

Trinity Forks Native Plant Press

The Newsletter of Trinity Forks Chapter
Native Plant Society of Texas

September 2010

From the Prez

Fall Is Time to Plant Natives & Seed Support for Trinity Forks

Welcome back for the Trinity Forks Chapter's fall activities. Summer was hot, as it usually is in Texas, but not as droughty as other summers. And, as usual, summer was deadly for some of the plants in your gardens, especially non-natives, unless you watered them almost every day. The more droughty second part of this summer underscored again and again the importance of using native plants in landscaping. I am sure that most of you have worked toward promoting native plants to, and even sharing some, with your relatives, neighbors, and acquaintances. I am very thankful to you for working to inspire others in landscaping with native plants. We all love summer educational success stories, so please forward them for publication in our newsletter and/or in the state newsletter. We need to let people know about our educational endeavors in convincing others to give up on the manicured "cleanscapes" for their own benefit and Nature's benefit, which in the end benefits us. Expensive water bills can be eliminated by using native plants. Reducing water consumption lowers the demands on limited water resources in the area. Native plants are the most beneficial vegetation for maintaining the integrity and functionality of ecosystems, thus supporting those butterflies and birds that we so enjoy watching and having around.

Our activities for this fall will stress even more the need for, and benefits of, landscaping with native plants. Come and join us for our September and October programs and make plans to attend the 2010 NPSOT Symposium, whose title is very suggestive: "\$ave Texas One Landscape at a Time: Our Native Plants Light the Future". Our chapter has the honor of hosting the annual symposium as we celebrate 30 years of NPSOT. This symposium is going to be outstandingly educational, exciting, and enjoyable with its scores of speakers, workshops, field trips, and other activities. We will have the usual Silent Auction for which we happily accept donations. Also, all of you native plant photographers out there be sure to send your photos in for a photo contest. If you have not visited our website lately, please check it out at <http://www.npsot.org/TrinityForks/index.htm>. It has a link to the symposium website on the main menu, as well as to our Flickr site under 'Pictures of local native plants.'

Fall is time to plant natives. By now, some natives in your gardens may have changed to a brownish color and look beat-up by the strong summer sun, but obviously they are not dead. Fall is here and it is time to give native plants a head start. From now on, days and nights are cooling down, and more rain is expected; therefore, this is the best planting time for almost all plants, except for annuals, in Texas. By planting your shrubs, trees, perennials and biennials now, you allow the plants to develop strong root systems and get successfully established over the winter, when more moisture is available in the soil. You will be impressed how ready your fall-planted natives will be to start growing rapidly at the first sign of warm spring days.

Fall is also the time of the year to nominate chapter officers for 2011. It is the time to seed and re-plant our support for our organization. We always need members to serve on the executive board and different committees. Please think about nominations for the position of President Elect, Secretary, and Treasurer and forward them to the Election Committee composed of Marshall Fox, Laurie Hammett, Dorothy Thetford, and myself. Please also take this opportunity to get more involved in our chapter by volunteering to serve as chair or member of one of the following committees and positions: Membership, Hospitality, Publicity, Field Trips, Newsletter, Historian, Parliamentarian, or Webmaster. The health of our chapter depends on support from its members. We have a record number of 114 members as of September 13. Please consider helping out. We need to hear about your willingness to join the team as soon as possible.

And one last issue: fall is time to ... re-plant our newsletter. We will post the October issue of our newsletter on our website and send you the link that allows you to access it. For members who are not using a computer, a printed version of the newsletter will be mailed to you, as before. The on-line version of the newsletter will allow us to expand articles by adding pages and also post beautiful color pictures, while greatly reducing our printing and mailing costs. We would very much like to get your input on the on-line newsletter, so expect a quiz at the October meeting.

Happy planting, whatever kind or kinds of planting (see above) you are planning to perform this fall.

Camelia Maier, TF President

Sep 23 Program

Our program this month will be presented by Dr. Dottie Woodson from the TAMU Extension Service on the topic of "Landscape Design with Native Plants and Water Conservation in Mind." This is a perfect lead-in to the state symposium in October.

This month's meeting will be in our usual location -- the TWU Clock Tower Bldg. Social time is at 6:30p.m. Meeting is at 7p.m.

Cecil Carter, Program Chair

Coming Oct 7-10



Symposium 2010 • 30th Anniversary
Native Plant Society of Texas

NOTE: Early registration prices have been extended to the end of September. Don't miss out!!!

Outreach Report

Sept 12, 2010: Chapter info display for "Second Sunday Resource Conservation Program" at First United Methodist Church of Denton.

Oct 2, 2010: Chapter info display at Master Gardener Fall Infest, Denton Bible Church, 9:00am-3:00pm. Volunteers are welcomed.

Dorothy Thetford, Outreach Chair

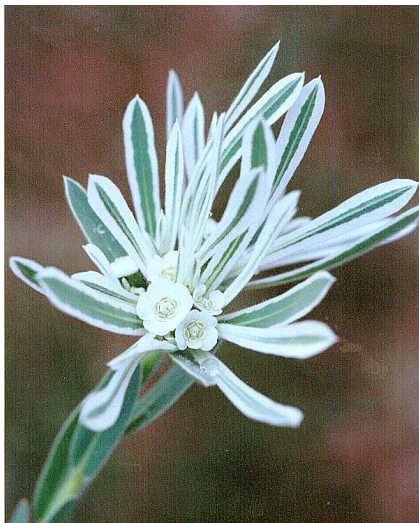


Photo by Dorothy Thetford
Her "Wildflowers-of-Texas" photo greeting cards are available locally at Cupboard Natural Foods & Cafe.

Wildflowers-of-Texas by Dorothy Brown Thetford

Common name: Snow-on-the-prairie

Scientific name: *Euphorbia bicolor*

Family: Euphorbiaceae

Snow in September? On a prairie? In Texas? Oh, sure. Our native wildflower, commonly called Snow-on-the-prairie (*Euphorbia bicolor*), attracts attention to the hot dry prairie with its cool, green and white striped bracts. These three-to-four inch bracts are longer than the leaves of the plant, and completely dominate the tiny white flower structures.

Actually, the white structure is not a flower, but a cyathium (the specialized inflorescence of Euphorbia, consisting of a flower-like, cup-shaped involucre which carries the several true flowers within) as defined by Marshall Enquist in his book WILDFLOWERS OF THE TEXAS HILL COUNTRY.

Each 5-petaled structure, only 1/4 inch in diameter, looks like it's been tucked into the base of the bracts as an afterthought, almost hidden by the long, wispy bracts. Snow-on-the-prairie has a single, stout, hairy, 3-5 foot stem, which splits midway up the stem into a perfect triangular set of (three) branches. With ample moisture, these three branches may grow 6 to 8 inches taller and split into additional sets of three branches.

One-to-two inch, hairy, lanceolate, alternate leaves line the stem up to the first branch split and, at that point, three opposite leaves encircle the base of the split. This interesting leaf arrangement is repeated with each new symmetrical branching. This is not your normal stem-leaves-and terminal flowering plant; inspect it closely. A milky latex weeps from any broken stem, leaf or bract. All Euphorbias contain this milky sap, which can cause dermatitis to sensitive-skinned persons, and, is toxic. Since livestock do not eat this plant, Snow-on-the-prairie is normally found in very large colonies throughout the Grand Prairie, Blackland Prairie, east to east Texas, and from Montague County southwest to Johnson County. As flowers mature, green, hairy, 3-seeded capsules develop and stay on the plant until they dry, harden, pop open and disperse seeds. This ballistic dispersal of seeds explains the scattered arrangement of plants on the prairie. Seeds from this annual must be collected after the pod dries, but before it pops open.

Texas Woman's University, under the direction of Camelia Maier, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Department of Biology, is currently researching *E. bicolor* to identify the chemical composition of estrogens within the plant for future medicinal purposes.

While *Euphorbia bicolor* is in full bloom, take the time to touch the leaves, and use a magnifying lens to closely inspect the downy-soft, hairy details of this uniquely beautiful wildflower. A single plant is intriguing, but a colony is breathtaking. You'll likely learn to appreciate Snow-on-the-prairie in August-September.

Dorothy is a past president of Trinity Forks Chapter of NPSOT, a certified Master Naturalist, and a roving ambassador for wildflowers.

My Sunflower Patch by Marilyn Blanton

I have a sunflower patch just off the corner of our back porch. Tall lanky sunflowers fill in the strip of ground between the porch, the rock wall and the sidewalk leading to the steps down to the back yard. Anyone concerned with garden design would wonder, "Why did you put it there?" The truth is I didn't exactly plan to put it there.

My sunflowers are the common, native, annual ones, *Helianthus annuus*. They grow eight feet tall or more. Of course, I knew that when all of the little seedlings from the few sunflowers I had there last year started coming up in the spring. I thought I should pull them up when they were only a few inches high but found that hard to do, thinking they really weren't hurting anything. I compromised with myself thinking I would move them to a more suitable spot, maybe leaving just one or two. Well, time passes quickly and sunflowers grow fast. Before I started to move a single plant, they were two feet tall. At that point, I thought they were too big to move, so I found a convenient excuse to leave them alone. My grandchildren were coming from Tennessee later in the summer and I knew they would love the sunflowers.

My sunflowers continued to grow with their stout, bristly stalks and many branched stems reaching toward the sun. Their stems are topped with flower heads 3½ to 5½ inches across, composed of yellow ray flowers around a center of dark brown disc flowers.

My grandchildren did love the sunflowers, but they weren't the only ones. Giant, black, and tiger swallowtails, gulf fritillaries and cloudless sulfurs have danced about them all summer and I look forward to seeing more monarchs as they drift south. Endless flying insects, including honey bees, bumblebees, yellow jackets and dirt daubers are in constant motion around them. Ants travel up and down the tough stems and dragonflies with gossamer wings dart between them.

The sunflowers have attracted me, too. I've stood among them towering over my head and watched a leafhopper clinging to a stem emit a spray of "honeydew" that fell on the leaf below attracting tiny flies and ants. Their alternate leaves are rough, coarsely toothed and hairy with a broad base that tapers to a point. They grow to be six inches long or more, making a fine platform for a basking butterfly or dragonfly. I even found a small green tree frog nestled on one.

I've seen Texas spiny lizards and five lined skinks skirting between their stalks and found spiders and praying mantis hiding in them as they wait for prey. My sunflower patch seems to be the center of activity.

Birds coming to the sunflower patch are another delight. Black chinned hummingbirds zip in and out to hover at the flowers to sip nectar. I like to sit on the porch in the mornings drinking coffee from my favorite sunflower cup and catch the sunlight sparkling off the little hummers' shimmering green backs. I enjoy seeing and hearing Carolina wrens singing from the sunflowers and watch perky little Carolina chickadees, often hanging upside down, pick the dry seeds from spent flowers.

Sunflower seeds are very nutritious, providing protein, vitamins, minerals and oil. They are a good food source

for wildlife and people as well. The seeds from common sunflowers are not as large as commercial varieties but just as nutritious.

Perhaps next year I'll find another place for my sunflower patch, but I'm enjoying it where it is for now. The sunflowers make me smile and remind me of my dad because they were his favorite flower. The sunflower patch is enchanting from morning, when silver threads of spider webs glisten in the early light, until twilight, when moths drawn to the porch lights flutter by. Maybe I won't move my sunflower patch after all.

Marilyn Blanton, NICE! Coordinator

NOTE: See page 4 for more beautiful photos by Marilyn.



Tiger Swallowtail on sunflower. Photo by Marilyn Blanton.

Membership Corner

We give a big "Thank You" to all these folks who became new or renewed members in Trinity Forks since May and hope to see you at the next meeting. You are what makes Trinity Forks special! We currently have a record membership of about 114 member families.

*Will/Mattie Evans, Denton
Bill/Patti Pierce, Plano
Carla Orr, Saint Jo
Warren/Eileen Short, Denton
Mark Pape, Copper Canyon
Don/Patricia Edwards, Denton
Camelia Maier & George Roberson, Denton
Shirley D. Lusk, Denton
Bob Harris, Celina
Owen Yost & Nancy Collins, Denton
Don & Nelia Smith, Denton
Marilyn Lawson, Flower Mound
Elizabeth Acosta, Oak Point
Cecil & Polly Carter, Shady Shores
Dale Branum, Denton
Caroline S. Polliard, Denton
Tim May, Hickory Creek
Stowe Gardner, Flower Mound
Maxine Lindauer, Frisco*

(Continued on page 4.)

Photo Gallery

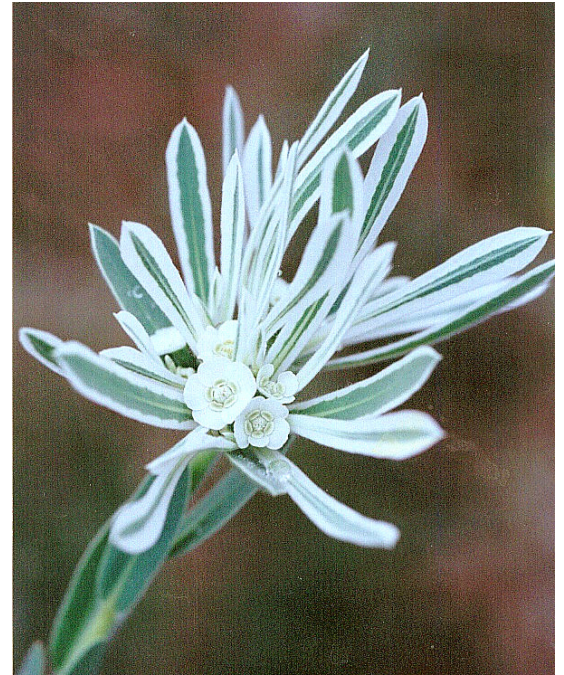
Sunflowers by Marilyn Blanton



- ^ SF next to back porch.
- > Look at all the pollen!
- > Tree frog on SF leaf.

Snow-on-the-prairie

by Dorothy Thetford



Trinity Forks Contact Information

- President** - Camelia Maier, 940-566-7913
cmaier@mail.twu.edu
- Pres. Elect** - Marshall Fox, 940-627-2343
- Secretary** - Lon Turnbull, 940-323-8999
- Treasurer** - Fritz Poppe, 940-387-9351
- Past Pres.** -- Cathy Lustgarten, 972-306-1088
- Ways/Means** - Cathy Lustgarten, 972-306-1088
- Membership** - Laurie Hammett, 940-383-3287
- Hospitality** - Fonda Fox, 940-627-2343
- Programs** - Cecil Carter, 940-321-9527
- Publicity** - Cecil Carter, 940-321-9527
- Education** - Marilyn Blanton, 940-387-4353(B)
- Outreach** - Dorothy Thetford, 940-382-9344
- Parliamentarian** - Marshall Fox, 940-627-2343
- Field Trips** - OPEN
- Historian** - OPEN
- Webmaster** - Lon Turnbull, 940-323-8999
- Newsletter** - Mike Mizell, 940-382-8551
birdmizell@msn.com
- NICE! Coordinators:**
 - Kathy Saucier, 972-492-4680
 - Marilyn Blanton, 940-464-7775(H)

Website: www.npsot.org/TrinityForks

Membership Corner

Continued from page 3:

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| <i>Wayne Farley, Flower Mound</i> | <i>Lynn Hagler, Denton</i> |
| <i>Michaelanne Cangelosi, Fl. M.</i> | <i>W.R. Mote, Greenwood</i> |
| <i>Jimmy Hoefert, Fl. M.</i> | <i>Ed Ellis, Denton</i> |
| <i>James Thurman, Denton</i> | <i>Melissa Carr, Denton</i> |
| <i>Sheryn Jones, Highland Village</i> | |
| <i>James/Dona Gardenhire, Rockwall</i> | |

If we missed anyone, we apologize. Please let us know so we can list you next month.

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.