

Trinity Forks Native Plant Press

The Newsletter of Trinity Forks Chapter
Native Plant Society of Texas

February 2008

From the Prez (Cathy Lustgarten)

What's Blooming?

Admit it – you've already been out in your yard looking for signs of spring, right? Me too. And since your Anticipation Radar is already up and running, let me add to the things you could look forward to this year at Trinity Forks. You'll find a calendar of known events elsewhere in this newsletter. But those aren't the only Trinity Forks blossoms waiting to open.

Would you like to visit member's yards to look at some of the wonderful uses of native plants, borrow ideas, and get inspired? Not a formal garden tour like what is done for fund-raisers, and no fancy exhibits -- just a good old "come on over & let's walk through my garden" experience. It can happen if a few people extend an invitation. Are you willing to host your native plant buddies? Let me know this month so we can firm up the plans. Most likely dates are May 3 or 4 – but YOU TELL ME.

Start setting aside your favorite native plant photos for a chapter-wide show-and-tell for one of our fall programs. Or get outside and take some new ones with the great info you got from Kathy Saucier in last month's program!

Instead of a fall plant sale this year, we are thinking about a members-and-friends plant swap – natives only, of course. Could be held in place of a chapter meeting. Or we could hold it on a weekend, combined with a potluck picnic similar to last August. YOU TELL ME what you'd like to have!

Could you conduct an Informational Minute at the beginning of one of our meetings this spring? Let me know NOW. Can you take March? April?

We've had a couple of opportunities to spread our message and enthusiasm for native plants at weekend community events this spring, and there are bound to be more on the horizon. This is one of the best ways to carry out our mission, but too often we have to pass them up! Our chapter is blessed with many members holding a broad and interesting assortment of talents and skills. As a chapter, we have the potential to be a powerful influence in our little corner of the world, but only if each member steps forward to sew his seeds when an opportunity matches that member's time and talents.

One plant does not a landscape make. But if you tell me what you'd like our chapter's landscape to look like, I'll bet that together, we can make it happen. My Anticipation Radar says our fun-loving & imaginative members collectively hold all the components needed for

a bountiful and diverse year, just like our Texas Natives. We've got myriad annuals and perennials ready to burst from dormancy into glorious spring bloom, and I'm not just talking plants here. Be sure to look around and see what's blooming. Better yet, look within!

February 28 Meeting

Rodney Love from Tierra Designs will present the program on rainwater collection, drip irrigation techniques, and your native plant landscape.

March 27 Meeting

Master Naturalist Jim Varnum presents Botanical (A)musings where he explores the world of plants and plant naming, like how our state flower, the Texas bluebonnet, became known as *Lupinus texensis*. The presentation is not all serious and technical; Jim includes some of his nature jokes and trivia and interesting names of plants and animals. Finally Jim caps off the evening with a discussion of his very special plant. You have to attend to find out what it is.

Jim is a self-taught student of nature where his interests range from birds to prairies to land preservation. He spends much time searching for native plants out-and-about in the DFW Metroplex. Jim and his wife Stephanie have recently purchased an old ranch in Hunt County and have begin to restore it back to a native prairie. Jim is a Texas Master Naturalist and on the board of the Texas Land Trust Council. And he recently retired from the board of the Native Prairies Association of Texas. He also teaches and leads trail walks on birds, trees, wildflowers and prairies.

This will be followed up with a field trip to Clear Creek Preserve in Denton on Sunday, March 30th from 2-4 pm. See trip list on p. 2 for more details

Trinity Forks Chapter of NPSOT meets on the fourth Thursday of January through May and September and October. Sign-in, social time with refreshments, educational displays, etc. start at 6:30 on the 2nd floor of the Administration & Clock Tower (ACT) building at Texas Woman's University in Denton. ACT is located at Oakland Ave. & Administration Drive. The program begins at 7:00pm on the 3rd floor.

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.

FIELD TRIP OPPORTUNITIES

Invitational Plant Dig Saturday, March 1

Long-time member Wilma Haggard has invited our chapter to dig plants from her Denton property for our spring plant sale. The dig will be Sat., March 1, 10 am to noon, with a rain date of March 8. Wilma is at 1900 S. Mayhill Rd, across from the Denton Municipal Landfill. We will need 1 gal and larger pots for Possumhaw Holly and Sumac. Bring smaller pots to harvest Blue Spiderwort and Red Sage. The soil is mostly sandy, so the digging is relatively easy. Bring your own tools & whatever pots you can, then take your diggings home to nurture and label in time for the April 12 plant sale. As an added bonus, Wilma's property is classical Cross Timbers woodlands and fields, so keep an eye out for early spring wildflowers and practice your tree ID skills while you work!

Sign up at the Feb. 28 meeting or contact Cathy L. with questions. 972-306-1088, drgoodrad@verizon.net

Nature Hikes to the LBJ National Grasslands

On the first Wednesday of every month there is a nature hike on the Lyndon B. Johnson National Grasslands (north of Decatur). This national treasure is just 30 minutes from Denton. There are only 22 national grasslands and we are so fortunate to have one so close. Led by Mary Curry with lots of assistance from Shirley Lusk, the focus is on all of nature, including the wildflowers. Mary's specialty is the birds and of course Shirley's is the wildflowers and other native plants. We have several folks that are NPSOT members who regularly attend as well. With spring just around the corner, consider joining us. The group tries to visit a different unit every month, so no two field trips are the same.

Be prepared for a moderate hike of about a mile or less through tall native grasses and other flora. We don't always stick to a trail. Bring along your binocular so that you can enjoy the birds, butterflies, and dragonflies. Wear long pants, have good closed-toed hiking shoes, and bring your water. And if the chiggers are out be sure to apply some bug spray!

We meet at the Forest Service Office in Decatur on Hwy 287 just north of 380 about ¼ mile. The office is on the right hand side just past the blinking yellow light. Please be there by 8:45am. We leave the office at 9am sharp. Everyone provides their own transportation, but of course we encourage you to carpool if possible. We stay out on the grasslands 'till around 11am.

If weather is threatening (thunder or ice storms), you can check with the Forest Service office at 940-627-5475 after 8am to see if the field trip has been postponed or cancelled. You can also call them if you need further directions.

The dates for the next four hikes are March 5th, April 2nd, May 7th, and June 4th. Mark your calendars and see you on the LBJ National Grasslands!

Sunday, March 30, 2-4pm

As a follow-up to his program earlier in March, Jim Varnum will lead us on a field trip to Clear Creek Preserve in Denton. He, along with Dorothy Thetford, will lead us in exploring the native plants of the area.

You can meet at the entrance along Collins Rd on the west side of the preserve at 2pm. However, because of very limited parking space there, you are encouraged to meet at Piggly Wiggly on Sherman Dr. at 1:45 for carpooling to the site.

POW WOW in the Big Thicket, April 26/27

The 29th annual Texas Wilderness Pow Wow takes place this year in the Big Thicket National Preserve and Village Creek State Park. It is sponsored by Texas Conservation Alliance (formerly TCONR) and the Big Thicket Asso. Enjoy canoeing on Village Creek or the Neches River, a multitude of fascinating plant/bird walks, and a delicious Dutch oven dinner on Saturday evening, with entertainment by environmental troubadour Bill Oliver. Camp at Village Creek SP or stay in area motels. Go to www.TCAtexas.org for more details on events and reservations. Reservations need to be made early.

May 3 or 4, Member Yard Tour?

Will there be a tour of members' yards? YOU can help make it happen by volunteering to show your yard. This would just be an informal affair for NPSOT members. We are a friendly bunch. Please let Pres. Cathy know NOW if you are open for a visit.

Saturday, May 10, 9am-3pm

Annual Master Gardeners Yard Tour

Enjoy a delightful tour of beautiful yards around the area. Many use at least some natives and feature butterfly gardens. Cost is \$8 in advance or \$10 at the door.

Volunteers across the Nation Needed to Track Climate Clues in Spring Flowers

Citizen-scientist volunteers will be able to help track climate change by observing and recording the timing of flowers and foliage.

Project BudBurst, operated by the University Corporation for Atmospheric Research (UCAR) and a team of partners including the U.S. Geological Survey's USA National Phenology Network, allows U.S. students, gardeners, and other citizens to enter their observations into an online database that, over time, will give researchers a more detailed picture of global climate change.

The project, which will be launched on Feb. 15, will operate year-round so that early- and late-blooming species in different parts of the country can be monitored throughout their life cycles. Project BudBurst (See <http://www.budburst.org>) builds on a pilot program carried out last spring, when a thousand participants recorded the timing of the leafing and flowering of hundreds of plant species in 26 states.

2008 Trinity Forks Calendar

- Feb. 28 Meeting & **Program**: Rodney Love from Tierra Designs: Rainwater collection , drip irrigation techniques, and your native plant landscape
- March 1 **Plant dig** at Wilma Haggard's property 10am – noon (rain date March 8)
- March 27 Meeting & **Program**: Master Naturalist Jim Varnum presents Botanical (A)musings, where he explores the world of plants and plant naming with plenty of nature jokes and trivia mixed in. Follow-up field trip below.
- March 30 **Field Trip** to City of Denton Clear Creek Natural Heritage Area; Jim Varnum & Dorothy Thetford, 2-4pm
- April 12 NPSOT Exclusively-Native Spring **Plant Sale** with Redbud Festival, Denton Civic Center 10am – 4pm
- April 24 Meeting & **Program**: Steven Ray, with the Denton USDA office will give a program on Prairie Grasses.
- May 3or4 ?NPSOT Members' **Yard Tour**: Depends on YOU.
- May 10 Annual Master Gardeners Yard Tour. See details on page 2.
- May 22 Meeting & **Program**: Dr. Camelia Maier: Native Plant Research @ TWU, including snow-on-the-prairie, trout-lily, and bois d'arc, to mention a few.
- Aug. 23 ?Annual Ice Cream Social, time & location TBA
- Sept. 27 Meeting & **Program**: TBA
- Oct. 16-19 **NPSOT State Symposium**, Beaumont, TX "The Big Thicket"
- Oct. 23 Meeting & **Program**: TBA

Johnny-Jump-Up / Field Pansy / Cupid's Delight

by Dorothy Thetford

Botanical name: *Viola bicolor* Family: Violaceae

By the time nurseries have sold their winter inventory of cultivated pansies, nature pleasantly surprises us with one of the many violets of Texas, namely, Johnny-jump-up, Field pansy, or sometimes commonly referred to as Cupid's delight.

To find the Wild pansy, one must look closely among the dried, winter grasses and leaves of mostly sandy soils from east Texas and west to the Rolling Plains and Edwards Plateau.

Camouflaged is a good description of this violet. The plant is only three to five inches tall, with a flower that's only 1/2 inch wide. Its five petals vary in color from violet-blue to light lavender-blue, and fade into a whitish colored center or throat. The three lower petals have visibly darker-colored veins toward the center. Even though the delicate vein markings are truly special in design, the plant can be easily overlooked due to its pale colors and petite size.

Leaves of Johnny-jump-up or Field pansy have two sets of characteristics. The lower leaves are orbicular to ovate and unlobed. The upper leaves are small, spatulate (wide and rounded at outer tip; narrow at base) to lanceolate (longer than wide; tapering at both ends). Leaves of this violet grow in clusters on the stems, and from each cluster one or two leafless pedicels extend an additional inch and provide one terminal blossom.

Ants are credited with transporting seeds from one location to another. The ants are attracted to, and eat, the outer covering of the seed which is described as an oily appendage (elaiosome), but leave the seed intact. Depending on how far the ants forage for food, next year's plants may be found several feet from the location of last year's plants vs. in a tightly arranged colony. Therefore, finding these annuals is always a surprise.

True Texas wildflower enthusiasts are always elated to find the early-blooming Johnny-jump-ups peeking through the grass because we can be assured that spring is not too far away.

Dorothy Thetford has been a Trinity Forks member since 1992 and is a roving ambassador for wildflowers with her "Wildflowers-of-Texas" photo cards and programs. Her cards are available locally at Cupboard Natural Foods & Café in Denton.

PrairieBlog: about Native Prairies & Grasslands

Jason Spangler has created a prairie blog on Wumple.com where he publishes news about native prairie (tallgrass and shortgrass), savanna, desert grassland, and other native grassland related news. Check out Prairie Blog at <http://prairieblog.wumple.com> and read current native prairie news!

PrairieBlog publishes and summarizes news daily about native prairies and other grasslands, though it may have slightly more tallgrass prairie news (due to author's preferences) and Texas prairie news (since that is where the author is located and involved in prairie conservation, restoration, and appreciation).

Some example topics include: prairie conservation and restoration, native prairie plants, local ecotype, native seed projects, grassland birds, butterflies, ducks, bison, prairie art, culture and history related to native prairie, carbon sequestration, cellulosic ethanol, organizations working on prairie conservation and restoration, etc. PrairieBlog is designed to help educate more people about native prairies, motivate people to work for prairie conservation and restoration, help people keep informed of the latest news and work in prairie conservation and restoration, and help people involved with prairies network with each other.

If you know of some native prairie, savanna, desert grassland, or other native grassland related news, you can submit it by emailing to blog@texasprairie.org.

Jason Spangler is on the Board of Directors for Native Prairies Asso. of Texas and currently serves as Treasurer.

Trinity Forks Contact Information

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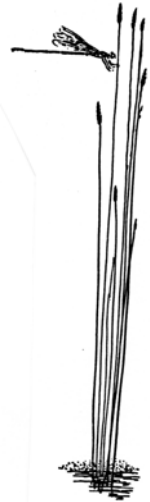
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