



From the Prez....

Fall has arrived! Colonies of **goldenrod** (*Solidago* spp.) and **Maximilian sunflowers** (*Helianthus maximilianii*) color the roadsides. Migrating birds are leaving for their journey south. Native warm-season grasses like **little bluestem** (*Schizachyrium scoparium*) have gone to seed. Squirrels and bluejays stash away nuts and acorns for winter food. **Sumacs** (*Rhus* spp.) flash brilliant leaves of red, yellow and burgundy. Bumpy green horse apples from the **bois d'arc** tree (*Maclura pomifera*) litter the ground under its twisted branches and yellowing leaves. Butterflies dance in the autumn air, swirling and twirling bits of color in the morning sunlight. Cloudless sulphurs spangle their buttery yellow among the finely cut leaves and velvety red, star shaped flowers of the **cypress vine** (*Ipomoea quamoclit*) then flutter on to the orange blooms of the **flame acanthus** (*Anisacanthus quadrifidus* var. *wrightii*).

A green lynx spider, the color of a granny Smith apple, guards her egg sac that's suspended from her web among the flowering branches of **Turk's cap** (*Malvaniscus arboreus* var. *drummondii*). A wren chatters while two mockingbirds chase away a noisy crow. An orange and black gulf fritillary caterpillar munches steadily on the leaves of the **passionvine** (*Passiflora incarnata*). An empty, paper thin chrysalis hangs near by as evidence of a past caterpillar that became a butterfly. Will this one escape his predators long enough to complete his metamorphosis? A giant swallowtail and a spicebush swallowtail mingle with dozens of wasps and other flying insects serving as pollinators as they feed on the blooms of **lantana** (*Lantana* spp.) and the tall plumes of **goldenrod** (*Solidago canadensis*).

A large fuzzy bumble bee, heavier than the other flying insects, bends down a stem of **mealy blue sage** (*Salvia farinacea*). A jumping spider waits for prey on the blade of a **yucca** (*Yucca arkanzana*). Close inspection reveals various insects on the beautiful clusters of magenta berries on the arching stems of **American beautyberry** (*Callicarpa americana*) and along the stems of the **partridge pea** (*Cassia fasciculata*). The partridge peas' seed pods, filled with flat brown seeds, will provide a food source for game and song birds through the winter. **Virginia creeper** (*Parthenocissus quinquefolia*) climbs in bronze and scarlet tangles over a dead tree.

Trinity Forks Native Plant Press:

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

October 2004

Carolina snailseed (*Cocculus carolinus*) with bright red berries twines into the trees.

A cottontail darts from the shelter created by draping **mustang grapevines** (*Vitis mustangensis*) that are dotted with dark clusters of drying grapes. Huge **pokeweeds** (*Phytolacca americana*) dangle lush deep purple berries that are relished by wildlife from raspberry colored stems. With these familiar sights, the cycle of seasons settles into the rhythm of autumn.

As I watch the changes occurring in the natural world, I'm increasingly aware of the complex interconnections of living organisms, the delicate balance of give and take, the drama between predators and prey, the importance of biodiversity, and the necessity for us to be ecologically responsible. Protecting "wild" places, supporting "open spaces," promoting the use of native plants, and working to raise awareness and educate the public are issues that are becoming more and more urgent as humans continue to change the natural ecosystems and destroy natural habitats.

Members of the Trinity Forks Chapter of the Native Plant Society of Texas should be commended for their individual and collective efforts. The 2004 annual report for our chapter (printed on page 2) illustrates the commitment of our members to be ecologically responsible. I would like to thank the board members for their leadership and service to our chapter and all of our members for their interest, dedication and work.

— Marilyn Blanton ☞



Our October Program

Dr. Camelia Maier will present *Flora of the Galapagos Islands*, comparing the plants at home there to our Texas native plants. Camelia has recently traveled to the Galapagos and will be showing photos from her trip to help us see similarities and differences among them.

Dr. Maier, a botanist at Texas Woman's University, has presented other programs for our chapter in the past and is always a knowledgeable and popular speaker. You won't want to miss this opportunity to see how Texas plants stack up against those exotic tropicals! ☞

TRINITY FORKS CHAPTER 2004 Annual Activity Report

General Meetings

Seven meetings, Jan-May and Sept-Oct at the University of North Texas (UNT) Environmental Science Bldg. Programs for 2004:

- **Don Smith**, Trinity Forks (TF) chapter member, Professor of Botany at UNT – “*Care and Maintenance of Post Oaks*”
- **Carol Feldman**, Dallas chapter member, Landscape Architect – “*Landscape Design Basics*”
- **Suzanne Tuttle**, Natural Resource Manager at Fort Worth Nature Center & Refuge (FWNCR)– “*Ecological Restoration at FWNCR*”
- **Delia Warren**, Fort Worth chapter member – “*Creating School Gardens*”
- **Lisa Bellows**, TF chapter member, Chair of Science Department at North Central Texas College (NCTC) – “*Thomsen Foundation*”
- **Kathy Saucier**, TF chapter member – “*Native Plant Foods*”
- **Camelia Maier**, TF chapter member, Assistant Professor of Botany at Texas Woman’s University (TWU) – “*Comparing North Texas and Galapagos Islands Native Botany*”

Education, Outreach & Community Involvement

- Chapter sponsors the Benny Simpson Memorial Garden located on the TWU campus.
- Chapter donated proceedings of annual NPSOT Symposium to the libraries of TWU and UNT.
- Member observed and critiqued environmental project presentations by TWU biology students.
- Chapter held native plant sale, distributed information, displayed books and had membership promotion at Redbud Days Festival.
- Member serves on the Denton County Horticulture Committee, overseeing Master Gardner (MG) and /Master Naturalist (MN) programs.
- Member is serving as president of the Upper Clear Creek Range and Wildlife Management Association.
- Member selects the “Yard of the Month” for Keep Denton Beautiful (KDB).
- 12 members are certified MN, 3 serving on the Elm Fork Chapter MN board.
- Several members contribute articles to local publications in the North Texas area including the “*Wildflowers of Texas*” series of articles and photos and landscape design articles in the House and Garden section of the Denton Record Chronicle.
- Member contributed 6 articles to “*Co-Op Power*” - Texas Electric Co-operative statewide magazine.
- Member contributes “*Wildflower Awareness*” column; another contributed “*Summerize Your Yard*” article for NPSOT News.
- Member serves as NPSOT Environmental Liaison and another serves as Editorial Advisory Support for NPSOT News.
- Member advised 5 cities on landscape requirements.
- Members have given numerous programs to civic groups, garden clubs, MN, MG and other professional groups on native plants.
- Members worked with the City of Denton Parks Department to develop interpretive signs for Cross Timbers Park (CTP) – work involved layout, photos, text and placement of signs.
- Member documents and photographs plants for interpretive information for CTP.

- Member led MN classes through CTP.
- Chapter provides school garden program to help design school gardens and provide native plants.
- Educational displays set up at several general meetings.
- Members furnished give-away native plants for guests at general meetings.
- Chapter supports KDB Native Plant Committee (NPC) – one member serves as chair – one member designed master plan for 2 landscape sites – many members helped with drafting final plan.
- Members contributed over 250 combined hours attending meetings, keeping records, making contacts, planning, planting and tending gardens.
- Chapter donated \$500.00 to KDB – NPC to purchase native plants in addition to donating native plants.
- Member is working with entomologists studying problems caused by gall-producing insects on native morning glories.
- Member planned and orchestrated prairie reclamation project utilizing native grasses and wildflowers.
- Several members led or assisted numerous field trips and plant ID’s at Thomsen Foundation (TF), Fort Walter Wildflower Preserve, Clymer Prairie, Becker Prairie, LBJ Grasslands and several ranches.
- Member directs research and education for TF and houses their herbarium species. In the past year 75 teachers and 800 students have visited the TF under her guidance. Member also directs teacher quality grants in the area of science.
- Member participated in study of native orchids at Cedar Ridge Nature Preserve.
- Member introducing several native plants to local nursery for them to propagate and use in the nursery trade.
- Various members attended continuing educational events including MN workshops, Botanical Research Institute of Texas (BRIT) Lectures and the TWU Friday Seminars.
- Members teaching botany and environmental biology classes at TWU and NCTC emphasize native plants and utilize field experiences including participation in controlled burns and other native plant restoration projects.
- Member collects herbarium specimens for BRIT.

Chapter Sponsored Field Trips

- Tour of 2 native plant landscaped yards and natural area to see champion sized bois d’arc tree in Muenster.
- Tour of Thomsen Foundation.
- Tour of Merritt Bois d’arc Ranch (bison ranch).
- Tour of Cross Timbers Park.

Publicity

- Newsletter (6 issues) mailed to members and recent guests and distributed at special events.
- Publicity on meetings is sent to several area newspapers
- Articles in the Denton Record Chronicle have a byline giving NPSOT contact information.

Membership

- Number of current dues – paying members is around 100.
- Meeting attendance approximately 50, including guests.
- Everyone receives e-mail reminders of chapter events.
- Several TWU professors offer their students credit for attending our meetings.
- Membership applications are distributed at many special events.

The Cross Timbers That Used to Be

by G. Owen Yost
Landscape Architect

Cross Timbers Park is a fetchingly natural park in the south of Denton. But it seems that many people think that the phrase “Cross Timbers” is merely a made-up name.

Actually, Denton is mostly in the Eastern Cross Timbers, the popular name for this area in “pioneer-speak”. Unfortunately, there is hardly any real “Cross Timbers” left today, having been plowed under and paved over to accommodate subdivisions, shopping malls, highways and the like. Which makes Cross Timbers Park very special.

The origin of the phrase can be traced down several paths, depending on who’s talking. The most popular, however, has its roots in the natural geography and vegetation of this area. Most forests here run in north-south bands. Rivers, on the other hand, run roughly east-west. The result was that pioneers (who fervently avoided river crossings) had to cross bands of forest as they traveled between the rivers, heading west. Thus the name, “Cross Timbers.”

In academic, ecological terms, this area was a savannah, which is defined as a grassland prairie spotted with trees (mostly **post oaks** and **blackjack oaks** in this instance). In many areas the characteristic trees were so thick that they became forests. In the 18th and 19th centuries, the Cross Timbers was a well-known geographic feature marking the eastern edge of the American grasslands.

Nowadays, however, there are embarrassingly few remnants of the Cross Timbers left. Much of the original soil has been “urbanized” by extensive construction, farming and introduction of non-natural soil. Even though 19th-century naturalists generally put the range of the Cross Timbers in a large stretch of Texas, Oklahoma and Kansas, it is now found in only a few large parks, preserves and isolated patches of countryside and floodplains.

Many kinds of plants thrived in the Cross Timbers, but almost all the natural canopy trees were post oaks and blackjack oaks. Amongst them were millions of tough **smilax** vines (those pesky, thorny vines also called **catclaw vine** or **greenbrier**). The combination was almost impenetrable, causing the 19th century author and statesman, Washington Irving, to call the Cross Timbers “forests of cast iron”. But vegetation would not exist at all in this type of soil, if “traffic” were not limited in some way. The Cross Timbers soil is sandy, porous, unstable and nutrient-poor. Consequently, the natural vegetation is fragile and easily killed.

The Cross Timbers is tied to the sandstone geology, and is limited by the local climate; rainfall being the biggest factor. The area (which encompasses Denton) gets between 23 inches and 43 inches per year. Coupled with high summer temperatures and frequent droughts, this area is ideal for the native oaks. When artificial irrigation is introduced, many other plants will survive here, although vegetative life is still very fragile.

Despite a growing awareness of the Cross Timbers’ ecological and historic importance, what little remains is being demolished at an alarming rate. In the words of author Richard Francaviglia, “...developers are often either ignorant or arrogant. Thus, the Cross Timbers yields to the bulldozer in many locales, especially in the suburban areas where the prime real-estate sites...entice developers.” (Dr. Francaviglia authored *The Cross Timbers* and *A Natural and Cultural History of the North American Cross Timbers*).

Dr. Francaviglia also noted that in some areas (including Denton) some land developers are preserving remnants of the Cross Timbers as they carefully develop sites. Also, the opportunities for tourism revenue are huge. “Few regions present better opportunities to integrate heritage tourism with conservation than the Cross Timbers. Descriptions of this region’s forest abound in the historic literature and the Cross Timbers was often THE most prominent feature on historic maps of the period 1830 – 1880.”

So, as you look around Cross Timbers Park, glimpse a scissortail flycatcher perched on a limb, and photograph a mass of **sage**, think of all that came before us, and what Cross Timbers used to be.



The
North Texas Garden Fairies
present their annual
Fall Plant Swap
at Lewisville I.S.D.'s
Outdoor Learning Area
Saturday, October 30, 2004
9 am - 2 pm

LISDOLA is located on Fish Hatchery Rd. off business 121 east of I35. Turn north just east of where the Trinity River crosses business 121. Bring food for a potluck lunch and plants to swap!

For more information go to:

[http://thetexasgardenfairy.gardensweb.com/
Plant%20Swap.htm](http://thetexasgardenfairy.gardensweb.com/Plant%20Swap.htm)

**A Texas native perennial favorite for shade:
Texas yellow columbine,
Aquilegia chrysantha.
by Becca Dickstein**

Since Lon and I moved to Denton, we've been experimenting with a number of native and so-called adapted plants. We've also had our share of disappointments with plants that just aren't suited to the north Texas climate: sometimes it's the winters, but more often, it's the summers that get them. So I was delighted when I found a native Texas variety of one of my favorite perennials, columbine. I was told that it was called "**Hinckley Columbine**" and it well survives the north Texas summers.

We purchased our first columbine at a Redbud day festival, held every March, during the first year or two that we lived in Denton. Since then, **Suan Fagan** brought me some volunteer columbine seedlings from her yard that are doing very well in their new home in our garden beds.

My experience with this plant is that it can grow in deep shade or in somewhat dappled shade. It has very airy foliage which doesn't grow very tall, some as tall as 18 inches. In spring, starting in April and continuing into May, the plants send up airy flower stalks, which open to reveal yellow to pale yellow blooms that seem to float above the foliage. Some of the flowers are up to three feet above the ground, looking like yellow wands blowing in the breeze in our shady area of the garden. After flowering, the flower stalks gradually dry out. The foliage will persist through the wet weeks of the spring and into early July. If watered, the foliage will persist throughout the summer, but Wasowski and Wasowski [1] advise that if not watered, the plants will go dormant over the summer. In fall, with the fall rains, they will put up new leaves and occasionally re-flower. Wasowski and Wasowski [1] also state that Texas has four native yellow columbines that can hybridize. Thus, I'm not sure exactly which one we have. Fortunately, all of them can survive both our cold winters *and* our killer summers.

Columbine is easy to propagate. After Suan brought me some volunteers from her yard, I experimented with starting new plants from seed. First, I collected fresh seed from freshly dried spent flowers that had dried on the plant. I stored them in the refrigerator until ready to try germinating. To germinate, I put some commercial seed starting media into a clean yogurt container, wetted it down until it was wet but not soggy, then added seed, and with my finger, pushed the seed into the starting media. Then I covered the container loosely with the yogurt container top and checked every other day for germination. After germination, approximately seven days, I put the

container in a partly sunny window until the plants had at least one true leaf. Then, I carefully placed the plants in small pots filled with the same seed starting media. When the plants had filled these pots, I mixed the seed starting material with garden soil in the yard and planted them out. Lon and I dug in cotton burr compost and several other organic amendments to the soil before we planted the columbines. Columbines do well in amended soil, and according to Wasowski and Wasowski [1] grow best in sandy or rocky soil on slopes. Good drainage is a must, so raised beds might be in order for an area with poor drainage.

Texas yellow columbine is a lovely plant which should work well in formal gardens as well as more casual ones. This plant's a keeper!

[1] Wasowski, S. and Wasowski, A. *Native Texas Plants*, 2nd ed. 1997. Lone Star Books, Houston, TX



Symposium 2004, the Piney Woods

Wasn't it great? Those who didn't come to this year's Symposium sure did miss out! The Northeast and Tyler Chapters outdid themselves. Various hikes and paddleboat tours were offered Thursday. That evening included some good home cooking by the local members and fabulous live music by the Blake Brothers band. Not only was the music good but they were really humorous!! The table decor was really neat with plant items from the area.

Friday morning we got our packets and t-shirts. This year's design is the best ever. An original watercolor design was commissioned for the symposium. It is an arrangement of several native tree sprigs in their fall glory—the prettiest ever for a symposium. The painting was in the silent auction. The same design is also on the cover of the proceedings. The Friday and Saturday speakers introduced us to the Piney Woods. Dr. Charles Allen, spoke about nearby Ft Polk Louisiana with its 1360 taxa. Dr. David Lewis spoke on Mushrooms. Some say it was stretching it a bit since they are fungi not plants, but what plant enthusiast doesn't look at the mushrooms? Boy it was interesting! And Joe Liggio's talk on pitcher bogs was great. Dr. Creech is a blast! If you haven't ever heard him speak, you're really missing something. He could make any subject fun. All the talks were interesting and informative. Did you know that east Texas has saline prairies?

Saturday night's banquet was fried catfish and chicken and the fixings, and homemade **blackberry** cobbler. As far as who won chapter award, photo award, Fellows award and all the others, you who didn't come will just have to be in suspense until the newsletter comes out.

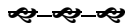
If you have never come to a NPSOT Symposium you are missing out. You learn so much. You meet such nice people. You have fun and eat well. You get to see other parts of Texas and appreciate her variety and beauty. And in case you haven't heard, next year we are in Big Bend. We ARE excited!

— *Kathy Saucier* 

Plant Native Grasses *(continued from pg 6)*

Native grasses are used in the residential landscape in a variety of ways. The most popular is as a backdrop for flowers. Native grasses can also be an ever-changing mass or unique specimen in the yard. In wintertime, a colorful splash of native grass makes the dark green of our evergreen trees and shrubs come to life. However they're used, they are sought after by all sorts of butterflies and wild birds for food, safety, nesting material, shade and such.

At minimum, try planting a clump of low-maintenance native grass in a corner of your yard. One single plant won't be enough, though. I suggest, at the very least, three. Remember to space them well apart and give the roots plenty of room to grow. Skip the fertilizer and the pruning -- just leave them alone, and in just a few seasons, each plant will become many.



Proposed Slate of Officers for 2005

Our election of new officers will take place at our October meeting. The current Board is proposing the following slate:

- ◆ President—**Cynthia Maguire**
- ◆ Vice President—**Owen Yost**
- ◆ Secretary—**Lon Turnbull**
- ◆ Treasurer—**Caroline Polliard**

Other nominations are, as always, welcome. You can nominate someone from the floor during the meeting, or contact any current board member in advance.

CALENDAR

Thursday, October 28, 7:00 p.m. ☞ TRINITY FORKS CHAPTER MEETING at UNT EESAT Building, Room 110. **Dr. Camelia Maier** will present *Flora of the Galapagos Islands*, comparing their natives to ours. ☞

Saturday, October 30, 9 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. ☞ Fall Plant Swap at LISDOLA. Brings plants, seeds, cuttings, bulbs, garden-related goodies of all sorts, and a Buddy! Bring no money—you can ONLY trade.

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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

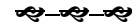
Phone: _____ Email: _____

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.

Also, bring a dish for a potluck at noon if you wish. For more info, go to <http://thetexasgardenfairyt.gardensweb.com/Plant%20Swap.htm> ☞

Saturday, October 30, 2:00 p.m. ☞ CROSS TIMBERS PARK TOUR. Join us for a walk through the woods. We will meet and park on the west side of the park on Waterside (the side street off of Hickory Creek Road). Refreshments will be served. ☞

THE TRINITY FORKS CHAPTER MEETS THE 4TH THURSDAY OF JAN–MAY AND SEPT–OCT AT 7 P.M. IN ROOM 110 OF THE UNTEESAT BUILDING (AVE C & HICKORY) IN DENTON, TEXAS.



Current Officers/Board Members

President Marilyn Blanton	940-464-7775 <i>marilyn@postoakplace.com</i>
Vice Pres. Harriet Horton	817-847-1816 <i>Harriet_Horton@hotmail.com</i>
Programs/Education Dorothy Thetford	<i>dthetford@mymailstation.com</i>
Secretary Lon Turnbull	940-323-8999 <i>lont58@aol.com</i>
Treasurer Caroline Polliard	940-382-0957
Membership Laurie Hammett	940-383-3287 <i>lhammett@gte.net</i>
Ways & Means Cathy Lustgarten	972-306-1088 <i>drgoodrad@comcast.net</i>
Hospitality Marilyn Martin	940-382-8014 <i>marilyn_martin@hotmail.com</i>
Field Trips Mike Mizell	940-382-8551 <i>mmizell@webtv.net</i>
Historian Shari Withey	940-458-1273 <i>willowbendgarden@aol.com</i>
Publicity Irene Hanson	972-539-9471 <i>ICHanson@metlspan.com</i>
Newsletter John Vandigriff	972-436-0184 <i>jhnvan@comcast.net</i>

Plant Native Grasses This Fall, For Next Spring

by G. Owen Yost

We're coming into prime time to plant native, sometimes called ornamental, grasses, such as **bluestem**, **gramma**, **muhly** and **lovegrass**. These native grasses, usually 1 to 3 feet tall, provide low-maintenance landscaping all year, with attention-grabbing landscape color in the fall and winter. They're different from the traditional lawngrasses that are starting to be brown, dormant and unkempt -- like **Bermuda** and **St. Augustine**. Also, as opposed to boringly common lawns, these native grasses were here long before our ancestors settled here. In fact, there are several dozen different varieties of native grasses—each ideal for North Texas. Depending on the species, native grasses range from less than a foot tall to 8 feet tall, or anywhere in between. Their roots descend to incredible depths (mature **buffalograss** roots can be 8 to 10 feet deep) making them very resilient, durable and drought-tolerant.

Native grasses never need artificial fertilizer, regular water (only in emergencies) and rarely, if ever, need to be cut. On the other hand, traditional lawn grasses, such as Bermuda, require frequent pampering in the form of fertilization, mowing, weeding and so on, to be kept healthy. Actually, native Texas grasses prefer our naturally poor soil, and get unhealthy if soil is fertilized or watered much. The frequent watering that ordinary lawns demand make the real cost of a traditional manicured lawn imposing.

Why am I telling you this now? It just so happens that now is the very best time to plant most native Texas grasses. Simply select a sunny, well-drained spot and plant (or transplant) the grass plants exactly like any other new plant. Don't forget the mulch, but forget about "improving" the soil. You won't see any aboveground growth during the first winter, but the roots will be growing like crazy. So in the spring, it'll be ready to burst out of the ground.

In North Texas, fields of **bluestem** grass (a group of native species) produce a subtle orange all winter long. At the same time, most trees are leafless and the rest of nature is monochromatic and gloomy. In shade, **Inland Sea Oats** turns a compelling beige for the winter. The "plumes" or "tufts" most of them have can be especially interesting in the fall. To be honest, only a few nurseries have these grasses in stock this time of year, but ask them your favorite nursery to help you get some. **Bluestem Nursery** in Arlington (817-478-6202, owner **John Snowden**) is the largest wholesale provider of native grasses in this area.

Continued on page 5.

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