

Enclave Butterfly Garden Blooms Report: Frogfruit

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Enclave Butterfly Garden has several plants with large flowers, including hibiscus, milkweed, and zinnia. But small flowers are equally valuable. They feed a unique set of small butterflies and other pollinators, which in turn feed birds. Many people walk right past small flowers, though their beauty can be even more exquisite than that of the big showstoppers.

To enjoy small blooms, we need to stop, bend down, and get close. Take, for instance, the flower of the native groundcover Frogfruit (*Phyla nodiflora*), which thrives at Enclave Butterfly Garden. Frogfruit is the host plant for the Phaon Crescent, a butterfly barely larger than a quarter whose wings exhibit an intricate sienna, cream, and black checker pattern.

Frogfruit is a humble plant, staying low, drawing little notice. It's also hardy. It has laced itself through lawns across every ecoregion of Texas and through the South, Midwest, and Southwest. Yet most people have never heard of Frogfruit. It's in our Fall Creek lawns, but it flowers well above the two inches at which most people mow their grass. Frogfruit spreads quickly, so many gardeners prefer to grow it in a pot with flowers, where it can gracefully "spill" over the sides.

Unless you're looking, it's easy to miss Frogfruit's blooms, for they're smaller than the buttons of an Oxford shirt. Up close, its flower is lovely: teeny, frilly white florets surround a magenta ball of buds, each with its own magenta center. From a few inches away, the flower resembles a tiny round scoop of vanilla ice cream with a cherry on top, the perfect treat for a butterfly.