

Texas Bluebonnet and Wildflower Routes

Brenham Area

Provided by WildflowerHaven.com



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About this eBook

The Brenham Area edition provides some of the more popular routes for finding bluebonnet and other wildflower displays. It represents the collective experience of several professional and semi-professional photographers. However, this eBook is just a guide and does not guarantee that the reader will find displays of Texas Bluebonnets along any of the routes mentioned. It is hoped that the information shared here will encourage you, the reader, to safely and respectfully venture out to enjoy the wonder and beauty of our state flower and the many other wildflowers in Texas. For current reports on bluebonnet and other wildflower sightings visit our Facebook page – [Texas Wildflower Report](#). Also see the [Resources Page](#) at the end of the eBook for other sighting report sources.

When you do venture out to enjoy our Texas Bluebonnets and other wildflowers in bloom, please travel safely and be respectful of the private property of others. We **do not** encourage nor do we condone trespassing on private property to get that annual “kids in the bluebonnets” photo or any photo. The Texas Department of Public Safety provides some important [guidelines](#) on how to safely and legally enjoy viewing and photographing our Texas Wildflowers. You are strongly encouraged to read those guidelines before venturing out to explore.

If you find this guide to be helpful in your search for Texas Wildflowers, please like our [Texas Wildflower Report](#) Facebook page and share a copy of this guide with your friends. Also, we have a large selection of bluebonnet and wildflower images in our [Texas Wildflower Report Galleries](#). Prints or licenses to use are available for most of these images. WildflowerHaven.com is a for-profit organization, but we do attempt to provide these and many other sources of information without charge. If you would like to help fund our efforts consider purchasing a print or make a small donation via PayPal.

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- NOAA/National Weather Service - <http://water.weather.gov/precip/> - Maps are used under public domain and as such are not copyright.

What is needed for a good season?

Most of our spring wildflowers including most of the varieties of bluebonnets in Texas germinate in the fall. So, sufficient fall rainfall at the right time when soil temperatures are warm enough will help ensure a healthy crop of wildflower seedlings. It is important to understand that although fall rainfall is very important, rainfall is only one factor that leads to an above average wildflower show in the spring. Some other factors for a great spring wildflower show include:

- **Late winter and early spring rainfall** is very key to rosette root and plant growth. Usually the rosettes with deeper and better developed root systems are the ones that yield larger plants with more blooms.
- **Warming temps** in March are needed to encourage growth of plants and bloom stalks. Usually when the night-time temperatures are averaging 50 to 60 F, bluebonnet plants will increase plant growth and send out bloom stalks. Cooler temperatures in March will tend to delay the blooming period. Warm temperatures with good rainfall will tend to promote an early and longer season. Extreme heat in late March and April with less than average rainfall will promote a quick and shortened season.
- **Plenty of sunshine** during the typical flowering time is important especially for sun hungry bluebonnets. Long periods of overcast skies with warm/damp weather can encourage development of plant and root diseases. I have seen entire bluebonnet crops wiped out by root/stem diseases.
- **Less competing vegetation** - Dead vegetation from previous seasons not removed can result in excessive shading thus limiting rosette and seedling development. Often aggressive invasive species will use this tactic to push out native wildflowers. In recent years the giant common mustard([Rapistrum rugosum](#)) has taken over entire pastures resulting in little or no native wildflower growth.
- **Proper mowing/grazing** - Grass mowed/grazed in late August and again in late January (but not too low to remove seedling rosettes) will help in removing/reducing dead/competing vegetation. Roadside mowing during the prime blooming months of Mar-May can literally kill a good wildflower display. Also, pasture lands overgrazed by livestock will often be completely barren of any wildflowers. This is particularly true of pastures grazed by goats and sheep. Deer usually do not choose native wildflowers as a food source, but where there is overcrowding and fewer food sources they will munch on native plant seedlings.
- **Topography and soil:** Although bluebonnets will grow in most any soil, they tend to do much better in areas that drain well and in soils with less clay. They depend on a rhizobium bacteria that help to fix nitrogen from the air. Soils poor in this bacteria will not likely produce a good crop of bluebonnets. Rangeland is often better at producing those photographic worthy landscapes of wildflowers including bluebonnets than farmland. Farmland wildflower displays are limited mainly to roadsides if the area is not sprayed with herbicide. Abandoned rangeland or farmland without proper restoration to native grasses/wildflowers can lead to spread of invasive species like the giant common mustard plant.

Overview of Brenham Area

The Brenham area is located 75 miles northwest of Houston and 85 miles southeast of Austin. It includes the communities of Brenham, Burton, Chappell Hill, Industry, Independence. Also nearby is the historic Washington-on-the-Brazos State Historic Site – The Birthplace of Texas. Rolling pasture lands and fields of hay comprise the main topography. Brenham is the home of [Blue Bell Creameries](#) which does have guided tours that include a serving of ice cream. Scenes of cows grazing in fields of bluebonnets can be seen along several routes. Old farmhouses with bluebonnets growing around bales of hay can also be found.

If you are in the Brenham area or traveling to Brenham from San Antonio, then a visit to Industry, New Ulm, and Bellville is worth the extra time and effort. There are usually a number of fields of bluebonnets mixed with wildflowers to be found along SH-159 between Industry and Bellville.

Also plan to visit the historic sites of Independence, Old Baylor University and Washington on the Brazos State Historic Site. Right northwest of Brenham off US 290 is the small farming town of Burton. This is a great starting point for one of the most scenic drives in the area along FM-390, parts of which are known as the La Bahia Scenic Highway.

If you plan to travel to Brenham or Chappell Hill for the bluebonnets and other wildflowers, I recommend you spend the night in Brenham or close to Brenham. There is so much to see in Brenham that you just cannot see it all in two days, much less one. Chappell Hill has an [Annual Bluebonnet Festival](#) which this year is scheduled for during April. The festival is sponsored by Chappell Hill Historical Society.

If you travel to Brenham from either Austin or Houston, then US 290 is the fastest route. If you travel to Brenham from San Antonio or Austin, then a side trip via SH 71 and 159 through LaGrange or Industry, Texas, is well worth the extra time.

Peak bluebonnet period: Last week in March to first week in April. A warmer February and March will push this date earlier. Brenham has had split seasons with the roadsides blooming much earlier than the fields.

Routes

The routes listed here are some of the popular ones with a few favorites of two of our regular forum wildflower reporters. Several of the highways listed here are high traffic roadways and often with narrow or non-existent shoulders. Other routes are along county roads which could be dirt/gravel roads with low water crossings. **Caution is advised** when traveling or stopping along any of these routes. The route maps provided here are only a guide, you should also have along either a standard printed road map or mapping software. Legend: SH – State Highway, FM – Farm To Market

The Loop: If you only have a few hours to spend in Brenham, then I recommend driving northeast on SH-105, north on FM-50 to Independence and then west to Burton via FM-390. You can return to Brenham from Burton via US 290. You will enjoy the ride and the bluebonnets.

FM-2502 and FM-389: This is another quick route that can be taken if time is limited.

SH-159 to FM-2502 to FM-109 to Industry:

FM-390 from SH-105 to Independence: The route from SH-105 along FM-390 to Independence is very lovely with a mixture of green pastures, rolling hills, and river-bed forests.

Independence-Old Baylor: Independence, Texas, was settled in 1824 by John P. Coles, who was one of the original 300 families brought to Texas by Stephen F. Austin. There are several photo opportunities in the town of Independence, so plan to spend some time there. The ruins of Old Baylor University can be seen just one-half mile west of Independence on FM-390. Just south of Independence on FM-50 is the Antique Rose Emporium, which often has a field of solid bluebonnets just to the right of the main parking area.

Routes contd.

FM-390 West of Independence to SH 36: This is a very scenic route that is especially attractive during the bluebonnet season. The 28-mile stretch of FM-390 from SH-105 to Burton is also called the La Bahia Scenic Highway.

FM-50 from Independence to SH-105: Usually there are a few large fields of bluebonnets along this route sometimes with rolls of hay or farm implements. Antique Rose Emporium is on the left going south from Independence.

SH-105 to FM-912 to Washington-on-the-Brazos State Historical Site: Only sparsely covered roadsides and a few small fields have been seen along SH-105 past the intersection with FM-390. Right next to the visitor's center at the park is the Barrington Living Farm. There were a variety of wildflowers at select locations including baby blue eyes, bluebonnets, and paintbrush.

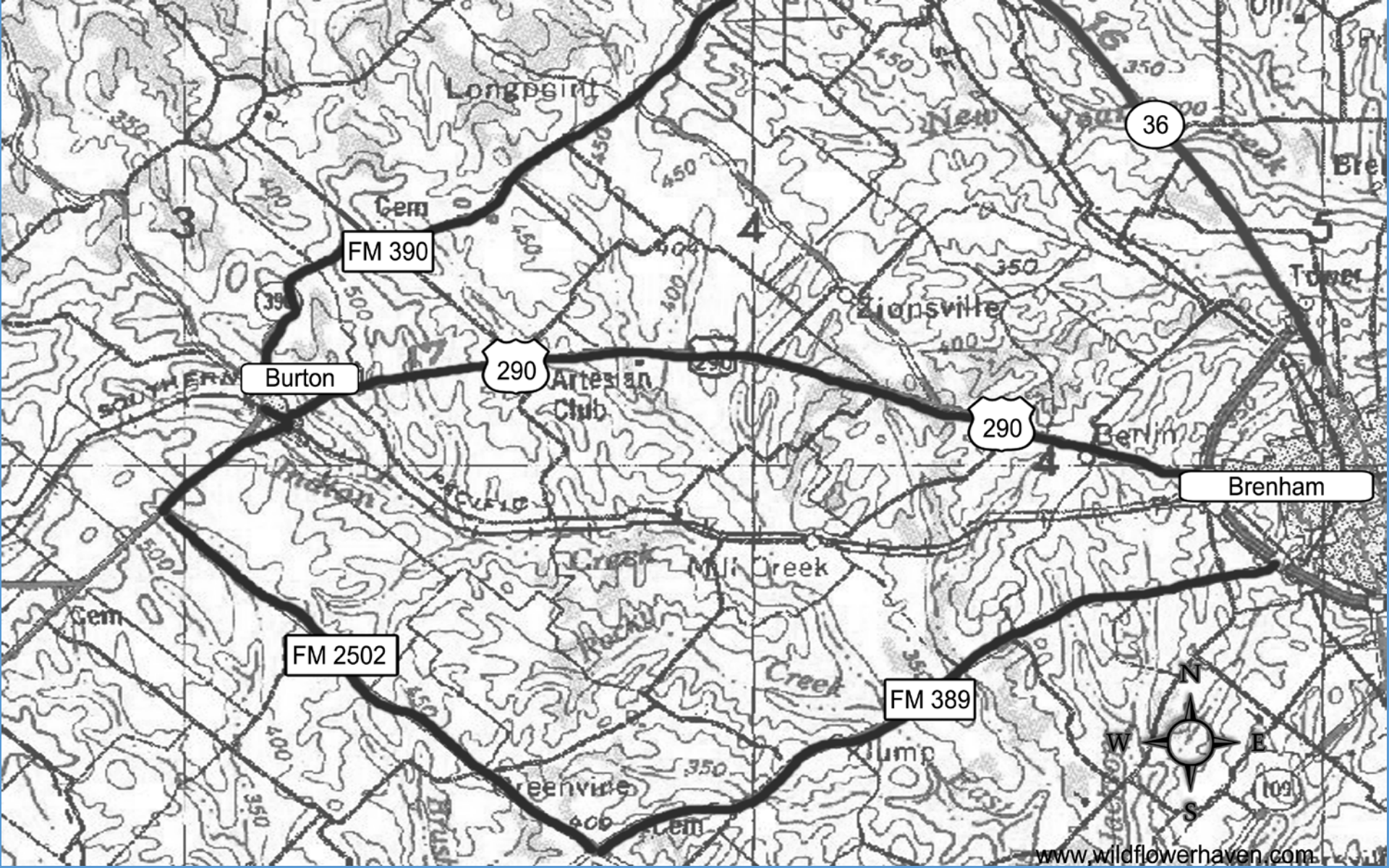
FM-362 to Whitehall: Spend some time along the country roads 320, 322, 323, 324, 325 and 2. In the past some very large fields of bluebonnets have been found.

FM-1155 to Chappell Hill: This stretch of road often produces a number of very nice spots of paintbrush, bluebonnets, and pink evening primrose. The road is usually very busy with only a few spots to pull over safely.

FM-2447 East from Chappell Hill: Murry reports there is a covered bridge along this route. It is one route he usually checks.

FM-1371 south from Chappell Hill to Gibbs Creek RD, East on Gibbs Creek RD to Nicholson River RD: Variety of areas along this route.

Phillipsburg Church RD: This one of Tony's favorite routes and is located south of Brenham off SH-36.



Longpoint

Gem

FM 390

39

Burton

290

Artesian Club

290

Zionsville

290

Berlin

Brenham

FM 2502

Gem

Creek

Mill Creek

Creek

FM 389

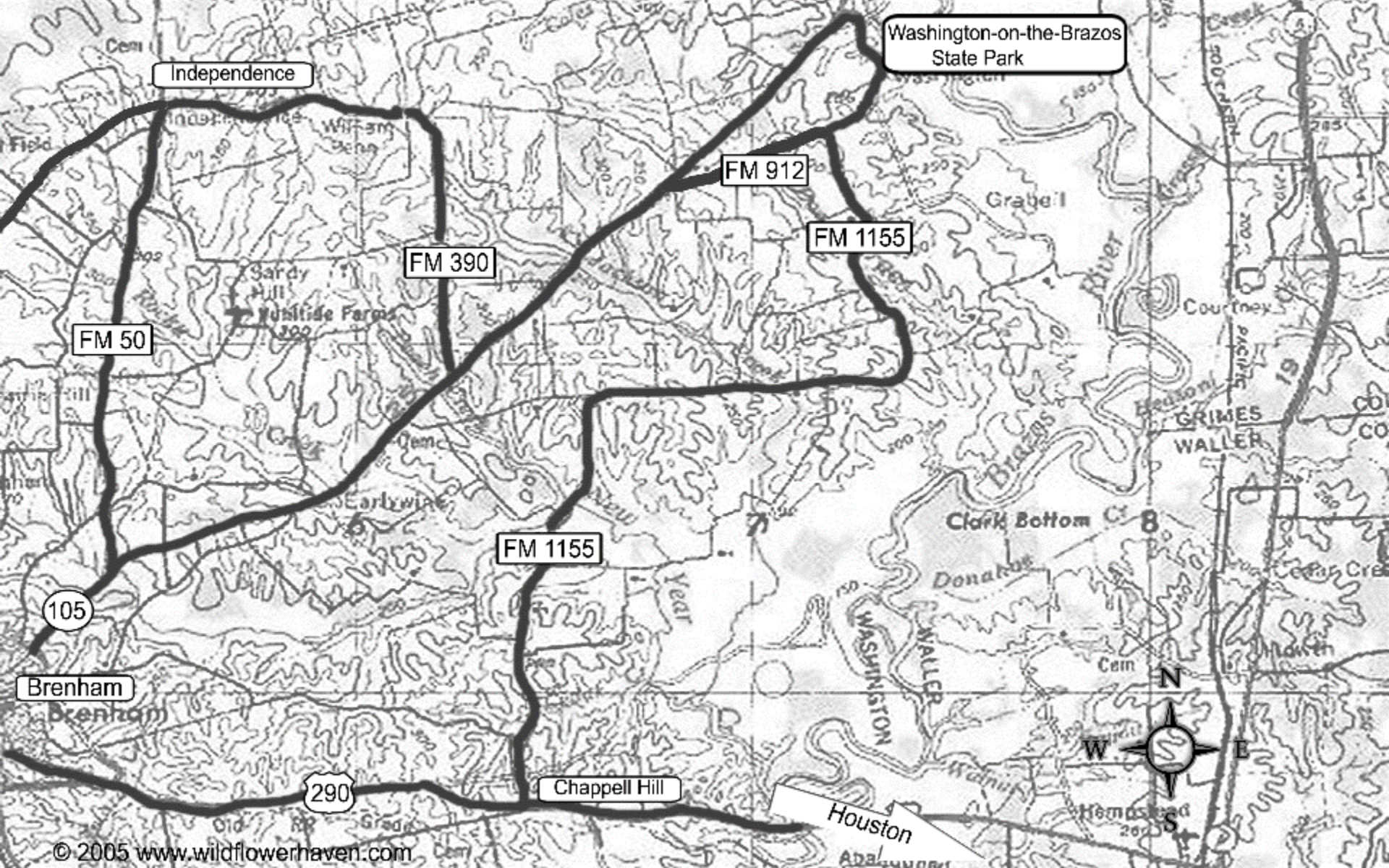
Greenville

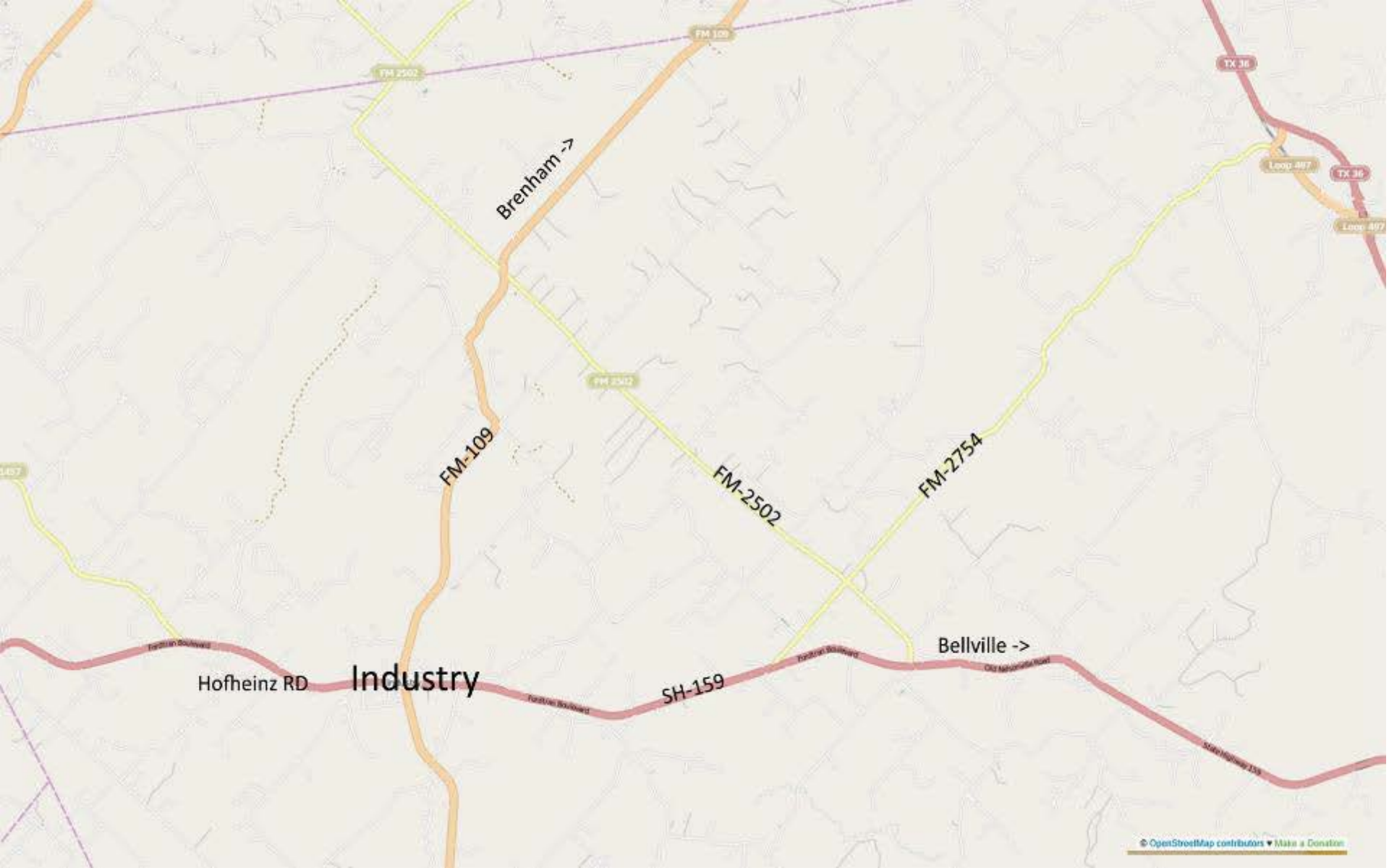
Gem

Kilump

36

109





Brenham ->

FM-109

FM-2502

FM-2754

Hofheinz RD Industry

SH-159

Bellville ->

Chappell Hill

US 290

FM-1371

Nicholson Lake RD

Gibbs Creek RD



Sample Photos

A small sample of the types of views and photo opportunities are available in the Brenham area. Click on each photo for more information. These are from previous seasons and do not necessarily reflect the current season.



References and Resources

Thanks to Murry Grigsby and Tony Crowley for their contributions to the routes section.

Wildflower Sightings

For bluebonnet and other wildflower sightings for the Brenham area check:

[Brenham Wildflower Watch](#)

[Texas Wildflower Report on Facebook](#)

[Other Wildflower Resources](#)

[Wildflower Identification Resources](#)

Photographer Galleries

[Murry Grigsby](#) – Murry has been photographing wildflowers in the Brenham area for many years and is one of the senior contributors for WildflowerHaven.com and other sighting sites. Check his [Texas Wildflowers Gallery](#) for current photos of the Brenham area.

[Texas Wildflower Report](#) and [Texas Bluebonnet Photos](#) – Photos by the author, Rich Olivieri.

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