



# Trinity Forks Native Plant Press:

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

May 2004

*From the Prez....*

## Time Flies . . .

**A**mazing, it seems like just yesterday we had blowing cold, ice and snow. Now, we are knocking on the door to summer with all of the heat and vacations. I realize that spring is a busy time and folks often have numerous commitments, but the Thursday, May 27th meeting will be especially important. Please tell your friends and neighbors about the benefits of native plants and invite them to attend. We will have another great presentation about the **Thomsen Foundation** by **Lisa Bellows**. Don't forget that the Trinity Forks Chapter of NPSOT does NOT have regular meetings during the summer. If you have any questions about native plants, get them answered now! We will break for the summer and meet again in September.

Yesterday I was out walking in the early morning hours enjoying the sights and sounds when I had to stop and take in a deep breath. I suddenly became aware of the perfume-like smell from my childhood. You know the feeling — it hits you like a ton of bricks and you are transported to a place and time that no longer exists. The smells of my childhood revolve around **Russian Olive Trees** (*Eleagnus angustifolia*, [http://www.cwma.org/russ\\_olive.html](http://www.cwma.org/russ_olive.html)) in the spring, **Sagebrush** (*Artemisia tridentata*) in the summer, and wet lawn grasses in the fall.

The shrub steppe lands of Eastern Washington's Columbia River Basin are bone dry most of the year and "normal" smells reflect this (<http://www.tarleton.edu/~range/Grasslands/Palouse%20Prairie/palouseprairie.htm>). I recall exiting my air-conditioned work building several years ago one hot (110°F+) August afternoon and thinking the air smelled like burned hair from a hair dryer. Well, yesterday was nothing like that. We have had several days of cloudy weather and a few good, hard rainstorms. Last night we even received 0.3" of precipitation, not bad for a region that typically receives only 7" per year. The desert smells that develop after a good soaking rain are impossible to describe and are something that simply must be experienced in person!

Once again, I will be returning to Texas for the May meeting. Unfortunately, this will likely be my last

opportunity to work with the **Trinity Forks Chapter of NPSOT**. I have enjoyed interacting with this wonderful group of people and learning about the benefits of native plants. I will always remember this time of personal growth and friendship.

—Garrett Brown ☞



## Our May Program

**L**isa Bellows will speak on May 27 about the **Thomsen Foundation**. The program is a follow-up to the May 15<sup>th</sup> field trip to the Thomsen Foundation near Forestburg. Those who went were able to observe a wonderful display of prairie restoration started by **Arnold Davis** several years ago. Lisa Bellows was the tour guide. She is Director of Research and Education there and is a certified facilitator for *Project WILD 2004* in the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. Ms. Bellows received both her B.S. and M.S. in biology from Texas Woman's University. She began teaching science in the Saint Jo ISD. She has since become a biology instructor and chair of the science department at North Central Texas College, Gainesville.

Lisa's research at the Thomsen Foundation includes researching regimented control burns and habitat restoration. In addition, she has researched the collection and preservation of native plants in the North Central Texas region. NCTC and Thomsen Foundation are currently collaborating on a Partners in Education project to provide K-5 students active learning field experiences to teach about biodiversity, environmental issues and habitat preservation.

Ms. Bellows' passion for the outdoors developed from observations in her rural childhood and her experiences afterwards. Lisa first learned to appreciate nature by traveling the back roads with her father. From her mother, Lisa acquired her academic roots and love of learning. Lisa can often be found outdoors on her hands and knees with science students, scouring the NCTC campus for insects, native plants and flowers.

—Harriet Horton ☞



## A Challenge of Propagating Native Plants: Identifying Seedlings

It's that time of year again. Well, actually it's been that time of year for over a month now. ...the time of year when all the volunteers from your favorite and not-so-favorite plants start to sprout in your yard. Including the plants you've wanted to propagate, the ones that you'd rather not have more of, as well as the ones that you've been bragging about to the folks you work with and you've promised to bring them seedlings to try in their own yards. And now the trick is: *which seedling is which?*

Right now (mid-April), a big quandary for me is whether the seedlings coming up in the middle of my **red yuccas** (yup, propagated from seed "borrowed" from a really nice stand of red yuccas in front of the EESAT building on the UNT campus) are **rock rose** (*Pavonia lasiopetala*) or **Turk's cap** (*Malvastrum drummondii*). Both are in the *Hibiscus* family and have similar leaves. Mature plants of both species are growing near the red yucca plants. And I've promised seedlings of both to people that I know and I'd feel awfully embarrassed if I gave them the wrong plants. As I write this, I still don't know for sure whether the seedlings are *Pavonia* or Turk's cap.

Volunteers are a wonderful way to propagate plants. They come from plants that have flowered, set seed, and then shed their seed that remain dormant until conditions are right, upon which they sprout. Most native plants yield volunteers, but it is up to us to do the selecting of the seedlings as one way to propagate our native plants and get them growing in a spot of our choosing, as opposed to where they germinated. But just *how* do you identify which seedling comes from what plant? Because most plant guides show you only the mature plant, this can sometimes be frustrating. Here are some tips:

—Most of the time, seedlings will germinate very close to the parent plant. Thus, if you see a lot of seedlings around the base of a **purple coneflower** plant (*Echinacea purpurea*), it's a pretty good bet that many of them are purple coneflowers.

—The first true leaves of a seedling frequently (but not always) resemble the mature leaves of the parent plant. The first leaves to emerge from a seedling are

cotyledon leaves and, as a rule, these don't look much like the true leaves of the mature plant. A seed is an embryo and the cotyledon leaves come from inside the seed and expand during germination. These cotyledon leaves often do not resemble the true leaves of the plant. So if you only see two leaves opposite each other (a dicot) or one leaf (a monocot) emerging from the ground, it's too early to try to match the leaves of the seedling to the leaves of the mature plant as a means of identification. Wait a few days or a week until you see the true leaves develop and then try to identify the plant. At our house, Lon and I do this by digging up one or two of the seedlings and carrying them to the parent plant to attempt an identification.

—Sometimes the first true leaf test fails for some reason. For example, that's where we are now with the *Pavonia*/Turk's cap seedlings. The first true leaves are out now and they resemble both the *Pavonia* and Turk's cap leaves. So, what to do now? We have potted up several seedlings and are growing them. We will look at them in the coming days and weeks when more leaves have developed and compare them to mature *Pavonia* and Turk's cap plants in our garden. We can definitely tell the difference between the two types of leaves in the mature plants and expect to be able to see which leaves the seedlings resemble, which should give an unambiguous identification. Why do we care, you might ask? We're trying to enlarge our shade garden and Turk's cap grows better in shade, so we'd like to find some Turk's cap seedlings.

—If these methods fail, there's always the test of growing the plant through an entire growing season and finding out what you have. For us, this approach worked with some native **beebalm** (*Monarda fistulosa*) that appeared in our yard. We still don't know how we acquired these plants (bird droppings?), but they are lovely and we're glad to have them!

—Another alternative is to ask someone who will know. Native Plant Society meetings bring together a very knowledgeable group of people and present an excellent opportunity to find out the identity of your mystery seedlings. I don't know about you, but if I don't figure out whether those seedlings are *Pavonia* or Turk's cap by the next Native Plant Society meeting, I'll bring them in for an expert opinion!

—Becca Dickstein 

P.S. I did take the sprouts to the April meeting and, as a result, the possibilities have widened for what they might be. I'm growing them up, and may have an identity by the end of the season.



## Locating Native Vegetables

When you decide that you want to prepare some native plant foods, there are some established procedures to follow. An informative book is the *NASCO Field Guide to Edible & Useful Wild Plants of North America* by Myron C. Chase. This field guide lists the necessary procedures for procuring these foods as follows:

1. Decide that you want or need a certain item.
2. Turn to the relevant page(s) in the field guide to identify the location, description, etc. of the desired plant.
3. Find a suitable location with the use of maps, etc. and begin looking for the plant.
4. When you think you have found the desired plant, check the leaves, fruit and root to be sure it is the one.
5. Returning to the relevant chart in the field guide, decide how to prepare the food plant.
6. Take only what you need, leaving plenty to restock the supply, so you can return another time. If there is any left, it can be dried, or perhaps frozen, and used later. The leftover portion may be prepared by a different method. (See last month's article for cooking methods.)
7. Keep notes, perhaps in a journal, as to where the plant was found, how it was used, etc. Notes about seasoning and individual taste will add to the value of the future reference.

It is a good rule to prepare only small quantities of any plant new to us in case of any ill effects. If there are any ill effects, they will usually show within four hours. Most native plant "vegetables" are available only during their growing seasons. Maybe some of us will have opportunities soon to find some native foods to supplement our usual summer menus of hot dogs and hamburgers. If you can, try drying some food samples and save them for display at the September meeting

—Harriet Horton ❧



## Announcements & Calendar

**Kathy Scott's** mother passed away this month in California. We want to express our sincere sympathies to Kathy and her family at this time of loss. ❧

**Thurs, May 27, 7:00 p.m. ❧ TRINITY FORKS CHAPTER MEETING** at UNT EESAT Building, Room 110. **Lisa Bellows** will speak on "Prairie Restoration at the Thomsen Foundation." ❧

*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.*



## Current Officers/Board Members

President <b>Garrett Brown</b>	940-482-7950 <i>garrett.brown@att.net</i>
Fill-in: <b>Marilyn Blanton</b>	940-464-7775 <i>marilyn@postoakplace.com</i>
Vice Pres. ( <i>open</i> )	
Programs/ Education <b>Harriet Horton</b>	817-847-1816 <i>Harriet_Horton@hotmail.com</i>
Secretary <b>Lon Turnbull</b>	940-323-8999 <i>lont58@aol.com</i>
Treasurer <b>Caroline Polliard</b>	940-382-0957
Membership <b>Laurie Hammett</b>	940-383-3287 <i>lhammett@gte.net</i>
Ways & Means <b>Susan Burke</b>	940-898-2626 <i>lifestdnt@yahoo.com</i>
Hospitality <b>Marilyn Martin</b>	940-382-8014 <i>marilyn_martin@hotmail.com</i>
Field Trips <b>Mike Mizell</b>	940-382-8551 <i>mmizell@webtv.net</i>
Historian <b>Shari Withey</b>	940-458-1273 <i>willowbendgarden@aol.com</i>
Publicity <b>Irene Hanson</b>	972-539-9471 <i>ICHanson@metlspan.com</i>
Newsletter <b>Cynthia Maguire</b>	940-594-6555 <i>c.maguire@charter.net</i>

.....  
**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.*

## “Summerize” your yard before summer arrives

According to a recent weather report, Denton has received less than even our normally meager rainfall. Lots of weather experts predict that our somewhat-wet spring will turn into our customary bone-bleaching summer. (It has for the past couple of hundred years!).

Unless the numbers on your water bill mean nothing to you, there are methods you can use for a colorful, lush landscape even during our upcoming 100-degree days. After years of actually seeing what makes it through a Texas summer, I've settled on five musts to summerize your Denton landscape:

1. Minimize your lawn area. A lush, green, manicured lawn is a real ego-builder. It also takes a huge amount of work. You know, sweating profusely while you push the mower, trim, fertilize, pull dandelions and so on.

Then there's the expense! Entire industries have sprung up just to take care of your lawn and your checkbook. The cost of a manicured lawn can eat you alive! Yet on any given weekend, you can spot scores of exhausted, sweaty men vainly attempting to defeat Mother Nature. Makes no sense, does it?

2. Use native plants. Native plants grew up in our type of summer (their ancestors did, anyway), so they're used it. Once a native Texas plant is established, it needs little or no extra water. Summerize your yard with these, not the water-guzzling, high-maintenance stuff.


3. Use "hardscape." This is "landscape-speak" meaning anything outside that's relatively immobile and that's not supposed to be alive. Examples: a driveway, a deck, a fence or a patio. (It's impossible for even the meanest summer to kill something that's not alive anyway!)

4. Mulch just about everything. Simply put, a top layer of mulch cools the soil and keeps in moisture. It also keeps out all but the most determined weeds. Mulch can be just ground-up bark chips, shredded leaves, or composted grass clippings or other yard waste.

Three or four inches of mulch will go a long way toward summerizing a yard.

5. Divide the yard into zones. There's the active zone with a few potted plants and maybe some outdoor chairs on a patio. Probably, there's a garden zone with flowerbeds and other tender plants. And there's the ubiquitous lawn zone. (You get the idea!).

The point is to group similar things together, so you can do any yard maintenance in short spurts, maybe even letting some chores slide for a week or two.

—Owen Yost 




---

Native Plant Society of Texas  
Trinity Forks Chapter  
P.O. Box 425491  
Denton, Texas 76204