluish green and they are usually 1-3' tall. Shortly after arriving at Texas A & M University in 1972, I was contacted by the Japanese government requesting that I locate a native site where blue bells were growing. At the time there were some large plantings between Navasota and Conroe on Highway 105. The site has since become a public school and the bluebells were destroyed.



Blue bells vary widely from year to year. Their use as cut flowers was what interested the Japanese visitors. They collected seeds and did some work toward making them available because they are not only stunningly beautiful but last a long time as cut flowers (two weeks is not uncommon). In early July of 2020, my wife and I noticed some really beautiful fields of blue bells along Highway 390 near Independence, TX (Washington County). We saw a tractor with a mowing attachment in the area and were saddened to notice several days later the field had been completely mowed and the blue bells destroyed.

Native American Seed is listed as a source. Late summer or winter is probably the best time to start seed. Either cool season transplanting or direct sowing is probably best.

