



THE TEXAS SAGE

Native Plant Society of Texas, North Central Chapter Newsletter
Volume 17, Number 4
May 2005

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The President's Corner *Pat Lovejoy*

Members and Friends,

Spreading the word on natives—with the help of Rosa Finsley we are well on our way, at least to the 47 guests and 63 members who were present at our April meeting. It was wonderful to see so many of you there.

Rosa encouraged us to add structure in our gardens with boulders, bird baths, fences, and rock walls. And to add soft-sounding water features for our feathered friends. Who would have thought to use prickly pear with four-nerve daisy, coreopsis, and other beautifully colored perennials? Or that Turks cap and *Lantana horrida* are a good combination. I'm going to try these combos, how about you? I'm a big fan of grasses also. The Lindheimer's muhly tucked in with the *Salvia greggii* at the Granbury Road Subcourthouse demonstration garden looks magnificent. And of course, my favorite, little bluestem, placed here and there really adds accents to your perennial garden and provides great winter interest.

The Star Telegram continues to help us spread the word on natives. I hope you had an opportunity to read Alyson Ward's article called "Want a beautiful—and less costly garden—go native!" It appeared in the March 27 "News to Use" section. Alyson interviewed our Gailon Hardin, who has reduced her 43,000 sq. ft. of grass to 1,200 by creating a beautiful native garden with large drifts of red autumn sage, chili pequin, Gulf Coast muhly and so much more.

As you can tell, I love using native plants. I have just about eradicated all of the box-wood and nandina from my yard. While I'm not a purist, my first choice is usually a native plant. I do have a few roses (most are native or the old found varieties), a small herb garden, plus pots of rosemary on my deck.

I just returned from a few days away to find some wonderful color in my shady back yard: yellow blooming columbine, the purple of lyre-leaf sage, a surprise ox-eye daisy, some red cedar sage, plus a white *Salvia greggii* shouted "Welcome home!" This spring has been very colorful in my back yard full of trees and native plants. My front yard is sunnier, and the blackfoot daisy, red *Salvia greggii* and zexmenia are just starting to bloom. I'm trying to be a good example in my neighborhood on how to have a beautiful, low maintenance, low water landscape using native plants. I also pass along my extras to neighbors. This is how I'm spreading the word on natives—how about you?

I hope you will join us in May as we continue our Smart Start Your Yard with Natives workshop with Rosa Finsley. Rosa will answer questions and we will have another surprise tree for our raffle, plus gift certificates from some local nurseries.

Pat



May meeting: Thursday, May 12, 7:00 pm, Fort Worth Botanic Gardens, Orchid Room

Please join us for part two of our Smart Start Your Yard with Natives workshop with Rosa Finsley, well known Texas Native Landscape Architect. During part three of the workshop on June 9, Rosa will conduct a walking workshop through the Molly Hollar Wildscape at Veterans Park, Arlington. For more information call Taylor Stephens-Parker, 817-784-6003 or soil-nurse@sbcglobal.net

The Landscape Revolution *Andy Wasowski*

The following sensible watering tips combine the basic xeriscape principles advocated by the Denver Water Department and suggestions that Sally Wasowski gives to her landscape design customers.

- Get rid of all or a significant portion of conventional turf grass. The lawn is a water guzzler; therefore consider alternatives such as native ground covers or grasses, decks, or patios.
- Use plants that are native to your immediate area (50-100 miles) or noninvasive exotics that are well suited to your growing conditions.
- Always water in the coolest parts of the day, preferably after sundown.
- Water in two short cycles instead of one long one to reduce runoff. Better yet, use a drip irrigation or bubbler system; these are far more efficient.
- Water deeply to a depth of four to six inches. This encourages roots to grow deeper where it stays moist longer.
- Aerate the soil for better water penetration.
- Use mulches. They keep the roots cool and reduce evaporation by as much as 70%.
- Check your irrigation system for leaks. Even a small leak can waste incredible amounts of water.
- Separate plants according to their water requirements: Place low-water plants together and higher-water plants in another place. Take advantage of existing water in your landscape area such as a creek, pond, recycling fountain, or extra moisture gained where rain runs off your roof or patio.



Garden Cuttings *Annotated from Jim Leavy*



Lady beetle larva feeding on aphids
R. Bessin, University of Kentucky
Entomology

Spring has sprung and everything is growing including garden pests. If you have roses, then you have aphids. But wait: there is hope. Those strange-looking black and orange creatures are ladybug "tigers." They may be the ugliest things in your garden, but these ladybug larvae devour aphids and are your best weapon in the fight of good against evil.

Ladybugs are beneficial insects and should be encouraged in your yard. But if your garden is overrun with aphids or other pests, the root cause may be your choice of plants and where they are sited. Pest infestations are secondary lines of attack on a plant. Something else (too much light, not enough water, too little oxygen in the soil, wrong soil pH) is causing the plant to be in a weakened condition, and it will emit certain gases that pests recognize as free meal tickets. Many times the answer to the plant's sickness is that it is in the wrong growing site.

You will always have a few pests around, so the key is to create a balance between prey and predators and healthy plants whose own turgor pressure keeps some pests at bay. The key to this

balance is to not use pesticides, to put the right plant in the right spot, and to have biodiversity within your garden so that you offer a smorgasbord of potential habitat for as many creatures as possible. If a plant is sickly or constantly being attacked, get rid of it and find another plant that does work. In the long run, it is a lot cheaper to replace a plant than to apply band-aids. In the longer run, you'll be doing your part to reduce toxins in your own environment.



Convergent lady beetle larva and adult
R. Bessin, University of Kentucky
Entomology

Don't forget the Fall NPSOT Symposium in Big Bend, October 20-23, 2005

The Big Bend NPSOT chapter has many wonderful activities planned. Make your hotel reservations soon as rooms are going fast! Check the NPSOT website or the next state newsletter for more details.

Molly Hollar Wildscape at Veterans Park *Molly Hollar and John Dycus*

Molly Hollar calls spring at the wildscape “splendiferous.” The powerful fragrance of the Mexican plums delights a visitor even before the cloud-like blooms come into view. Redbuds are showing off, along with lovely drifts of golden groundsel, a native, shade-loving groundcover destined to help reduce areas of water-guzzling, non-evergreen St. Augustine lawn. Recommended watering for St. Augustine lawns is an inch every five days, as opposed to the 3-6 times *per year* (4 inches) supplemental water needed to keep the golden groundsel and other native, evergreen groundcovers looking lovely.

Sally Wasowski favors a native mixture of drifts of golden groundsel, *Ruellia nudiflora* with Missouri violets, cedar sedge, white avens, trout lily and wild garlic in the Eastern Cross Timbers for an evergreen, blooming groundcover mix in the shade. An example of this mix can be seen in the wildscape pavilion area by the kiosk and north of the boardwalk. Those fortunate enough to have woodland shade trees on their property can reduce or even eliminate lawn area with these native evergreen groundcovers and consequently reduce watering and maintenance (no mowing needed!) by up to 75 percent.



Site of the latest expansion of native plants at Veterans Park. The bandshell is up the hill to the left, and the Wildscape is downhill to the right.

Volunteers have been working every Wednesday and Friday morning readying indigenous native plants to beautify the wildscape and for the spring plant sale. The Arlington Parks & Recreation Department accelerates the process by letting these volunteers use its greenhouse and by cooperating in many other ways. The city’s current project benefiting the wildscape is an erosion control area of nearly an acre on the north side of the sidewalk beyond and east of the vehicular bridge.

Erosion from this worn, bare area has smothered hundreds of plants as a result of excessive uphill water washing down everything in its path onto the wildscape area at the bottom. The volunteers recently began planting native grasses to anchor the soil, as recommended by landscape architect Rosa Finsley and by John Snowden, a local expert and grower of native grasses at Bluestem Nursery. John has been an invaluable benefactor by donating all the native grasses in the wildscape. He has also served as a wildscape volunteer, consulting and helping greatly in privet removal.

The recently updated Molly Hollar Wildscape mission statement—to educate the community to conserve resources, attract wildlife, and connect with nature through using native plants—will determine the content of the main wildscape kiosk. A committee headed by Ellen Baskerville is developing the sign. In accordance with the mission statement, the wildscape is being restored as an example of the Eastern Cross Timbers before it was overplowed and overgrazed. The wildscape will provide a bit of “wilderness” within the city where people can connect with nature as they stroll the trails and relax in the pavilion. They can meditate on benches overlooking the creek and the small bird pond. They can experience the sights of birds and butterflies, the smells (fragrances) and sounds (birdsong, flowing water) of nature. They also can see examples of how to conserve water, eliminate toxic chemicals, reduce labor and attract wildlife while restoring a natural setting.



Unbeatable help meets unstoppable force: Parks & Rec mainstay Martin Sanchez sets out grasses as fast as Molly Hollar can produce them.

Special raffle thanks to:

Designs in Nature for the Eve’s necklace
Green Mamas Gardens for the gift certificate
Redenta’s Gardens for the gift certificate
We appreciate your continued support.

And more thanks for March raffle items to:
Gailon’s Gardens for the desert willow
Stephen Hayden for the rosemary and holly ferns
Helena vanHeiningen for the pink watering can purse.
Jeanette Barkley for the pass-along herbs.

Thanks also to all of you who *bought* a ticket. This helps us cover our meeting room expenses.

Next Meeting

Thursday, May 12

7:00 pm

Fort Worth Botanic Gardens

Rosa Finsley

Native Landscape Architect

Special Workshop

Continues:

**Smart Start Your Yard
with Natives**

Visit us on the Web at
www.txnativeplants.org

Join the Native Plant Society of Texas!

We invite you to become a member of the Native Plant Society of Texas. Membership is open to any individual, family, or organization. Membership is renewable annually and extends for a year from the date we receive your original payment.

If you wish to join, please indicate your category of membership, then clip and mail this application along with the appropriate remittance to:

Native Plant Society of Texas
P.O. Box 891, Georgetown, TX 78627
512-868-8799 or 512-931-1166

<input type="checkbox"/> Student	\$15	<input type="checkbox"/> Group	\$35
<input type="checkbox"/> Senior Citizen	\$15	<input type="checkbox"/> Patron	\$50
<input type="checkbox"/> Individual	\$20	<input type="checkbox"/> Benefactor	\$100
<input type="checkbox"/> Family	\$25	<input type="checkbox"/> Corporate Sponsor	\$1000

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THE TEXAS SAGE

is a monthly publication of the North Central Chapter of the Native Plant Society of Texas.

For changes of address or information about contributing to the newsletter, please contact the newsletter editor.

The deadline for submitting articles for inclusion in next month's newsletter is the 15th of every month.

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The Texas Sage is printed on recycled paper.