



From the Prez....

# Trinity Forks Native Plant Press:

the Newsletter of the Trinity Forks Chapter,  
Native Plant Society of Texas

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February 2004

## February in North Texas

February is the one of the months that I find most difficult. Spring is just around the corner, but not here yet and it is hard to wait. There are warm, sunny days and clear, clean air that beckon. After a few days, I even begin to forget that there is a Winter and that folks "Up North" are freezing in their tracks. In February, I have been known to plant some of my garden vegetables a few weeks earlier than Mother Nature thinks is correct. I get excited looking for glimpses of those earliest spring flowers or even the first sprouts of the later ones. However, this February is much different because I am one of those "folks up North." I have been in Washington State since January and will return to Texas just in time for our February meeting.

This is an exciting and challenging time for the Trinity Forks Chapter. We are fortunate to have FOUR new board members: **Harriet Horton** (Programs & Education), **Laurie Hammett** (Membership), **Susan Burke** (Ways & Means) and **Shari Withey** (Historian). Please take a minute to thank them for their service. Our Chapter is so much more enriched by their efforts. We have even received interest in positions for NEXT year! Please contact me via email if **YOU** would like to provide additional assistance, or just sit in on the next board meeting (visitors are always welcome).

Hang on to your hats, Spring is nearly here and we have plenty of activities in the works! There will be informative programs, the big Redbud Days plant sale, field trips, plant rescues, and wildflowers galore. I can hardly wait, can you?

—Garrett Brown ☞



## Our February Program

Trinity Forks chapter of the Native Plant Society of Texas will meet on Thursday, February 26, 2004 in Room 110 of the UNT Environmental Science Building. **Carol Feldman** of Feldman Design Studios will present February's program, *Landscape Design Basics*. She will discuss design principles, and tell about the versatile palette of native plants available for use in Texas. Ms. Feldman's presentation will include topics such as site analysis and plant selection, and basic design principles such as composition, color, texture, form, and personalizing your garden.

Ms. Feldman is President of the Dallas Chapter of Native Plant Society of Texas, and a member of American Society of Landscape Architects, The National Arbor Day Foundation, Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center, and Society for Ecological Restoration. Carol Feldman has won several awards and has also been the recipient of several scholarships related to her work. Carol has produced numerous projects in the Greater Dallas/Ft. Worth area and worked with other landscapists and homebuilders on sustainable home projects including rain collection, porous paving, drip irrigation and water efficient plantings. She was worked on conceptual designs for water-efficient landscaping. Ms. Feldman worked with parents and teachers to install an outdoor elementary classroom with a stream, ponds, forest eco-zone, prairie eco-zone & bog eco-zone.

Carol Feldman has presented seminars at various house and garden shows and other events in our area. *Dallas Home Design* and *Preston Hollow Home & Heritage* magazines have featured some of her projects. Ms. Feldman will present *Landscape Design Basics* again at the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center Spring Symposium in Austin on February 28<sup>th</sup>.

—Harriet Horton ☞



## Digging into our Roots

### The Redbud Days Plant Sale

Our Chapter is preparing once again for our annual plant sale at the Redbud Days Festival. The plant sale is always an important activity for our chapter. It is the main fund raising event of the year. In addition, it gives us an opportunity to gain new members, answer questions and promote native plants while offering a large variety of plants to the public. Years of plant sales means many hundreds of native plants have been dug, potted, hauled to sales and sold. The plants have been dug by individual members in their own yards and by groups of members at organized digs at various places. The plants have been potted in a mix of used pots of all sized and colors. Plants have been carried to sales in all kinds of weather from warm and sunny to cold and rainy. Despite our used pots, plants that sometimes have a meager appearance, and weather that has not always cooperated, we've always had fun and successful plant sales. Because the sale is always held in early March, not only are our plants not blooming yet, they may not even have leaves. We have been amazed at customer's eagerness to buy what sometimes has looked like sticks in pots. The "sticks" that I bought for my mother a few years ago were actually dormant **passionflowers**. She planted the "sticks" and has enjoyed lush plants and beautiful purple blooms from spring to fall ever since. The **American beautyberries** that were only a few inches tall when I got them several years ago are now four feet tall and were loaded with lovely magenta berries last fall. Many plants in my yard are from past plant sales including **prairie phlox, flame acanthus, rose pavonia, Turk's cap** and **coreopsis**. I've had **standing cypress** and **bluebonnets** that have reseeded themselves every year since I started with a few small plants. Success with native plants is the best incentive to buy more. There is nothing more rewarding at the sale than having customers come back year after year because our plants "grow so well!"

—Marilyn Blanton ☞

### Don't forget . . .

to get personally involved in the Redbud Days Native Plant Sale! We can use your help in many ways: set-up, work at the sale, donate plants, and even to help clean up afterwards. This is a great way to get to know other members and get involved in a fund-raising event that is vital to the funding base of our chapter. Spread the word to friends and neighbors to encourage them to visit our booth. We look forward to seeing you at the event. The sale will be held Saturday, March 6, 2004;

8 am to 3 pm. Set-up will begin at 8:00 a.m. Saturday and the sale starts at 9:30 a.m. It is held at the Denton Civic Center and in Civic Center Park. To volunteer for any sale activity, please contact **Susan Burke, lifstdnt@yahoo.com, 940-898-2626**.

If you are donating potted plants (*see the list below for plants "most requested"*), please label your plants so there is no question about what they are and we don't end up with "mystery plants." For the first time we will be offering some native plants that have been grown by the Painted Flower Farm. We have made arrangements to sell select plants on a consignment basis. They will be in one gallon containers with Painted Flower Farm's labels. This decision was made by the board last year in an effort to increase our inventory and offer some plants that we had not had available in the past. We are always trying to improve on our plant sales and inform more people of the benefits of native plants. We can't predict the weather or what plants will sell the best, but with everyone's help and enthusiasm we can predict another great plant sale.

—Susan Burke ☞



### NPSOT Plant Request List

The following species have been requested at previous sales. We would like to offer them this spring, so go see what you can dig up! (Reprinted from October 2003 newsletter.)

- 1) Rusty Blackhaw Viburnum (*Viburnum rufidulum*)
- 2) Caroline Buckthorn (*Rhamnus caroliniana*)
- 3) Scarlet Buckeye (*Aesculus pavia*)
- 4) American Beautyberry (*Callicarpa americana*)
- 5) Cardinal Flower (*Lobelia cardinalis*)
- 6) Butterfly Weed (*Asclepias tuberosa*)
- 7) Winecups (*Callirhoe involucrata*)
- 8) Texas Bluebells (*Eustoma russellianum* or *grandiflorum*)
- 9) Rough Leaf Dogwood (*Cornus drummondii*)
- 10) Red Yucca (*Hesperaloe parviflora*)
- 11) Possumhaw (*Ilex decidua*)
- 12) Burr Oak (*Quercus macrocarpa*)
- 13) Spring Obedient Plant (*Physostegia augustifolia*)
- 14) Shooting Star (*Dodecatheon meadia*)



## In North Texas, native plants may need water in the winter, too!

by G. Owen Yost, Landscape Architect

Plants here often die during the winter, but we just don't notice it. Even native plants can die! A plant's roots, however, can be very active in this climate during the winter months if they are getting enough water.

Plant loss in the winter is more commonly caused by a lack of water than by cold temperatures. If properly cared for, native or well-adapted plants can make it through the coldest Denton weather. Plants may be native to this area, or incredibly adaptable, but there's just no way any of them can live without water. In fact it's common misconception that native plants somehow have the ability to thrive without any water.

This winter might be wetter than last year. Maybe not. In the event, however, that the winter rains aren't quite what we want, you're looking at doing a bit of supplemental watering. Of course, if your plants are native to Texas, less water will be required.

Even native, dormant plants need moisture to keep up the physiological and biochemical changes that make them able to handle the winter weather. The rule of thumb is to water thoroughly once every 2 to 3 weeks through the fall and winter months. Of course, if there's a good, soaking rain, count it as a "watering". When you have to water with a sprinkler, do it in a series, making each sprinkling brief to prevent wasteful run-off; 15 or 20 minutes at most. About mid February, resume your regular watering schedule.

It may look like nothing is really happening in the landscape, during cold weather. However, plants are positioning themselves for spring by producing high concentrations of dissolved sugars, amino acids and other soluble organic molecules to stay resilient during freezing temperatures - almost all this activity is in the plant's roots. A high concentration of chemically-bound water is essential for these processes to occur. This may seem unnecessarily detailed and scientific, but all we really need to know is that regular watering in winter is one way to assure that roots won't dry out and die.

Up North, the plants have to deal with frozen groundwater, which is not the case here. Here, roots continue growing through the unfrozen soil. NPSOT members may realize this already, but your neighbors probably don't.

For those of us in this area who have planted young plants or bulbs within the past few years, it is essential that we keep them well watered when the fall and

winter weather is dry. This is when a lot of root growth occurs (since the ground isn't frozen). Prolonged dryness from fall through late winter will result in weak roots, which translate into slow growth and a poor showing of flowers the following spring. A 2 to 3 inch layer of mulch helps immensely, acting sort of like insulation. (I just use brown, shredded leaves which are, of course, free).

Don't worry too much, however. Insufficient moisture is a problem that's easily remedied. Just remember that your landscape is a living thing all year 'round. If we get regular, soaking rains this winter - great. If not, give your garden a touch of extra care in the form of water. Come springtime it will reward you with healthy, strong and growing plants, while you just sit back and relax.



## Calendar of Events

*THE TRINITY FORKS CHAPTER MEETS THE 4<sup>TH</sup> THURSDAY OF JAN-MAY AND SEPT-OCT AT 7 P.M. IN ROOM 110 OF THE UNT EESAT BUILDING (AVE C & HICKORY) IN DENTON, TEXAS.*

**Sat, Feb 21, 8:45 a.m.** Visit **Texas Discovery Gardens** at Fair Park in Dallas. The program that day is a tour of the tropical paradise in their conservatory. Learn how to grow and care for tropical plants in your home. Then we will tour their Benny Simpson Garden featuring trees and bushes collected by Benny Simpson. Meet at 8:45 a.m. in the parking lot in front of Luby's Cafeteria, SW of Golden Triangle Mall. ☞

**Thurs, Feb 26, 7:00 p.m.** ☞ **TRINITY FORKS CHAPTER MEETING** at UNT EESAT Building, Room 110. **Carol Feldman** of Feldman Design Studios and President of the Dallas NPSOT chapter will present *Landscape Design Basics*. She will discuss design principles, and tell about the versatile palette of native plants available for use in Texas. Bring a friend and let's get our creative juices flowing together! ☞

**Sat, Mar 6, 8 a.m. til 4 p.m.** ☐ **Spring Plant Sale** at the Denton Civic Center. We will be participating in an event sponsored by Keep Denton Beautiful (KDB). We will set up Saturday morning from 8 to 9:30 a.m. The sale begins at 9:30 a.m. Saturday. Get your plants ready now and come join in the fun! This is a great way to gain some good exposure for our chapter, and spread the word about native plants to a broad audience at the same time. ☞

**Thur, Mar 25, 7 p.m.** ☐ **TRINITY FORKS CHAPTER MEETING** at UNT EESAT Building, Room 110. ☞

**Sat, Mar 27.** Tour yards, a pocket prairie, and a champion **Bois d'Arc** tree in the Muenster/St. Jo area. More details next month. ☞

**Sat/Sun, Apr 17 & 18, 2004.** *North Texas Ecology: Embracing Our Natural Heritage.* Spend a weekend exploring the history and ecology of the Ft. Worth prairie. The event is sponsored by the **Botanical Research Institute of Texas** and will include a wildflower study. It is open to everyone, especially families and educators. Contact Kathy Scott at BRIT ([k.scott@brit.org](mailto:k.scott@brit.org)) or check the website at [www.brit.org/education](http://www.brit.org/education). ☞

**Do you have news or events to share?** Send it to **Cynthia Maguire** at [c.maguire@charter.net](mailto:c.maguire@charter.net). or call her at 940/594-6555. ☞



## Current Officers/Board Members

President <b>Marilyn Blanton</b>	940-464-7775 <a href="mailto:marilyn@postoakplace.com">marilyn@postoakplace.com</a>
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and Ways & Means Historian <b>Kathy Scott</b>	940-321-2412 <a href="mailto:t.kgscott@hotmail.com">t.kgscott@hotmail.com</a>
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**Join the Native Plant Society of Texas—Trinity Forks Chapter.** If you wish to join (or renew) indicate your category of membership, then clip and mail this application with the appropriate remittance to:  
**NPSOT, P.O. Box 891, Georgetown, TX 78627.**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ ( ) Individual \$20 ( ) Benefactor \$100 ( ) Family \$25

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ ( ) Group \$35 ( ) Senior \$15 ( ) Patron \$50

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_ ( ) Corporation \$1000 ( ) Student \$15

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

*The purpose of the Native Plant Society of Texas is to promote the conservation, research and utilization of the native plants and plant habitats of Texas, through education, outreach and example.*

## A Foxglove by Any Other Name

During May a few years ago I was riding my bicycle along Farm-to-Market Road 156 just south of Krum and was surprised by a huge display of large, lavender flowers. One of the reasons for my surprise was the near complete lack of native wildflowers anywhere near this agricultural area. However, there are a few strips of land between the railroad tracks and FM156 that are difficult for the mowers to reach. This particular area was about 8 ft high and rather steep. A small patch of *Penstemon cobaea* was growing at the top of this little hump and was visible from the roadway. I climbed off my bike and "headed for the hills" to get a closer look. To my additional surprise, when I reached the flowers, I could see that even more flowers were growing down the other side of the hill. The patch was easily 30 ft long by 5 ft wide and full of colors ranging from purple to white.

Up close, the flowers were huge compared to many of the other native wildflowers that I was familiar with. I went straight home and pulled out the books for identification. The plants were approximately 2 ft tall and had beautiful, glossy light green leaves. The huge flowers were being used like airplane landing strips for a wide variety of bees and flies. Because the flowering display was so spectacular, I just had to have this for my native landscape. I continued to watch the plants periodically throughout the summer, waiting for the perfect time to collect seeds. The seedpods are pointed like a teardrop and extremely hard. They didn't

begin to open until the early fall, at which time I collected about a tablespoon of seeds.

For those of you who are really interested, separating the seeds from the pods was an experience in itself. After several missteps, I found the best procedure is to literally smash and grind the pods between two bricks into the lid of a cardboard box. The first year, I sifted the seeds and chaff through a coffee can that had a bunch of holes punched into it. I devised a scientific experiment to evaluate the best conditions for germination (soil type, soaking, heating, cooling, scratching, dilute acid, etc.). I discovered that poor germination was the rule (except in the case of extreme scratching or multiple year exposure to the elements). In subsequent years, I have found that sowing the smashed seeds/chafe mixture directly on bare clay during the month of September is the least labor-intensive method and achieves adequate germination. In fact, it works so well that I have hundreds of plants that have grown over two winters and one summer (this *Penstemon* is a perennial). I have potted about 50 plants for the Redbud Day's sale and they should bloom for you this May and well into the future. Take a bunch home and mass them together for a little lavender surprise in your life, too.

—Garrett Brown 




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