



Yes, it's a native plant. See page 2.



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N P S O T

**North Central Texas
News**

Native Plant Society of Texas, North Central Chapter Newsletter
Volume 20, Number 9, November 2008

The President's Corner *Hester Schwarzer*

Notes from Hester

What could be better than a successful native plant sale in Texas in October? In fact, we have had two sales within the last few weeks. First, one to benefit the Molly Hollar Wildscape in Arlington followed by the NPSOT sale held in the Fort Worth Botanic Gardens in conjunction with their annual fall sale. Both occasions afforded us great opportunities to visit with a number of folk concerning the native plants available and their usefulness in the urban landscape.

Many volunteers were needed and grateful thanks go to all.

To top off October events, several members shared the good fortune of traveling to East Texas to spend time in the Big Thicket Preserve. We learned of multiple efforts to expand the holdings with connecting corridors along vital waterways and additional blocks of land. Areas along the Big Sandy Creek, Turkey Creek, Village Creek, Menard Creek, Neches River, and Pine Island Bayou are in need of protection. These streams connect various units of the Big Thicket Preserve, which are located miles apart.

We explored plant diversity in the area, from tall pine and cypress to tiny mosses. Carnivorous plants unique to the area were of particular interest. Even the soil and underlying rock did not escape study. What a wealth of knowledge the speakers and field trip leaders contributed!

It felt a great deal like going home to the piney woods and bottomlands of northeast Texas where I spent so many care-free hours roaming the woods and meadows with my faithful dog. We are in grave danger of losing these wild places and removing them from possible use by generations to come. It is so refreshing to know some of the people committed to preserving at least a portion of this great land for all to enjoy.

November meeting

Thursday, November 6, 7:00 pm,
Fort Worth Botanic Gardens, Deborah Beggs Moncrief
Garden Center, Leonhardt Lecture Hall

Program: Plant exchange. Bring a Texas native plant to exchange for another of your choice. Note: You might lose your choice to another member.

Plant of the Month Josephine Keeney

Frostweed, *Verbesina virginica*



The large clusters of white flowers bloom in August and September and are usually covered with bees and butterflies. The foliage is a larval host for the Summer Azure, Bordered Patch and Silvery Checkerspot butterflies.

As if all that wasn't enough, when a freeze happens the stems will burst and make beautiful ice formations at the base of the plants, but you have to go out early to see it because the ice sculpture melts fast.



This lovely perennial plant is native to Texas and many other states but has been ignored by commercial nurseries.

The large leaves give it a rather tropical look, but it is very hardy. Frostweed can reach as high as 6 feet but averages 4 feet. Trimming it back in June will give you a fuller plant and more blooms. It likes full sun, partial or full shade. Frostweed requires a small amount of water to be happy.

Its native habitat is river banks, open woodlands and shaded woods.



Editor's note: You really should visit Josephine's marvellous Web site, www.texasstar.org. It's a forum for Texas gardeners dedicated to the cultivation and propagation of Texas native plants and wildflowers.

Business & Bylaws

Nominating committee for 2009
Officers: Sandra Balch, Gailon Hardin, Helena van Heiningen

Nomination of Officers for 2009:
President - Dawn Hancock
Vice President - Sandra Johnson
Treasurer - Gailon Hardin
Secretary - Alice Moffitt

ARTICLE IV. Officers

Section 1 - The officers of the Chapter shall be President, Vice-

President, Secretary, and Treasurer.

Section 2 - Nomination and Election of Officers.

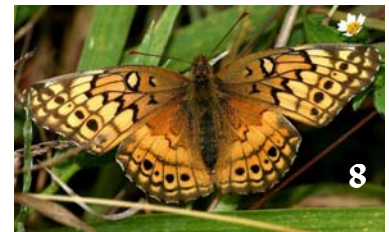
A. The President shall appoint, subject to Executive Board approval, a Nominating Committee consisting of three or more members. These appointments shall be announced at the August general meeting. It shall be the duty of this committee to nominate one or more candidates for each office.

B. At the October general meeting, the Nominating Committee shall report. Before the election at the November meeting, additional nominations from the floor shall be permitted. Nominees from the floor must have agreed in advance to serve if elected.

C. Elections shall be held at the November general meeting, and shall be by ballot except if there is one nominee for any office. If there is only one nominee for each office, voting shall be viva voce.

Butterflies Jo Ann Karges

Butterflies in Fall and Winter

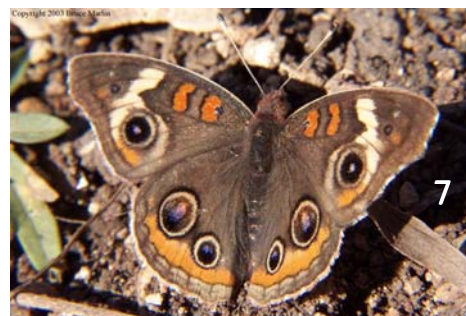


Many people are under the impression that when cold weather comes there will be no more butterflies. This is true in northern latitudes, but in this area we can always expect to find some species, not as many as we find in spring and summer but nearly always some.

The sulphur butterflies (Pieridae) for the most part can withstand some quite cold weather and may be observed in open fields and gardens throughout the season. Most common of these are the Orange Sulphur (1), the Sleepy Orange (2), and the Dainty Sulphur (3).

In addition, the Goatweed Leafwing (4), and the Questionmark (5) flash brilliant orange as they flit through the woods. The Red Admiral (6), which for the most part has bred north of here, is a frequent visitor, sometimes numerous.

One can almost always expect to see the Buckeye (7), the Variegated Fritillary (8), and the little American Snout (9). Look also for the gorgeous Mourning Cloak (10), a cold-weather visitor here.



How do they manage when there are no flowers? Some have stored up reserves of nourishment in their bodies. Others will partake of tree sap, fallen rotten fruit, and protein and minerals from animal droppings or even from carrion.

How do they survive freezing temperatures? After finding some shelter among rocks, fallen logs, tree hollows, or thick grass and shrubbery, they go into a kind of torpor state, glycerin in their bodies acting as antifreeze. On warmer, sunny days with temperatures about 60°, they will be flying.

Can we help them find food? Yes, by putting out fruit, such as bananas, peaches, pears. And one non-native plant that I must recommend because it blooms in December and January with abundant nectar: *Lonicera fragrantissima*, which, because it is an evergreen shrub, also provides shelter.

New York Avenue Prairie Jan Miller



Well, doesn't that stand out like a sore thumb?

Sometimes things just stand out from the background...just don't look right some-

how. That was the case earlier this month when a volunteer noticed that a load of brush had been dumped at Arlington's New York Avenue Blackland Prairie. Apparently someone finally got sick of their red tip photinia hedge, plus some sickly boxwood and euonymus shrubs, so they cut down the whole mess, then dumped it at a convenient, but really, really wrong spot.

Well, all that looked really out of place with the bluestem, Maximilian sunflowers and asters, at least until volunteers moved it. But it also demonstrated the biodiversity difference between urban landscapes and natural ones: The dumped mess consisted of the three shrub types, then for comparison let's add a couple of tree, grass, weed and a few ornamental flower species (likely all non-native) for maybe a dozen total for the urban landscape. In contrast, over 120 plant species have been counted (so far) at the native blackland prairie on New York Avenue. Typically, blackland prairies host 200-300 plant species, so it's quite likely they're not all recorded yet.

The high degree of plant diversity typical of blackland prairies is primarily based on the types of soil. In our North Central Texas area that was once mostly prairie, the major types are:

Vertisols (think 'vertical' or rising soil) are rich, highly fertile black clays that swell and shrink depending on moisture. Gilgai are characteristic.

Mollisols are rich and fertile, but less so than vertisols and generally more shallow and also more stable.

Alfisols are less fertile clays with more sand. They are found

along rivers and creeks, especially along the eastern side of the blackland region and along the Red River. Mima mounds are characteristic.

Depending on the soil type, moisture, pH and texture, a variety of grass and forb communities is possible, but in general, the following grass-based plant communities are typical. Shinner & Mahler's *Flora of North Central Texas* counts three to seven (depending on the researcher) different grassland communities on these three soil associations.

Three of the grassland communities cover most of the blackland prairie region and are similar, having little bluestem as the predominant species, and differing only in the secondary grass species. Little bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*) and Indiangrass (*Sorghastrum nutans*) are frequently the dominant species on Blackland Prairie alfisols and vertisols. Big bluestem (*Andropogon gerardii*) is frequently a dominant species on Blackland Prairie mollisols, but variable on vertisols.

The other two blackland plant associations are more limited in coverage and area:

Gamagrass-switchgrass-Indian grass (*Tripsacum dactyloides*-*Panicum virgatum*-*Sorghastrum nutans*) prairies are associated with lowland sites throughout the region, and are also found on upland vertisol sites along the Red River.

Silveanus dropseed-Mead's sedge (*Sporobolus silveanus*-*Carex meadii*) prairies are found over low pH soils with more moisture in the northern main belt and frequently associated with mima mounds.

That's just the grasses. Then the community relations get really involved with secondary grasses and forbs. All that's great for researchers, but ultimately the blackland prairies are a rich patchwork of mutual support, with an equally mind-boggling diversity of critters: insects, other arthropods, birds, herps, mammals, even

the soil micro- and macro-flora/fauna. It's the kind of diversity that's just not found in urban landscapes.

Then sometimes there's the other kind of 'stand out.' After leaving a local drive-through, a sideways glance caught an ugly mish-mash of construction debris, fast food litter...and a funny-looking bloom spike. Curiosity and a closer look found that the bloom was a native *Mirabilis* species, along with some *Agalinis* and a nice stand of purpletop (*Tridens flavus*), all in bloom. Got to wonder: not too long ago, what kind of plant community was there, and what did that prairie look like?

References:

Texas Parks & Wildlife Department
Flora of North Central Texas

Orchid Therapy

Don Young has kindly supplied his recent photo of Nodding Ladies Tresses (*Spiranthes cernua*) that he found blooming recently at Fort Worth's Tandy Hills Natural Area.



Wildscape Update John Dycus



Beautiful weather and 20 great volunteers from ACC, NPSOT and CTMN made this year's plant sale at the Arlington Parks and Recreation

Department greenhouse in Randol Mill Park the most successful ever. Interest never flagged, from before 8 a.m. until after 1 in the afternoon. Out the door they went — native grasses, perennials, groundcovers, shrubs, trees, bog/water plants — piled on wagons, pulled by volun-



teers to the parking area, and loaded into customers' cars.

Sally Wasowski's books about landscaping with native Texas plants sold out, as did many of the plants grown by wildscape propagation volunteers. John Snowden, owner of Bluestem Nursery, again provided expert advice regarding his great native grasses, which complement our other native plants so well. A supporter from the beginning, he has donated all the grasses in the wildscape and has spent many hours removing the invasive privet and providing consultation.

Organic guru Lucy Harrell brought some of her gardening students to buy some of the plants they've been learning about in Lucy's wildscape mini-classes.

She recently donated 10 sacks of pine needle mulch to help control bermuda grass.

The plant sale success can be traced to greenhouse manager Josephine Keeney and the propagation volunteers. Every Wednesday morning they hit the greenhouse to grow Texas native plants from seeds or cuttings, most of which are collected locally and grown organically. In addition to overseeing Wednesday morning propagation, Josephine goes other days to care for the plants. She even had a hand in September's mini-class on attracting butterflies, which attracted several volunteers.

Indigenous plants accustomed to the area's temperature swings and fickle rainfall can be difficult to find. Thousands of plants are needed to restore the four-acre wildscape to a natural habitat after being overrun by the awful invasive privet. Income from these sales provides the wildscape's share of matching grants, tools and other essentials.

Since fall is the best time to plant in this part of the world, the volunteers will put all manner of flora in the ground through October and into the winter. The critical part of plant survival is the summer Texas heat, so planting in the spring means lots of watering and care with little growth. Fall planting enables roots to grow during the relatively mild winter. After it freezes is the best time to plant trees, so understory trees will continue to be placed along the trails during the winter.

One of those trails, the one leading to the pavilion from the original entry area, has been greatly improved thanks to Eagle Scout candidate Stephen Storm



and his Scout friends. This sloping trail of decomposed granite has proved vulnerable to washing and drainage problems, prompting trail manager Larry Norris and APRD's Martin Sanchez to replace the original stone waterbars with larger, more stable stone, with drains added to better divert the rain. Wesley Miller, poison ivy control guy and super wildscape supporter, assisted, and Stephen and his team of Scouts provided the labor to install the heavy stone and bury the drains.

And what wildscape update would be complete without worms and a little decay? ACC president John Darling, the Eddie Murphy of mulch, in early August entertained the volunteers with a demonstration of vermicomposting. Even those who found worms lacking in appeal were amused (perhaps converted even) after this brief exposure.



Next Meeting

Thursday, November 6
7:00 pm
Fort Worth
Botanic Gardens

Plant Exchange

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Join the Native Plant Society of Texas!

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 with the appropriate remittance to:

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<input type="checkbox"/> Student	\$15	<input type="checkbox"/> Couple/Family	\$40
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<input type="checkbox"/> Senior Couple (one 65+)	\$30	<input type="checkbox"/> Patron	\$100
<input type="checkbox"/> Individual	\$25	<input type="checkbox"/> Benefactor	\$250
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The North Central Texas NPSOT News

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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