

February 21, 2024

Ernesto Ortega Cariño
November 11, 1945 – February 16, 2024

Ernesto Ortega Cariño was born Nov. 11, 1945, in Guadalupe Santa Ana, Puebla, Mexico. He passed away peacefully at his home in Medina on Feb. 16, 2024.

He is preceded in death by his parents and several siblings. Ernesto is survived by his partner of over 30 years, Ysmael Espinoza; his sisters - Blanca, Maria, Esperanza; and brothers - Jerry and Jorge; and several nieces and nephews.

Ernesto attended the Universidad Autónoma de La Ciudad de México in Mexico City, studying business and accounting and received a degree in accounting.

Ernesto worked for 15 years for HEB. It was at HEB where he met Ysmael. During their off hours from HEB, they began working for Betty Wunningham at her “Natives of Texas” nursery. There they learned to appreciate the value of our hardy native plants. Ernesto and Ysmael then started the Medina Garden Nursery in 1999. Many native plant enthusiasts continued to influence them along the way about plants, botany and cultivation techniques, including Dorothy Mattiza, Sally Wasowski, Jill Nokes, Chuck Janzow, Sue Tracy, Pat McNeal, Karen Smith, Dan Hosage and others.

The focus of their nursery was and still is native plants. One of the few early providers of Texas native plants, this nursery is highly respected throughout Texas and beyond. Under Ernesto’s and Ysmael’s creative care it became much more than a nursery - a demonstration garden for attracting butterflies, hummingbirds and songbirds, a teaching garden, a research garden for studying monarch butterflies, a place visited by school groups, garden clubs, and more. Ernesto provided seeds and cuttings and shared native plants with botanists, nursery people, and native plant societies throughout Texas and the southwest. The key to its success was not only Ernesto's business savvy, but his generous nature.

He and Ysmael were willing to share their knowledge of growing plants with others. From the “Bienvenidos” entry sign to the extensive butterfly gardens, that place is truly a gem, welcoming all.

Besides appreciating the beauty of plants with an eye for landscaping, Ernesto had another artistic side to him - he loved to paint. He studied oil painting with artist, Joy Carrington of Medina. Ernesto was also known for his philosophical thoughts and words. He often relayed “dichos” or wise sayings in Spanish to instill wisdom and insight.

Ernesto was honest and kind and a generous friend to many.

Funeral service will be held on Saturday, Feb. 24, at 11 a.m., at Grimes Bandera Funeral Chapel, 1214 Mulberry St., Bandera, Texas. A procession will follow afterwards to the West Prong Cemetery, on Coalkiln Road off FM 337, west of Medina.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the Silver Sage Resource Center of Bandera (<https://silversage.org>) or the Medina Community Library (<https://medinacommunitylibrary.us>).

In honor of Ernesto, please wear something blue, his favorite color.

Funeral arrangements are entrusted to Grimes Bandera Funeral Chapel.

To order memorial trees or send flowers to the family in memory of Ernesto Ortega Cariño, please visit the Grimes [flower store](#).