

A Labor of Love

Article & photos by Velma Schmidt, South Texas Border Chapter

It all started during the pandemic, a vision for an Eagle Scout service project created by his love for nature. Robert “Zeke” Schmidt presented his vision to The Meadow’s Home Owners Association and obtained permission to proceed with a small community garden located off Sugar Road, between Vance and McKee Streets in Edinburg. His vision involved a place for reflection and meditation, a Serenity Garden filled with native plants to attract butterflies and other pollinating insects.



Roadside view of Serenity Garden

The garden would include Texas lantana, Turk’s cap, porterweed, goldenrod, blue mist, and milkweed flowers to name just a few. It would also include two native vines, the balloon and passion vine, on each side of a trellis to attract fritillaries. In the center, a Guamuchil tree to attract the red-bordered pixie butterfly which enjoys its northernmost habitat here in the Rio Grande Valley.



White peacock butterflies (*Anartia jatrophae*)

The vision became reality in the fall of 2022. Since that time, Zeke and I have maintained this beautiful garden, ensuring plants get watered and pruned, in addition to pulling out invasive grasses. We have learned how to keep a healthy ecosystem, through the help of our Texas Master Naturalist (TMN) classes and have recorded over 75 different species of insects and butterflies. We have also been lucky enough to see the life cycle of monarchs, queens, and gulf fritillary butterflies multiple times.



The Serenity Garden has been a true labor of love, creating and maintaining a small space that we have seen mature over the last three years. It is a big reason we both became TMNs. We invite everyone to come by and see our Serenity Garden, which is open to the community.

Interior view of Serenity Garden