



Trinity Forks Native Plant Press

The Newsletter of Trinity Forks Chapter
Native Plant Society of Texas

October 2009

From the Prez

Rebalancing in 2010

May I use this financial term to tickle your thoughts about our chapter's goals in 2010? Less than a year from now our chapter will host the state symposium, celebrating the 30th anniversary of the founding of NPSOT, right here at TWU. Planning for local arrangements, the educational program, and some of the field trips and special activities, is well under way. But hundreds of small jobs are ahead of us, along with lots of fun! For example, what do you think about The Trinity Forks Native Plant Choir leading the audience in a short native plant sing-along at one of the social functions? That would require a couple of rehearsals next summer. The pace will pick up significantly in the final 2-3 months as we prepare to lead field trips, set up displays, make direction signs, and recruit additional assistance from sister organizations around Denton, but that will go smoothly if the groundwork is done this winter and spring.

Using the Cross Timbers as our workshop, the 2010 "how-to" symposium will explore and teach ways to conserve our native plants and habitats, and pass along our great enthusiasm for natives in the process. We want to provide skills to people from every group that influences which plants go into the ground, as a means to restore balance between the way Man impacts the ecosystem, and the ability of that ecosystem to sustain Man. Since our chapter is at the cradle of NPSOT's birthplace, Trinity Forks hopes to hold a symposium that springs life into our mission statement, and do it in a way that well reflects pride in our chapter and its heritage, as well as our love of Texas Native Plants.

Most of us are involved in many activities, not just the Native Plant Society. And I can see you thinking -- how will each of us possibly squeeze this in on top of other activities? The answer is, I don't want you to! I am boldly asking you to pare back your involvement in some of your other activities just for 2010, to be able to apply more of your time and talents for the success of the symposium. In other words, rebalance your activities this year. And we won't think unkindly of you if you reverse the process the following year and rebalance your activities for 2011.

Denton area members stand to receive tremendous benefit from NPSOT next year in knowledge of native plants in general, of our own ecosystem in particular, of how to apply principles of sustainability and habitat conservation, of ways to diversify our gardens to benefit nature's creatures, and so much more. NPSOT in turn

will need more from its members to accomplish this. To whom much is given, much is expected. It all balances out.

Cathy Lustgarten, President, Trinity Forks Chapter 2007-2009 -- "My favorite thing about NPSOT has always been YOU."

Caterpillar Gardening with Native Plants

Our **October 22 program** will be presented by Trinity Forks member Kathy Saucier

Be prepared to see about 50 species of butterflies, moths and skippers found in the North Texas area and surrounding areas. Kathy will show how the use of native plants, and the right ones, will increase those populations in your own yard.

Learn about the larvae, what they eat, and how to appreciate them instead of curse their devouring of your plants.

Kathy has had a lifelong interest in nature. Since she was a small child, she has collected and observed anything alive and much that is not, all related to our natural world. That included butterflies and especially sphinx moths. She shared that interest with fellow members of her 4-H club by being entomology project leader for other kids.

Kathy has been a member of NPSOT and Trinity Forks chapter for almost 18 years. She has dabbled in landscaping with native plants since the early 80's, basically when she graduated from college & had her first yard. She even introduced a new author of native plant landscaping to Frogfruit.

In 1994 her yard was awarded the Texas Wildscape certification, as Backyard Habitat #290, with TX Parks & Wildlife. A few years following, she was certified as a Wildscape Instructor and did some Wildscape landscape consultation. It was the precursor to the Master Naturalist.

She loves to encourage others to use natives and has a passion for introducing new plants. She continually provides new species to 2 growers to encourage more natives in the nurseries, one just delivered at the end of September. Some of these include Chile pequin, Bush Sunflower & Frogfruit. That latest is Snakeherb, *Dyschoriate linearis*. Currently she has about 180 species of TX Native Plants in her yard.

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 meeting begins at 7:00pm on the 3rd floor.

Trinity Forks Plant Festival News

The brisk temperatures did not deter these native plant lovers from their appointed rounds! A steady throng of customers created a constant whirl of activity, and I counted at least 29 members (and may have missed a few besides)! The selections included about 1200 plants representing 95 species, plus about 20 varieties of seeds. We sold about 600 plants and gave away 50 or more plants to 4 different elementary school outdoor learning centers & demo gardens. We again had the good fortune to be assisted by 21 TWU student volunteers earning science class credits in their civic engagement project. They made very short work of the set-up and take-down. They also took home about 50 plants to baby-sit until time to install them in the Benny Simpson Memorial Garden during the up-coming fall garden work-day.

The large number of members present allowed all the visitors to ask plenty of questions and have a personal escort to assist in their selections, with students at the ready to carry plants. A great many of the customers stayed for more than 2 hours, carefully learning and studying before deciding on selections. Learning, teaching, sharing -- now THAT'S what it's all about! I want to give special thanks to Kathy Saucier who fostered the great variety of plants for us to consider, and who orchestrated and kept a running inventory of all the species and numbers of donated and consigned plants and tracked their sales as well.

Credit for much of our success also goes to Don Kenney and his Painted Flower Farm, who provided so many plants on consignment. Don has been has been a strong supporter of our chapter in this and other ways for many years. The number of native species he is able to offer has steadily grown each year, partially in response to requests and encouragement from our own members. A treasured symbiotic relationship, to be sure! Give Don your thanks by favoring him with your business and recommending that others visit his nursery when they want to Buy Native.

The \$1500 or so in profits generated by this chapter event will pay for speakers' honorariums, the NICE! program, our newsletters, and allow us to fund educational activities in our community which promote native plants and habitat. We may not have a fall festival next year, since we will be busy hosting the 2010 annual state symposium. But our 2009 Fall Plant Festival will go down in chapter history as a well-executed, well-stocked, educational, and inspirational event, and most of all, was a fun way to spend a classic autumn Saturday morning.

submitted by Cathy Lustgarten, Plant Sale Chair and perpetual customer

(See photo on next page)

Texas Native Plant Art Contest

The fourth grade students of McNair Elementary School are participating in the Texas Native Plant Art Contest sponsored by Trinity Forks Chapter. The purpose of the contest is to raise awareness and educate students about the importance of native plants in keeping with the intention of the Texas legislature in designating the third week in October as Texas Native Plant Week. The artwork will be

displayed at Texas Woman's University during Texas Native Plant Week and later at the Interpretive Center at Lake Ray Roberts State Park. *by Marilyn Blanton*

Carolina Snailseed

Shiny red berries of Carolina snailseed (*Cocculus Carolinas*) accent the wild tangle of growth along the wood's edge. The showy berries, which are actually drupes, have developed from the small inconspicuous whitish-green blooms of late spring and summer. The two inch wide compound clusters of ¼ inch fruits have turned from apple green to glossy red as they matured, creating a familiar autumn scene. Although the fruit is poisonous to humans if ingested, it is eaten by a number of both game and nongame birds that often disperse the seeds. It is also eaten by some small and large mammals.

Carolina snailseed, sometimes called red-berry moonseed, is a member of the Menispermaceae or moonseed family. Its native distribution includes much of Texas and runs eastward to Florida and north to Kansas and Virginia. It is found along roadsides, thickets, and in disturbed sites. Carolina snailseed is a fast growing, deciduous, native, perennial vine that climbs to twelve feet or more. It is adapted to various soils of both uplands and bottomlands. It is tolerant of full sun but prefers partial shade.

Carolina snailseed's leaves grow alternately two to four inch and are typically heart-shaped but vary significantly. They have a veined texture with a dark green upper surface and paler lower surface with soft dense hairs.

Carolina snailseed is often found growing with greenbrier, which has similar shaped leaves, but the twining Carolina snailseed does not have the thorns or tendrils of greenbrier and its leaves are not as leathery.

Carolina snailseed seeds look like little snails, hence the common name. The hard round seeds are compressed laterally and sculptured with ridges. The vine can be propagated from seeds or woody cuttings. It can become invasive in a landscaped area, but works well in a natural setting. It is pretty as well as being drought, disease and insect tolerant.

When I see the scarlet clusters of Carolina snailseed's fruit dangling from a post oak or hackberry tree, mingled with greenbrier or wild grapevine, draped over sumac or twirled around a rural mailbox, it seems to be the perfect picture of fall.

Autumn is full of color with the bright yellows of Maximillian sunflower, golden aster, broomweed and goldenrod. Snow on the prairie, frostweed and boneset add patches of white. American beauty-berry, wild morning glory and eryngo add their shades of purple.

The elms, ashes and bois d'arcs start to yellow and persimmon leaves turn bronze. Virginia creeper leaves blend in colors of pink and burgundy while sumacs flash their brilliant oranges and reds.

But for me, it's the red berries of Carolina snailseed that carry my thoughts back to the carefree autumn days of childhood.

*Marilyn Blanton, education chair and past President
(See photo on next page)*

Wildflowers of Texas

by Dorothy Brown Thetford

Common name: Texas Sage/Tropical Sage

Botanical name: *Salvia coccinea*

Family: Lamiaceae

You may consider this native Texas wildflower a late-bloomer. But in reality, Texas sage, also known as tropical sage, Indian fire, and scarlet sage, blooms from late spring to the first frost of North Central Texas. Wilma Haggard, a beloved TF charter member and wildflower enthusiast, introduced me to her grand and glorious landscape about 17 years ago with a tour of her 'red' perimeter of Texas sage. I was hooked, thanks to Wilma.

There's too much competition in late spring for this sage to get much attention, and oftentimes it ceases blooming during the extreme heat of summer. But, when the temperature drops a bit in late summer, the plant produces a renewed flush of bright red flowers that deserves center stage from September until frost.

The slender, tube-shaped, two-lipped flower is about one inch long and grows at a 45-degree angle from the stem. Two to four flowers encircle the stem at each node, and these clusters bloom only on the upper six to eight inches of the terminal flower spike. BTW, dead-head these spikes and you'll be overwhelmed with repeated flushes of blooms.

The base stems of the plant are very stout but not considered woody. An interesting characteristic of the stem can be felt by rolling the stem between your thumb and finger. You'll feel that the stem has four very pronounced vertical ridges, and easily understand why it is described as being square-stemmed.

Leaves of Tropical/Texas sage are 2 1/2 inches long by 2 inches wide on the lower stems, decreasing in size rapidly from bottom to top of its hairy stem. The true green deltoid-ovate shaped opposite leaves have serrate-to-dentate margins without true points along the edges. They fall into the category commonly known as heart-shaped.

Fragrance exuded from crushed leaves of *Salvia coccinea* often produces mixed responses, i.e., it is considered desirable by some, and undesirable by others, thus described as 'aromatic'.

Scattered throughout the eastern half of Texas, this sage prefers sandy soils along the wood's edge. Even though it is considered a shade-tolerant perennial, it produces a more up-right plant with more blooms if it gets more sun than shade, and will max out at 25-35 inches tall. The single to multiple stems die back to the ground for the winter, and new stems emerge in early spring. It transplants easily and seeds out prolifically, so share your natives with your non-native friends!

We're fortunate to have local nurseries carrying this plant. Once you've witnessed thirsty hummingbirds and butterflies hovering around these vibrant red flowers at daybreak, waiting for flowers to open with fresh nectar, you'll want to follow Wilma's example and add Texas sage to every corner of your wildscape.

Dorothy, a TF member since 1992 and a former (twice) president, is a roving ambassador for wildflowers with her City Nature Hikes, DISD hikes, programs-OLC support, and her photo cards. Her "Wildflowers-of-Texas" photo greeting cards are available locally at Cupboard Natural Foods & Cafe.



Fall Plant Sale (photo by Shirley Bond)



Ca. Snailseed (photo by M. Blanton)

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Trinity Forks Chapter
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Membership Corner

We give a big 'Thank You' to all these folks who have renewed their memberships in Trinity Forks recently and hope to see you at the next meeting. You are what makes Trinity Forks special!

W.R. Mote, Greenwood

Elizabeth McMath, Denton

Claude Walter, Muenster

Patrick Peterson, Denton

Smiddy Foreman, Lewisville

Tom & Leslie Kirwan, Flower Mound

Julie Kidd, Carrollton

October 22 Program:

Butterfly Gardening



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.

Website: www.npsot.org/TrinityForks