



# Trinity Forks Native Plant Press

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

February 2005

From the Prez....

## Get the Picture!

**T**hank you **EVERYONE** seems hardly adequate for the labor of love—and the response from our members—at our January meeting. So many people worked so hard to prepare a truly wonderful event for our first meeting of 2005. They must have done something right. I was gratified to look around the lobby at 9:15 and realize that attendees were only just then tearing themselves away long after they could have been home. If you weren't there, you really did miss a special evening. **Mary Ann McDuff** warmly and officially welcomed us to Texas Woman's University, then stayed the entire evening. **Becca Dickstein** has been asked to do an encore for seed planting. **Bonnie Bradshaw** did a wonderful presentation on backyard wildlife habitats (see p. 4). Add our 15<sup>th</sup> birthday cake and the **NPSOT Quilt** and you get the picture.

When our new board met last November, we discussed a “big picture” theme for this year's programs. I believe that is exactly what you will hear from our education committee members and speakers. Our goal is to motivate each of you to think large on topics like prairies, forests and trees, always learning “*Why native?*” and “*How do I fit in?*” as we go. Bonnie's talk was a perfect introduction for our year. I believe this month's program on prairies will be equally inspiring.

If there's a topic that is nearer to my heart than native plants, it is education. At the state NPSOT board meeting in January, **Dar Richardson** (state Chapter Liaison) approached me to inquire whether Trinity Forks chapter would be interested in participating in a pilot program designed to reach out to youth and attract young families. At my invitation, Dar and his wife **Cheri** attended our February TF board meeting to discuss the idea further. I am glad to say that there is good support for this—**Owen Yost** has since agreed to serve as our outreach coordinator. Now we need **YOU**—a few willing hands can accomplish much! The idea is

to choose a limited number of events to encourage children to learn about native plants, and do a really first class job. The first will be our Kid's Korner at our Spring Plant Sale (see p. 2).

I look forward to seeing each of you at TWU next week. If you need directions or a map, check our chapter website at [www.npsot.org/TrinityForks](http://www.npsot.org/TrinityForks). Be sure to come at 6:30—you won't want to miss a minute!

—*Cynthia Maguire* ☞



## Our February Program

**R**ussell Stevens, our speaker this month, will present *A Discussion of Prairie Grasses*. Stevens is a Certified Wildlife Biologist by the Wildlife Society and a Certified Range Management Consultant and Certified Professional in Rangeland Management by the Society for Range Management. His areas of interest include wildlife habitat improvement, wild turkey and white-tailed deer management, range management using prescribed fire, plant identification, feral hog impacts, and waterfowl issues. Russell joined the Noble Foundation in 1989 where he currently serves as a wildlife and range specialist.

Stevens, along with **Chuck Coffey**, has recently co-authored *Grasses of Southern Oklahoma and North Texas: A Pictorial Guide*. We've invited them to bring copies to our meeting. Both authors will be available to autograph copies purchased (\$25). A recent state newsletter describes their book as “a handy tool for agricultural producers, managers and students. . . [including] full color photographs of 116 grasses occurring in south central Oklahoma's . . . and north central Texas' vegetational areas . . . organized alphabetically by Tribe, Genus and specific epithet in an easy to use 8.5 X 11 inch format.” ☞



## Native Plant Sale: Coming April 9

**S**pring is coming and with it, our annual **Spring Plant Sale**. Are you as excited as I am? This is our golden opportunity to spread the word about the

value of using **native plants** in our landscapes, help visitors identify the most appropriate **native plants** for their particular needs, as well as offering a wide assortment of **native plants** for sale—and get to visit with your friends besides! New this year will be a special **Kid's Korner** activity within our booth, designed to help educate school age children about the value of **native plants**. We will need the help of every single member to make our sale a success, and I hope I can count on you. This year's sale will be held on the square in downtown Denton, Saturday April 9th, from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. As usual, our sale will be part of Keep Denton Beautiful's (12<sup>th</sup>) **Annual Denton Redbud Festival**. What should you bring? Plants or seeds that are **native** to Texas, especially North Central Texas, within a hundred miles of Denton County. We all have our favorite non-native plants that we love sharing with our gardening friends but please save those for your other gardening organizations. Now is the time to get those seedlings started. Divisions or transplants from your garden should be potted up about a month before so that the roots can get well established. We want our plants looking their best when they are on display in our booth! Please label each individual pot.

Ways & Means Chair, *Cathy Lustgarten* ☞



## Education Is Exciting!

Thanks to all who attended the January meeting for your great response! If you missed our January *Name That Seed* game, you'll have another chance. By special request, we are extending the seed identification game through February . . . but, with different seeds, of course! For those of you who potted seeds at the January meeting, or who took seeds and potting cups home, please **BRING YOUR SEEDLINGS** to our February meeting. [Your seedlings will be used for the *Name That Seedling* game. Be sure that your containers are clean and dry, or in plastic sleeves. Write your name on each cup.]

Thanks to **Dr. Becca Dickstein**, our January *Early Bird Special* regarding seed-planting was very successful. For all of you who have asked about the potting soil used in her demonstration, the brand name is LCI Mix by Sunshine. It is available at Dennis' Feed Store, located at the corner of Bell Ave. & Mingo Rd. That event, too, was very well received and we've been asked to repeat the potting demo following the February program. Supplies will be available again in the second floor lobby; Becca will be there to help.

We'll have seeds and seedlings to challenge your ID powers before the meeting, and we'll discuss *Rosettes* for the *Early Bird Special*, followed by another seed-planting session after the meeting. Come and learn with us on Thursday, February 24, 2005.

— Education Chair, *Dorothy Thetford* ☞



## ?? QUESTION POT ??

*Look in this space each month to find answers to questions left in the Question Pot on a display table.*

Q: When should I prune **Turk's cap** (*Malva viscosa*) and **rockrose** (*Pavonia lasiopetala*)?

A: Both plants can be severely pruned (nearly to the base) in winter and periodically during the growing season to encourage bushy growth, or if either becomes too leggy.

Q: When should I transplant **spiderwort** (*Tradescantia sp.*) plants?

A. Now. The sooner the better!!! Spiderwort plant has several very thick roots that extend slightly downward, but mostly laterally, so dig 4-5 inches around the base of the plant to prevent damaging roots. Older clumps of spiderwort can be thinned and transplanted by digging the entire clump and gently untangling the thick roots.

Q. My **blue-eyed grass** (*Sisyrinchium ensigerum*) is coming up in my lawn; can I move it?

A. Yes, dig and transplant into your flowerbed now. It provides a beautiful, mid-day colorful perennial border.

## "Wildflowers-of-Texas"

by Dorothy Thetford

Common name: **Coral-berry**  
 Botanical name: *Symphoricarpos orbiculatus*  
 Family: *Caprifoliaceae*

**W**hile our Texas wildflowers are getting a fresh drink of water, utilizing the extreme cold temperature to break seed dormancy, and rosettes are strengthening their root systems in preparation for spring blooms, we have a few more weeks to appreciate, protect and preserve our native plant fruits and berries.

One of our understory native shrubs, **coral-berry** (*Symphoricarpos orbiculatus*) also commonly known as **snowberry, Indian currant, or buckberry**, has been in its prime berry display for a month or so. Its small, woody stems normally grow 25 to 30 inches tall in North Central Texas, and even taller in east and southeast Texas.

Each plant produces a few erect stems that I personally describe as 'spacey' or loosely arranged, especially if growing naturally in the woods or in non-mow areas. However, if located in an open

prairie and falling prey to a mower, the plant rebounds with multiple stems and heavier foliage. This pruning method could certainly be applied to coral-berry usage in a planned landscape. I suggest pruning every two to three years, and pick a year when fruit is small and scant.

Coral-berry expands its colony by extending several topical, horizontal shoots that trail three to four feet from the base plant to establish new roots. It is also described as rhizomatous, meaning that it produces underground shoots or rootstock that extend two to three feet peripherally within the top three inches of top soil. Thus, the plant is usually found as a true colony.

And, I must say that a colony vs. a single plant provides a more appealing showcase for the small berries. As the berries ripen in late fall, they turn rose-pink to dark-wine in color. They are only 1/8 to 1/4 inch in diameter and are clustered tightly to the stems, with each berrylike drupe containing two small seeds. On a good year (rain-wise) the fruits are more plentiful, larger, and showier, and vice versa during a year of scant rains. Needless to say, finding colonies in their native habitat is much easier following a season of ample rain.

The flowers of coral-berry are very small and inconspicuous. They are greenish-white to pinkish in color, of a funnellform design, and bloom in late spring and early summer. Leaves of this native are 3/4 inch long by 1/2 inch wide, opposite, oval to elliptic, and deciduous. While berries are still clinging to the stems, fresh, new spring leaves emerge in February-March, adding a colorful combination to the late winter or early spring garden.

We are fortunate that the nursery trade provides coral-berry plants for our personal landscapes. To prevent leaf mildew in a landscaped environment, plant it in well-ventilated areas of well-drained sand, loam, or clay. The plant will adapt to a wide variety of sites and locations and the winter berries will add color to your garden when everything else appears to be asleep.

Dorothy's "*Wildflowers-of-Texas*" photo-greeting cards are available locally at Denton's Wild Bird Center and Cupboard Natural Foods.



### Spring Joint Symposium

sponsored by

NPSOT and Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center

Saturday, February 26, 2005

### Those Other Texas Natives

**Grasses, Ferns, Sedges, Cacti,  
 Yuccas, Agaves, Nolinias**

and

**Soils and Organic Practices**

at the

**Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center  
 Austin, Texas**

Go to [www.npsot.org](http://www.npsot.org) for details  
 or call (512) 292-4100

## Opportunities for Learning Aboard

Recently it seems that my email inbox is filled with messages from folks who want YOUR attention. After some thought, I decided to share the following announcements of upcoming events with the Trinity Forks members via this article. These items won't be repeated in the Calendar column, so make a special note if you want to attend any of these events.

Newsletter Editor, *Cynthia Maguire* ☞

**Bill Dunmire** will give a slide-lecture, "*Our Gift from Spain: Colonial Farming and Ranching Come to Texas.*" March 7, 1:00-1:45 p.m. The talk is based on his book, recently published by the University of Texas Press, *Gardens of New Spain: How Mediterranean Plants and Foods Changed America*. The lecture will be in the Commissioner's Courtroom on the square, Denton. ☞

### Smart Start Your Yard with Natives!

The North Central Chapter of NPSOT (Ft. Worth) is pleased to welcome **Rosa Finsley**, a well-known Texas Native Landscape Architect, for a three part workshop on the use of native plants in your landscape. Rosa will present workshops at the April 14th and May 12th chapter meetings with a June 9th "Walking Workshop" through the Wildscape at Veterans Park, Arlington. Cost is \$45. For more information contact Taylor Stephens-Parker at 817-784-6003 or [soilnurse@earthlink.com](mailto:soilnurse@earthlink.com). North Central Chapter meets on the second Thursday at 7:00 p.m. at the Fort Worth Botanic Garden. ☞

### Brit Distinguished Lecturer Series

Co-hosted by the Fort Worth Botanic Garden and the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center in Austin, this year's theme is Medicinal Plant Use by Pacific and Neotropical Peoples. Though the lectures are not about Texas native plants, they are about how essential indigenous plants are to the societies that use them everywhere. More detailed information is available at [www.brit.org](http://www.brit.org).

MARCH 3<sup>RD</sup>, **Glenn Wightman** of the Parks and Wildlife Commission of the Northern Territory, Australia will present *The Use of Plants for Medicine in the Dreamtime: Australian Aboriginal Traditional Medicinal Plant Use*. Dr. Wightman, a taxonomic botanist, has undertaken traditional biological knowledge and conservation research in north Australia since 1982.

APRIL 7<sup>TH</sup>, **Michael Balick**, Head, Institute of Economic Botany, The New York Botanical Garden, Bronx, New York will speak on *Exploring Ancient Wisdom and Traditional Healing in Micronesia*. For nearly three decades, Dr. Balick has worked in remote regions of the tropics to document plant knowledge of indigenous cultures, and help develop sustainable utilization systems for these regions to ensure that local communities benefit from such work.

MAY 5<sup>TH</sup>, **Brent Berlin**, Department of Anthropology, University of Georgia; Athens, Georgia; will present *Use of Medicinal Plants Among the Maya in the Chiapas Highlands*. Working among the Maya of Chiapas, Mexico, Dr. Berlin has led a five-year project on drug discovery, medical ethnobiology, botanical inventory, conservation, and sustained economic development. One goal of the study is to determine

the efficacy of the most important plant species used in Maya herbal medicine, as well as the pharmaceutically most promising species from the total flora of Highland Chiapas. ☞

### Austin College 2005 Lecture Series

The Center for Environmental Studies at Austin College will hold its lecture series for Spring 2005 on Thursdays, 11:00 – Noon in Hoxie Thompson Auditorium, Sherman Hall. **All lectures are free and open to the public.** For more information call Jan Beckett (903) 813-2034, or visit <http://www.austincollege.edu/Category.asp?1450>

The March 17 lecture, *The Coming Prairie Renaissance*, may be of particular interest to NPSOT members. The presenter will be **Richard Manning**, author of *Grassland*. ☞



## Backyard Wildlife Habitats: Butterflies, Birds & Botany

Last month's program was given by **Bonnie Bradshaw** from Texas Discovery Gardens in Dallas. This was an excellent presentation full of useful information given by a knowledgeable speaker. She used many clear examples with quotable phrases such as "native plants are the best food source for native birds" and "[these birds] are the best pest control service." Bonnie informed us that butterflies prefer to eat from plants that pump nectar all day long such as **Frost Weed, Mistflower, Mexican Bush Sage, and Butterfly Bush**. Butterflies are very picky as to their choice of plants where they lay their eggs; however, these plants are often not good at pumping nectar. Therefore, it is necessary to grow both kinds of plants.

Bonnie also gave us some pointers about our interaction with wild life. Do keep cats indoors as they are superb bird hunters. Do not leave cat or dog food out over night. Their food can become a buffet for foxes, possums, etc. Do not use live traps to remove wild life from unwanted locations as this can separate lactating mothers from their offspring. Instead, set up an environment that the opposite of what the animal is looking for in a nest.

A very impressive lecture!

Secretary, *Lon Turnbull* ☞



## CALENDAR

**Saturday, February 19, 2005, 9:00—12:00 ☞ Denia Garden Workday.** The Native Plant Committee at **KEEP DENTON BEAUTIFUL** is asking for volunteers to help clean up, weed, spread mulch, etc. Bring your gloves and gardening tools. Rain date is Feb. 26<sup>th</sup>. Contact **Cynthia Maguire** or **Owen Yost** for details. ☞

**Thursday, February 24, 6:30 p.m. ☞ TRINITY FORKS CHAPTER MEETING** at Texas Woman's University in the ACT Building. At 6:30, see Display Tables (*Name that Seedling*) and enjoy refreshments in the second floor lobby; program begins at 7:00 p.m. in Room 301. The *EARLY BIRD SPECIAL* will be *Rosettes*. Our featured speaker will be **Russell Stevens** from the Noble Foundation presenting *A Discussion of Prairie Grasses*. ☞

**Saturday, February 26, 2005, all day. ☞ THOSE OTHER TEXAS NATIVES**, the SPRING JOINT SYMPOSIUM sponsored by NPSOT and Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center, will be at the Wildflower Center in Austin, TX. Visit [www.npsot.org](http://www.npsot.org) or call (512) 292-4100 for details. ☞

**Saturday, March 5, 9:00am - 3:00pm ☞ Visit BRIT** in Ft. Worth, featuring an incredible herbarium and library (10:30am to noon). Leaders will be **Barney Lipscomb** and **Lee Luckydoo**. For those who can stay longer, we will eat somewhere close by and then go to the **Ft. Worth Botanic Gardens** for a fantastic tropical butterfly exhibit (cost \$4-\$5), returning to Denton about 3 p.m. Leave from the Cracker Barrel (I-35 & Hwy 380) at 9:00 sharp. ☞

**Sunday, Mar 13, 12:30 - 5:30pm ☞ Trout Lily walk** at Cedar Ridge Park in southwest Dallas (formerly the Dallas Nature Center). Our guide will be **Jim Varnum**. Depart from Luby's in Denton at 12:45 p.m. sharp. ☞

**Saturday, March 19, 9:00am - 3:00pm ☞ Visit Texas Discovery Gardens** (10 a.m. – noon, \$5/person). Take part in an Insect Safari led by Gail Manning, TDG staff entomologist. Discover a hidden world on this guided tour of the garden. Learn how to identify voracious garden predators and their prey. Eat lunch at a cafe on the Fair grounds. Afterward, **tour the Benny Simpson garden**, featuring primarily native trees and shrubs that Benny worked to introduce to north Texas. Leave from Luby's in Denton at 9:00am sharp; return by about 3:00pm. ☞

**Thursday, March 24, 6:30 p.m. ☞ TRINITY FORKS CHAPTER MEETING** at Texas Woman's University in the ACT Building. At 6:30, see Display Tables (*Name that Rosette*) and enjoy refreshments in the second floor lobby; program is at 7:00 p.m. in Room 301. The *EARLY BIRD*

*SPECIAL* will be *Pressing Wildflowers*. **Dr. Howard Arnott** will present *Crystals in Plants*. ☞

**Saturday, April 9, 10:00 a.m.—3:00 p.m. ☞ TRINITY FORKS CHAPTER SPRING PLANT SALE** on the Square in downtown Denton. This year we will feature a Kid's Korner for school-age children (and their parents). Make plans now to bring native plants from your garden, and invite your friends and neighbors to check us out! ☞

**Thursday, May 26, 6:30 p.m. ☞ TRINITY FORKS CHAPTER MEETING** at Texas Woman's University in the ACT Building. At 6:30, see Display Tables and enjoy refreshments in the second floor lobby; at 7:00 p.m. in Room 301 **Dr. George Diggs** will present *The Cross Timbers Across Time—a History of Cross Timbers Forest Plants*. ☞

THE TRINITY FORKS CHAPTER MEETS THE 4<sup>TH</sup> THURSDAY OF JAN–MAY AND SEPT–OCT AT 6:30 P.M. IN THE ADMINISTRATION AND CLOCK TOWER (ACT) BUILDING AT TEXAS WOMAN'S UNIVERSITY (OAKLAND AVE & ADMIN. DR.) IN DENTON, TEXAS.

## Current Officers/Board Members

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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*

## The Saga of the Brush Pile

A few years ago, trying to rediscover my long-lost youth, I spent all of a rather long day wielding pruning shears and a saw. Shrubs and trees throughout my yard were cowering in fear. Needless to say, I left a sickly-green trail of dead branches and assorted cuttings behind me as I let things “fall where they may.” I’d read all sorts of stuff about the evils of adding prunings to the landfill, and the sensibility of recycling green things on-site. So I just hauled them to an out-of-the-way corner of my yard, hoping somehow they would compost rapidly and magically turn into garden soil. They didn’t. Instead I had a 5-foot tall pile of brush that is now totally brown. Since creating the brush pile, I’ve occasionally pruned other branches. Not knowing what to do with the prunings, I just added them to the brush pile. (It’s now 7 feet tall).

It wasn’t going to disappear, so I thought of a “controlled burn”. After all, it was dead, dry wood and would burn away to nothing. It would work, if only open fires didn’t create pollution, and weren’t illegal in most cities.

About then, I saw a rabbit poke its head of the brush pile, and duck back in when he (she?) saw me. Then, being quite still for several minutes, I saw half a dozen mockingbirds (or did I see one mockingbird six times?) fly into the brush pile with beaks full of who-knows-what. There were probably lots of little birds and rabbits in there.

On closer inspection, I saw some really neat plants (doubtless “planted” by birds) taking root. Some **elderberry** (*Sambucus nigra*) and **Eve’s necklace** (*Sophora affinis*) were coming up, although none grew within a half mile. And two **passionvines** (*Passiflora incarnata*) were starting to twine through the stack of branches. No way could I burn the brush pile!

Since then I have seen wrens, chickadees, juncos and several birds I didn’t recognize go into, or leave, the brush pile. I even saw a roadrunner sitting on top, probably hunting down a lizard. The plants (many of which I can’t identify yet) are doing quite well, loving their tiny ecosystem.

The brush pile (actually, what’s around and inside it) is now something to be proud of. If I had it to do over again, I might contain it more decoratively, but I certainly wouldn’t get rid of it. Every yard should, and can, have one.

— G. Owen Yost ☞

Native Plant Society of Texas  
Trinity Forks Chapter  
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