



Trinity Forks Native Plant Press

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

May 2005

From the Prez....

Surprise endings

This week has been every bit as hectic for me as before the end of the spring semester. My saving grace was getting to spend some time in my garden last Tuesday.

While there I discovered a couple of “volunteer plants” – both of which were welcome additions. The first has had me wondering for quite a while, ready to yank it quick if it turned out to be a weed. Voila! When the buds opened, it’s identity was revealed to be a **Philadelphia fleabane** (*Erigeron philadelphicus*)! The other, much like **Marilyn Blanton’s winecups**, is an old friend from my childhood, **common dayflower** (*Commelina communis*).

Commelina grew under our wooden front porch when I was young and I have always admired its clear blue petals (both of them!); however, it took me years to realize there was also a third, tiny white petal. It was only in graduate school that I learned its name and how it came to be called *Commelina*. The story so amuses me that I must tell it here for each of you. **Linnaeus**, it is said, knew a family named Commelin which had three sons. One grew up to be a doctor, one a lawyer, and one never amounted to a hill of beans. When considering a name for this plant, the diminutive third petal caused Linnaeus to name this plant after the Commelin brothers. (Now who can say scientists don’t have a sense of humor?!)

Considering my good fortune after these two grand discoveries, I began to think of how dull life would be if I did not know enough to appreciate such gifts . . . and of all the people who have inspired me and helped me along the way. Of course, my very first inspiration to love plants was my mother, **Neva Fay Hyde**, who seemed to know the common name of every tree, flower and bird in her native Oklahoma. In more recent years, my education has been broadened by my association with **Camelia Maier**, **Dorothy Thetford**, and **Lisa Bellows**. Each of these individuals has had a large effect on my thinking and played a significant role in helping me develop knowledge about native plants to go along with the sense of beauty my mother instilled in me. As we all know, with knowledge comes responsibility. I hope to repay each of these people by passing on my enthusiasm for appreciating and preserving our plant heritage, and perhaps a little knowledge with it. Rarely do we know

the effect of our words or actions. Perhaps mine may lead to some other person’s discovery of a garden surprise one day.

I hope to see y’all on **Thursday, May 26th**. And I promise to bring at least one nice surprise to share with each of you!

Cynthia Maguire ☞



Our May Program

George M. Diggs, Ph.D., Professor of Biology at Austin College, Sherman, TX will present “*The Cross Timbers Across Time*” at our May meeting.

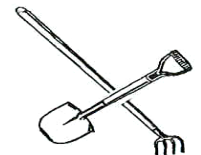
A botanist, Dr. Diggs researches and teaches introductory, plant and evolutionary biology at Austin College. During the spring term he alternates courses in Plants and Civilization with Tropical Natural History in locations including Bolivia, Chile, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Peru and Tanzania. Dr. Diggs’ research interests include the taxonomy and ecology of the flora of Texas and the systematics of the *Ericaceae*, blueberries. He is a research associate of the Botanical Research Institute of Texas (BRIT) in Fort Worth as well as a member of the Austin College Center for Environmental Studies.

In 2000, NPSOT awarded the Donovan Stewart Correll Memorial Award for Scientific Writing to George Diggs, Barney Lipscomb and Robert O’Kennon as co-authors of *Shinners & Mahler’s Illustrated Flora of North Central Texas*. Dr. Diggs has recently co-authored a new book, “*Illustrated Flora of East Texas, Vol. One*” with **Barney Lipscomb** and **Robert O’Kennon**, both of BRIT, and **Monique Reed** of TAMU College Station. You will be able to order a copy of this book at our May meeting to be delivered at our book signing, hopefully with our August Ice Cream Social.

Program Chair, *Harriet Horton* ☞

Digging into our Roots

Kids Korner, 2005: History in the Making



About 200 children received a potted wildflower during our first ever Kids Korner at Redbud Days on April 9th. A poster advertising our activity was read by most passers-by and nearly every child stopped to pot a plant. Potmakers (wooden tools) were used to roll newspaper pots. There were five different wildflower seedlings from which children could choose. The workers in our Korner seemed to enjoy the project as much as the children. For a short time in the morning we worked to realize the importance of getting each child to pot their own plant insofar as possible. Workers were kept busy finding the correct plant label and taping it onto the pot, watering the seedlings, and placing each "pot" into a newspaper sleeve while reminding the child (and the parents) that the seedling was a baby that needed care: water and sun and to plant the whole "pot."

Workers at this year's Kids Korner included **Becca Dickstein, Camelia Maier** and her son **George Roberson; Cynthia Maguire, Kathy Scott** and myself. I would say that two workers are always needed, with perhaps a third to cover breaks. Two can help children to make pots and plant seedlings of their choosing, while a third is the "explainer," telling what the seedlings are how and to grow them (sun or shade, sandy soil, etc.).

Harriet Horton ☞

Education Is Exciting!

Our thanks to **Kathy Scott** for highlighting the details of preparing a pressed plant specimen for herbarium preservation.

Employed by the Botanical Research Institute of Texas (BRIT), Kathy was our featured *EARLY BIRD SPECIAL* speaker. She followed BRIT's guidelines as found on pages 1386-87 of *Illustrated Flora of North Central Texas*, and provided specimens from BRIT's herbarium to complement her presentation.

We've completed the Education Committee's *EARLY BIRD SPECIAL* cycle which began with learning how to plant seeds, then nurturing seedlings, and then learning how to recognize rosettes. Our last two Specials were harvesting specimens/pressing for preservation, and instructions for documenting specimens in permanent archives. Thanks to all who provided information along the way!

Our May Display Table will showcase plant material provided by the Education Committee and anyone who is willing to bring plant specimens to share, or to obtain proper identification. *Name that Wildflower* will be your challenge for May. Come and learn with us on **Thursday, May 26, 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. How tall and wide will a **cowpen daisy** grow, and does it need full sun or will it tolerate shade ?

A. Cowpen daisy (*Verbesina encelioides*), also known as **golden crownbeard**, is a long-blooming native wildflower that deserves approximately a 5x5 ft. space in your flowerbed, and grows to a height of 4 to 5 feet. It is considered a prairie plant, thus the more sun it gets, the more blooms it provides. It is oftentimes planted as a larval food plant for the bordered patch butterfly (*Chlosyne lacinia*).

Q. I love our native **prairie verbena**, and would like to add more to my landscape. Any advice ?

A. Prairie verbena (*Glandularia bipinnatifida*) is a great addition to a landscape. Not only is it fragrant to smell, but blooms for an extended length of time. Flowers bloom from the bottom to the top of the stem, and seed capsules continue to form and mature as the blooms move upward. Watch the seed capsules and gather the seeds when the pod begins to open and expose the black seeds, and, before the seeds are dispersed by wind, etc.. Or, allow the seeds to drop and watch for seedlings that can be transplanted. Another means of producing more plants is to lay the leaf node of a stem directly on the soil and weight it down with a rock. New roots will develop at that node and provide nourishment for the remaining length of the stem, which can then be severed and transplanted. Thus the term from our grandmothers who would say, "Oh, that'll grow under a rock." Try it!

--Education Committee

Big Bend National Park: Its Flora and Habitats

The April program was given by **Bill Lindemann**, a past president of NPSOT. Big Bend National Park was created in 1944 from 8000 acres of desert and mountains in southwestern Texas. The southern border of the park for 118 miles is the Rio Grande. The average elevation is 6000 feet with a greater than 100 degree temperature variation. It is part of the Chihuahuan desert and contains the Chisos Mountain sky island. These mountains are the southern tail of the Rocky Mountains.

The major factors that control the ecosystem in the park are an average rainfall of 54" to less than 10" per year and average temperatures that vary from 56 to 74° F from the Chisos basin to the desert floor. Bill also presented a history of the geology of the area from 500 million years ago to the present. Over this time it went from hills to deep ocean, to shallow seas, to Rocky Mountains, to volcanic eruptions, to the development of the basin and ridge, and finally, to being a major erosional event. The Chihuahuan desert is the largest of four North American deserts being 800 miles long by 250 miles wide. Only 30 percent is in the USA--the rest is in Mexico. The major indigenous plant is **Lechuguilla** (*Agave lecheguilla*), a small bush. Once abundant desert grasslands have been lost since Europeans arrived due to overgrazing and a reduction in prairie fires.

After filling our minds with all this erudite information, Bill gave us a pictorial tour of the views from some of the trails in the park followed by pictures of a sample of the 1200 native plants in the park. Bill is an excellent photographer and the slide presentation was mind-blowing. He showed slides covering most kinds of flowering native plants; from delicate orchids, to cacti, to brilliant orange-red **Scarlet Ladies Tresses** (*Spiranthes cinnabarina*).

If you missed the presentation you will soon be able see all of the flora pictures he showed and more, because Bill is writing a book that will contain all the pertinent information about each of more than 500 native plants, organized much like the books that birders use.

Secretary, **Lon Turnbull** ☞



First Decatur Heritage Festival

At the first annual Decatur Heritage Festival, sponsored by the **Wildscape Heritage Society of Decatur**, on Saturday, May 7, 2005, Trinity Forks shared a booth with wool spinners, the **Audubon Society** and **Wild Bird Center** (Nancy Collins sent her daughter & co). **Marshall Fox** was the first to arrive; **Harriet Horton** and others helped him to set up his canopy, which lasted in the high wind most of the day. Marshall wore three "hats" that day: Trinity Forks promotion, Audubon Society and tour guide around the new Decatur Heritage Park, pointing out the various wildflowers. **Jeremy Voss** and his girlfriend added plants to those brought by Marshall and Harriet. **Fonda Fox**, who had been to the **Texas Discovery Gardens** Butterfly Garden seminar in the morning, joined us as did **Betty Dodds**, one of our founding members, in the afternoon. While there were few attendees at the festival, those who came to work had a fun time, visiting and becoming acquainted. We actually sold some plants (about \$19 worth) and passed out literature about Trinity Forks and NPSOT.

Harriet Horton ☞



Membership News

There were 43 people who signed in at our April 28 meeting, 11 of whom were visitors. Please make sure **YOU** sign in each month—we're trying to keep an accurate record of meeting attendance.

Jeremy Voss has a new address (415 Normal, Denton, 76201) and phone (940-381-5069). Please note this in your membership directory.

There have also been several membership renewals during April and May—**Gary Cook & Sharon Sahn, Becca Dickstein & Lon Turnbull, Curtis & Carolyn Gold, Jane Davis Lucas, Shirley Lusk, Marilyn Martin, Lyle & Patricia Nordstrom, Mr. & Mrs. Allan C. Vik, and Brigitte Yarborough.**

Membership, *Laurie Hammett* ☞



Propagating Herbaceous Perennials and Woody Plants from Stem Cuttings

Propagation of herbaceous perennials and many woody plants can be accomplished by a number of techniques. One of the most frequently used techniques is stem or tip cuttings. Stem cuttings are taken in the spring from vigorously growing vegetative plants. Plants that have a vertical growth habit can usually yield stem cuttings.

For successful results cutting material from vigorously growing healthy plants should be cut in lengths from 4-12 inches with a sharp knife or shears. An angled cut is not required since these will be recut. The material should be this year's growth but yet hardened enough so that it can be inserted into rooting media. To provide adequate plants for future plant sales, enough material to yield about 100 4 inch cuttings is desired. Wrap the bundle wrapped in a paper towel, moistened with water and place in a plastic bag. This bag can be refrigerated for no more than 96 hours before planting. A waterproof tag with the common name and scientific name, as well as your name and phone number, should also be placed in the bag.

The cutting material is re-trimmed into segments containing at least two nodes, dipped into a rooting hormone, inserted into the rooting media and immediately placed in a 100% relative humidity environment. Rooting will occur in most species in 2-3 weeks and then the cuttings are gradually moved to a less humid environment and grown for another two to three weeks before being transplanted.

Using this technique many identical clones of a desired plant can be propagated very easily.

Don Kenney ☞
Painted Flower Farm
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don@paintedflowerfarm.com
940/ 382-3789



“Want to Grow” List

The following plants are desired for our cooperative adventure with Painted Flower Farm. If you have any of these with a little to spare, please consider making a plant donation now to Painted Flower Farm. It will benefit Trinity Forks in future plant sales. To make a donation, just follow **Don's** instructions in the companion article on this page, then contact him (see info at the bottom of his article) and deliver the goods as soon as possible after collecting the plants.

Acanthus, Flame	Horse Herb
Agarita	Lantana
Aster, Tall	Lily, Spider
Beautyberry, Amer.	Marigold, Desert
Beebalm, Spotted	Paintbrush, Prairie
Bluebells	Passionvine
Bluebonnets	Penstemon, Hill Country
Buckeye, Scarlet	Rattlebush, Yellow
Buckeye, Texas	Redbud, Texas
Coneflower, Purple	Rose, Prairie
Coral-berry	Rudbeckia, Trilobe
Cypress, Standing	Rusty Blackhaw Viburnum
Dogwood, Roughleaf	Sage, Autumn
Fern, Wood	Sage, Lyre-leaf
Foxglove	Sage, Mealy Cup, Blue
Frog Fruit	Sage, Pitcher
Gayfeather	Sage, Red
Hibiscus, Texas Star	Sunflower, Maximillian
Holly, Possumhaw	Turk's Cap
Honeysuckle, Coral	Yucca, Red

Remember—this list is only the plants we want to grow that are not already under cultivation. Several other species are already under cultivation for Trinity Forks at Painted Flower Farm so don't despair if your favorite isn't on the list. Just check with **Cathy Lustgarten** or **Cynthia Maguire** to see if it's already growing.

Cathy Lustgarten & Cynthia Maguire ☞



CALENDAR

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 (*Name that Wildflower*) and enjoy refreshments in the second floor lobby. The *EARLY BIRD SPECIAL* will be *Pressing leaves of trees* in preparation for our September meeting. 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*. ☞

Saturday, June 18 ☞ All-day trip to beautiful Gardens at Athens, southeast of Dallas. For details, contact Mike Mizell. ☞

Thursday, August 25, 6:30 p.m. ☞ TRINITY FORKS ICE CREAM SOCIAL (and BOOK SIGNING?) at Texas Woman's University near the Benny Simpson Garden (west of the Chapel-in-the-Woods). **Dr. George Diggs** and **Barney Lipscomb** hope to bring their new *East Texas Flora Volume I*. ☞

Thursday, Sep 22, 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 **John Cooper**, TAMU Extension Agent for Denton County, will discuss *Landscaping with Native Trees*. ☞

Friday-Saturday, Oct 14-15 ☞ NPSOT State Symposium in the Big Bend region. See details on the state website at www.npsot.org. Plan ahead and get your reservations soon—hotel rooms are limited in the area. ☞

Thursday, Oct 27, 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. Rebecca Dickstein**, Associate Professor of Biochemistry at the University of North Texas, will speak on *Plant Propagation: Multiplication and Division*. ☞

THE TRINITY FORKS CHAPTER MEETS THE 4TH
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.

Announcements

Wanted: **homemade ice cream freezers** for the August ice cream social. Please contact **Marilyn Martin** if you have a freezer or would be willing to make a batch of ice cream. ☞

Our chapter has selected \$500 worth of free trees (part of a donation from **Schobel's Tree Farm** in Columbus, Texas). Do you have a vehicle with a trailer hitch? If so, we need your help to transport the trees to Denton. A covered 4×8 foot trailer is also needed. Please contact any officer if you can help. ☞

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Ways & Means	972-306-1088
Cathy Lustgarten	<i>drgoodrad@comcast.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

Bullnettle – Watch Out!

Normally I write about plants that I'm fond of. I'm not fond of **bullnettle** (*Cnidocolus texanus*); however, this common native perennial is a very interesting and handsome plant. Just don't touch it. Normally if I want someone to watch for a plant, it would be so they could get acquainted with it up close. I'd say, "Go ahead, smell the flowers, feel the texture of the leaves, turn them over to see if their underside is different, run a hand along the stem to see if it's hairy or smooth, round or square." But don't try this with bullnettle! It's not that friendly. Its common name, **tread-softly**, is good advice because it stings.

Bullnettle grows upright and branched from one to two feet and sometimes taller. It can be sprawling. It's found across much of Texas, often forming large colonies. It prefers dry, sandy soil in fields, open woods and disturbed areas. It has a deep branching taproot that enables it to survive drought. Every inch of bullnettle's stems and both sides of its dark green, deeply lobed leaves are covered with stiff stinging hairs. The hairs act like hypodermic needles breaking off in the skin and releasing a toxin that causes immediate redness, swelling, intense burning and itching. I was reminded of this recently when I accidentally yanked some up with my bare hand. Ouch! Despite its treacherous ways, bullnettles do have lovely white tubular flowers that are pollinated by sphinx moths. Each flower has five lobes and is about one inch across. They bloom in a terminal cluster containing separate male and female flowers in the same cluster. The flowers have a sweet fragrance if one dares to get close enough to smell them.

Bullnettles produce three large edible seeds in each prickly seed capsule. The seeds were used as food by various Indian tribes and are said to be very tasty when ripe. I've read the suggested way to harvest them is to carefully collect the capsules with tongs when they start turning brown. Store them in a paper bag until the capsules explode and release the seeds. Then the shell can be cracked and the nut can be eaten raw or used in cooking. I haven't eaten any seeds and probably won't. They reportedly contain some cyanide.

Bullnettle's botanical name, *Cnidocolus texanus*, is derived from the Greek word, *cnide*, meaning nettle and *scolopes*, meaning prickly or sting. Bullnettle certainly does sting; however, it's not a true nettle (*Urticaceae*) but a member of the surge family (*Euphorbiaceae*). Like many Euphorbia species, it has a milky white sap that can irritate the skin. With its painful sting that can itch for days and an irritant sap, bullnettle is well-defended. Bullnettle is easy to recognize and hard to forget if encountered up close. I got acquainted with it long ago and have been reintroduced more times than I'd like. I've brushed up against it, knelt down on it, and fallen into it. Believe me, those stinging hairs go right through jeans. The common Spanish name for bullnettle, Mala mujer, meaning "bad woman" is well deserved, so watch out! ☞

Marilyn Blanton ☞

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