



Trinity Forks Native Plant Press:

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

March 2004

From the Prez...

Is Spring Here Yet?

For me the month of March is like a young child, at times so sweet and peaceful that words cannot begin to fully describe the experience. The air is filled with the delicate sweet fragrance of Spring and the expectant warmth of glorious blooms to come. A few early-blooming flowers are just beginning to appear (at least in my neck of the prairie, way up north of Denton). However, in addition to the warm spring breezes, March also contains times of turmoil much like an obstinate two-year-old, screaming blustery winds, severe thunderstorms, and icy chills, sometimes all within a few hours. As I write this, the warm breezes are dominating and I have taken this as a sign to plant some of the early garden vegetables (**lettuce, arugula, peas, radishes**, etc.). I won't challenge Mother Nature just yet by planting the more tender vegetables, waiting instead for the all-clear signal from my very own native **Burr Oak** tree. Last year, the tree leafed out on April 11th, exactly three days after a hard freeze that put 1/4" ice on my pond and killed my covered **tomatoes**. But this year I'm ready, . . . and waiting!

Speaking of waiting, it won't be long until the March 25th meeting where **Suzanne Tuttle** will make a presentation about ecological restoration at the Fort Worth Nature Center. This will certainly be an informative learning experience and just another example of the benefits of YOUR membership in the Trinity Forks Chapter of the Native Plant Society of Texas. Of course, benefits like these bring responsibilities. Remember, *please tell your friends and neighbors* about the benefits of native plants and *invite them* to attend our Chapter meetings. Visitors are always welcome!

—Garrett Brown ☞



Our March Program

Suzanne Tuttle will present the March program, "Ecological Restoration at the Fort Worth Nature Center," on March 25th in Room 125 of the EESAT building at UNT. Holding degrees in Horticulture from TCC and Biology from UT—Arlington, she has worked at the Fort Worth Nature Center and Refuge since 1992. Ms. Tuttle currently serves as the Natural Resource Manager for this 3600-acre wildlife refuge and living natural history museum. She is President of the Texas Chapter of the Society for Ecological Restoration, a past board officer of Native Prairies Association of Texas, Native Plant Society of Texas and Keep Southlake Beautiful. She has been appointed to the Southlake Nature Center Development Committee and is a member of a number of other natural science-related organizations, such as National Audubon Society and the Society for Range Management.

—Harriet Horton ☞



Looking Back to February

*The following was submitted by a new (and one of our youngest!) Trinity Forks Chapter member, **George Roberson**, son of **Camelia Maier**. He offers us a unique perspective.*

—Editor

A New Look

Carol Feldman was the invited speaker for February. She talked about natural landscapes. A natural landscape considers human needs and also considers the needs of birds, butterflies and other wildlife. Ms. Feldman said to provide water for wildlife. Put a water fountain somewhere (one McKinney middle school has a great water fountain.) Put some rocks in the garden and reuse bricks. Sometimes trees look better than buildings. Have some berries in your front yard. **ALWAYS** have bushes! Have at least five flowers in your garden. Make sure your house is being a good background. And don't forget: **GROW NATIVE!**

—George Roberson ☞



"Wildflowers-of-Texas"

by Dorothy Thetford

Common names: Wood violet,
Missouri violet

Botanical name: *Viola missouriensis*

Family: *Violaceae*

Did you find the tiny **Johnny-jump-up** pansy (which has been blooming for several days)? If so, you'll easily find the larger **Missouri violet** (*Viola missouriensis*), commonly referred to as a **wood violet**.

And, the name is befitting. It is normally found growing in sandy soil along the edges of woods and under the canopy of trees in filtered sun on the forest floor. It can also be found in moist soil along creek banks.

This violet plant is a rounded clump of tightly arranged leaves that resembles a florist's nosegay. The dark green leaves are distinctly heart-shaped, or broadly ovate to deltoid ovate, with serrate edges and pronounced veins. They are almost as attractive as the flowers.

Not only are the individual leaves beautiful, but in their compact nosegay growth pattern, they collectively provide the perfect setting for displaying the plant's small and intricate flowers.

Solitary, violet-colored flowers tower an inch above the leaf mound on three-to-four inch peduncles. The arrangement of five unequal petals is often described as a "butterfly" or bilaterally symmetrical design.

The upper two erect petals are more uniform in color, and the three lower petals normally have more distinct, purple vein markings. All five petals, only 1/2 inch across, are displayed in a nodding stance versus face-up.

This perennial violet is native to eight of the ten vegetational zones of Texas, and begins blooming in our North Central Texas zone in mid to late March. The wood violet is normally only four-to-five inches tall, so keep your nose to the ground and don't miss it!

Dorothy's "Wildflowers-of-Texas" greeting cards are available locally at Cupboard Natural Foods and Voertman's.



Native Salads

Do you know which native plants can be/are eaten as salads and at which season of the year? Let me guide you through a delicious harvest to enrich your salad repertoire!

In Spring you can gather **Blackberry** shoots; **Cat Brier** shoots; **Bulrush** shoots and stems; **Burdock** shoots; **Cattail** shoots, roots and stalks; **Curly Dock** leaves; **Evening Primrose** leaves and roots; **Grape** shoots; **Rough Pigweed** tips; **Raspberry** shoots; and **Sumac** shoots.

In Summer you can gather **Bulrush** shoots and stems; **Cattail** shoots, roots and stalks; **Clover**; **Dandelion** leaves and roots; **Hog Peanuts** tubers (late Summer); **Rough Pigweed** tips; **Plantain** leaves; **Purslane** leaves and stems; **Rose** leaves and petals and **Sheep Sorrel** leaves.

In Autumn you can gather **Dandelion** leaves and roots; **Curly Dock** leaves; **Evening Primrose** leaves and roots; **Hog Peanuts** tubers and **Jerusalem Artichoke** tubers.

In Winter you can gather **Basswood** buds. All year you can gather **Water Cress** young leaves and **Wild Onion**. When you gather, remember to leave a part of the plant, if possible, or re-propagate the plant. When you are weeding your lawn or garden, think of salad greens before you remove native plants.

Bring examples of Spring salad greens to our March meeting if you are able. And remember to check your pantry, refrigerator and freezer for native plant inventory; bring your list to the meeting. There will be a prize for the person with the most variety in their food collection!

—Harriet Horton



Do you recognize this herald of spring? How many names do you know for this plant?

Native Plant Spring Symposium, Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center

On February 28, 2004 I was delighted to be able to attend this year's Spring Symposium convened by NPSOT and the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center, Austin. The theme for this year was "Landscape Design With Native Plants." In the morning there were three speakers. **Gary Smith** presented *The New American Garden, Revisited*, an informative and humorous journey through nearly 50 years of designing with native plants in America, as told through the pages of popular horticultural and garden design magazines, putting the current native plant movement into historical perspective. His main message was that our culture must escape the mindset that native plants and trees must be removed for the fertilization and watering of non-native grass lawns that must be frequently mowed with a tool shed full of chemicals and tools.

Jill Nokes presented the keynote address, *Restoration as a Model for Garden Design*. Designers, biologists, and ecologists are finding more meaning in defining restoration as the process of assisting the recovery of an ecosystem that has been degraded, damaged, or destroyed. If one considers restoration from the soil microorganism level to the selection of quality native trees with the greatest potential for mature grandeur, the landscape design heals the ecosystem through natural processes in the most sustainable way, responsive to the erratic demands of Texas climate. The challenge to the designer is to create landscapes that improve ecological qualities and at the same time clearly show the hand of human intention.

Andrea DeLong-Amaya built off Jill Nokes' presentation with *Considerations for Creating an Ecological Garden*. She gave the audience a sense of what to consider when using the concepts of restoration to create gardens. Besides traditional design concepts for our gardens, we can apply ecological principles used by restorationists to create landscapes with stronger meaning and beauty than ever before.

During concurrent sessions I attended *Prairie Gardening* by **Meg Inglis**. She charted the restoration of her Dripping Springs residential septic field over a three year period. In 2000 the Inglis family used 5 native grasses, annual rye grass (to prevent erosion) and wildflowers to seed the septic field. They kept a journal and took photos. A year and a half later, several wildflowers were predominant with the annual rye. **Buffalograss, Little bluestem** and **Sideoats grama** grew in patches. In 2003 the native grasses continued to establish themselves, but **Mexican Hat** had to be cut back to encourage buffalograss. Volunteer plants established themselves along the perimeter of the field. Wildflowers and grasses

migrated from the septic field to other locations on the property.

The next session that I attended was *Trees in the Landscape: Designing With Ashe Junipers* by **Elizabeth McGreevy Seiler**. She examined the aesthetic potential of **Ashe Junipers**, and then focused in using them to achieve desired objectives in a landscape design. Objectives included low water use, enhancement of wildlife habitat, provision of natural buffers, building of topsoil and protection of other, desired plants. She then showed which plants grow beneath Ashe Junipers.

Matt Turner presented *Hidden Roots & Forbidden Fruits*, the uses and association to cultural groups and historical references of **Texas Mountain Laurel, Mexican Buckeye** and **Yaupon**. The stories of uses began 8000 years ago and became more defined since Cabeza de Vaca. **Richard Choates** presented *Habitat Preservation During Construction*. Loosely based on "Building With Trees," a program co-sponsored by the National Arbor Day Foundation and the National Association of Home Builders, this program focused on the benefits of preserving as much vegetation and greenspace as is feasibly possible during both residential and commercial development. The program included the why and how of development preservation and explained the need to involve a knowledgeable tree care professional early in the planning stages, and the importance of full cooperation of all taking part in every stage of construction: talk not only to foremen, also explain why and how to the workers.

After a box lunch I attended *School Yard Design*, a workshop by **Ilene Grossman** and **Dar Richardson**. This workshop covered the process and components needed to create a successful schoolyard native plant landscape. Examples of such landscapes were presented and there was discussion of the steps used to create useful, outdoor learning spaces. Math, botany, physics, even zoology, climatology, responsibility, cooperation and other subjects can be taught by teachers to all age and ability groups of children; older children can help younger ones with some offshoot projects such as photography, news articles, [science fair] projects. Members of NPSOT chapters and other interest-related groups can be trained how to assist teachers in establishing plans for schoolyard learning spaces. Most of the work is actually done by the teachers, children and often parents assist. In the near future I plan to convene a committee in our chapter, which can develop our own curriculum (flower, vegetable, perennials, annuals) and train volunteers from our chapter who can assist teachers. I hope that each member considers the possibility of being a school garden assistant.

—Harriet S. Horton 

(Descriptions of these sessions were taken from the brochure for this event.)



Wild Birds Are A Barometer Of Your Garden's "Naturalness"

by G. Owen Yost

An undeniable fact is that a native, natural garden attracts wild birds. Lots of them! They are a good barometer of your garden's natural appeal. An appealing garden (to a wild bird) contains the four basics: food, water, nesting sites and shelter.

It's also been observed that wild birds focus on native, Texas plants before they resort to perching on or munching on imported, alien species. After all, their ancestors (probably going back thousands of years) have learned to exist on whatever grows naturally here.

However certain birds are "better" than others. Knowing which species is which helps you plant the appropriate plants and feed the birds in an effective way, instead of just wasting your money. So how does a novice know what kind of bird he's looking at?

When we try to identify a bird the most common mistake is not getting enough clues while the bird is in sight. We hurry and try to find a bird identification guide. Instead, make lots of mental notes and look it up later. In the seconds that the bird is in sight, mentally note as much as possible;

- Notice the body. Is it small like a sparrow? Medium-sized like a robin or cardinal? Or large like a jay? Is there a color or colors?
- Look, also, at the colors on the breast, wings and tail. Are they the same color as the body? Are there any patches of color on the wings or tail? Are streaks of different colors noticeable?

- Look at the head. What shape is it, generally? Is it all one color? Does it have a stripe or a splotch of color somewhere? Does the bird have a crest?
- Look at the shape and color of the bill. Is it long or short? Conical or thin? Is the bill all one color?
- Where do you see it? On the ground or in a tree? Is it alone or in a flock? Do nearby birds of the same species look the same? Where does it look for food?
- What is it eating? Berries, seeds, suet, insects, worms?
- Can you hear a song, or whistle or chirp?

Take time to watch it and pick up as many clues as you can. Try to remember them, repeating them to yourself as you watch the bird. Then, after the bird goes away, go to a guide for identification. Many guidebooks will list each bird's favorite foods – giving you important clues about what to plant. The mockingbird, for instance goes crazy over the berries of the beautyberry bush (*Callicarpa Americana*). Hummingbirds and sparrows like mistflower (*eupatorium spp.*) and turk's cap (*Malvaviscus drummondii*).

In spare moments, look at the photographs of the birds in a field guide and read the descriptions. This will familiarize you with the various species and help you identify them when they visit your landscape. The descriptions (and maybe even the pictures) will guide you to planting the right native plants, to attract even more wild birds. ☞



Plant Sale Report

The March 2004 plant sale was a huge success netting \$1,225.81 for the group. In addition to the money raised from selling plants, we received a \$40 cash donation from someone who had been assisted in her gardening efforts by NPSOT members, and she wanted to show her appreciation. We sold 44 one-gallon potted native plants and three American Beauty Berry bushes from Painted Flower Farms, for an after-cost profit of \$150 on those plants. The consensus of those at the sale was that the beautiful leafed-out appearance of the Painted Flower Farms plants drew customers to our booth. Additional customer comments indicated that the well-organized nature of our booth was appealing and contributed to sales.

At the end of the day the left-over plants were donated to Keep Denton Beautiful for the Native Plant Committee to use in their projects this year. Thanks to everybody for all the hard work—planting, digging, potting, transporting, organizing before the sale, and working at the sale. What an excellent coordinated effort by all involved!

—Susan Burke ☞



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Calendar of Events

THE TRINITY FORKS CHAPTER MEETS THE 4TH 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.

Thurs, Mar 25, 7:00 p.m. ☞ TRINITY FORKS CHAPTER MEETING at UNT EESAT Building, Room 110. **Suzanne Tuttle** from the Fort Worth Nature Center and Reserve will present the March program, "*Ecological Restoration at the Fort Worth Nature Center.*" ☞

Sat, Mar 27. We will tour two yards in Muenster landscaped with LOTS of natives, a pocket prairie, and a champion Bois d'Arc tree. Enjoy lunch at a German restaurant. Possibilities for the afternoon are Tyler bluff North of St Jo and/or two church landscapes in Gainesville. Meet at 9:00 a.m. at the Extension Service office on Loop 288 in Denton or at 10:00 a.m. at Kay Broyles' home in Muenster (407 W. 9th St.). ☞

Apr 10–25, 2004. Argyle Acres Iris Gardens, noon to 5pm daily, free. Not native, but a beautiful show of bearded irises. 910 Pioneer Circle East, Argyle, 940-464-3680, www.argyleacres.com. ☞

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) or check the website (www.brit.org/education). ☞

Thurs, Apr 22, 7:00 p.m. ☞ TRINITY FORKS CHAPTER MEETING at UNT EESAT Building, Room 110. ☞

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



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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.

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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.

Spring is Here!

Spring has arrived! Spring is a season of change and renewal. Spring is a season of color. Tiny green leaves unfurl on trees that have stood bare through the winter and birds gather materials to build their nests in the tree's branches. How quickly the trees turn green! The **American elms** produce flowers, seeds and leaves in a few short weeks. As the **ashes** and **sycamores** leaf out, the **blackjacks** and **post oaks** are decorated with fringe-like catkins that lengthen while perfectly shaped little oak leaves appear and grow larger every day.

Spring is a season of discovery as each day brings something new. Lovely shimmering blue and violet flowers open on the stalks of **spiderworts**. **Mexican plums** with sweet smelling blossoms are sprinkled through the woods like delicate white clouds. **Redbuds** bloom along city streets and in the wild with rosy purple pea-like flowers clustered along their branches. **Wind anemones**, **toadflax** and **corydalis** add color with their early blooms. Everywhere small new plants sprout up, triggered by spring rains, temperature and light.

Spring is a season of celebration. Mornings are welcomed with fresh wildflowers and the sounds of birds. Cardinals, robins, mockingbirds, chickadees and wrens sing

with chirps, twitters and whistles as bright and clear as the sun's early light. Afternoons warm the earth and awaken new life and activity in plants and animals large and small. From the tallest **sycamores** and stately **oaks** to charming **bluebonnets** and dainty **violets**, from furry cottontails and mischievous raccoons, to tiny spiders and cheerful ladybugs, new life stirs. As dusk settles in, crane flies, looking like huge mosquitoes, dance in the long slanted light. The air cools and shadows gather as the sun slips beyond the horizon in a glorious array of changing colors. The shades of amber, copper, coral, steel blue and lavender fade. Stars brighten a dark sky and bullfrogs call from the pond.

Spring is a season to be experienced and enjoyed, but it's exuberant and changes happen quickly. Don't let spring pass you by. Go for a drive in the country while the **Mexican plums** and **redbuds** are blooming. Walk through a woods under a canopy of new green leaves, Visit a prairie full of colorful wildflowers. Explore a creek bank where water from recent rain creates little ripples and moisture-loving plants thrive. And most of all, enjoy your own back yard.

—Marilyn Blanton 



Native Plant Society of Texas
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