



# The Texas Sage

Native Plant Society of Texas, North Central Chapter Newsletter

Vol. 12 No. 4

April 2000

## President's Corner . . .

Thanks to Sharon Wood, our Education Director, for a fun program at our last meeting. We all now know what *Salvia greggii* looks like! Sharon showed us some great slides of our chapter's demonstration gardens. I had a lot of expert opinions from the members on hand. There was great participation and a lot of questions were answered.

Spring is here and there are a lot of exciting activities scheduled for the coming months. Check out the 'What's Happening' page (which overflows onto a second page) in this newsletter. Dotty Woodson will be our guest speaker at the next meeting on April 6. Hope to see you there.

- Glen Nerwin

### What Spring Means to Me

I was first led off the path so to speak, when Jim Leavy said, "Hey, you want to go to an unfinished development and get some native plants to put in your parkway?" I said, "Free sounds good to me. As long as they are being bulldozed, why not?"

I should have known something was wrong when the few standing cypress rosettes we came for, turned into a truckload of grass plants, compassplant roots, hymenoxys, and lots of other stuff that just looked cool. I hoped they weren't invasive weeds.

After this first project I decided to landscape the front yard with natives, so I would have a place for all these 'free' plants (rain lilies and sedges). I just couldn't stop digging!

During the winter, while driving around, my eyes kept pulling involuntarily to the side of the road ... even while doing 80 mph. "Look! 880 oxblood lilies (adaptive bulbs) still blooming in an old homesite." Like Pokemon "I've got to get 'em all"! I can squeeze them between the spring flowers.

Next came the 4,000 *Penstemon cobaea*. I couldn't dig fast enough. So I hired the homeless to help me. Then came the 2 tons of big bluestem ... two 20-foot trailers, three layers deep in sod. I needed bigger tools! In came the front end loaders.

Well we found places for all the plants – the Old Bedford School, North Richland Hills Cross Timbers Park, and many others. I still have room for more if only the cold weather would hold. Well, it's not. It's 75 degrees out, the grasses are coming out of dormancy, and the rosettes are getting too big to move. Spring is here. Bummer! I need to get to my *Pure Prairie Pilferer's 12 Step Program*...well... maybe not. Say, free sandstone boulders are always dormant, aren't they? Got to go hitch up the trailer of greed. I'm off with 'boulder envy'.

- Glen Nerwin

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## Texas Parks & Wildlife Receives Award from BRIT

[This article was excerpted from an article on the Texas Parks & Wildlife web page: [www.tpwd.state.tx.us/news](http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/news)]

Texas Parks and Wildlife (TPW) will receive the Botanical Research Institute of Texas (BRIT) 2000 International Award of Excellence for managing and protecting the state's natural and cultural resources.

TPW has numerous programs that emphasize landscaping with native plants and foster education and public awareness. Among them are the Natural Resources Program, which provides stewardship services for ecosystem management of Texas state parks; Texas Wildscapes, an innovative native habitat restoration plan; and the Texas Master Naturalists, which provides instruction and volunteer opportunities for adults who want to help conserve natural resources.

### There's a new (year 2000) Native Plants Events Directory

On the internet at:

<http://www.nps.gov/plants/cw/events.htm>

It lists many events taking place throughout Texas, particularly Austin. There is also a page to submit information about events that you want added to the list.

### Veterans Park Wildscape News

The first Saturday in March brought beautiful weather and many volunteers from various groups to help at the Veterans Park Wildscape. Anita Garmon, Sarah Dendy and John Mallory provided support from Arlington Conservation Council; Jan Miller, Dale Denton, Marion Hiler and her friend Harley Mimura, Margaret Gariota and Dorothy Beard showed up to represent the Master Naturalists; and a new group of Master Gardener Interns – Allan Robertson, Gary Taylor, Miles Pennington; and Gailon Hardin representing all of the groups. Of course, Ann Trenton is always there. Thanks to all for your support and help.

- Molly Hollar

### Treasurer's Report

by Jean-Marie Smith

Balance (2/21/00)	\$1,762.70
Deposits (raffle, newsletter subscriptions)	\$ 249.00
Expenditures (program, newsletter, room rental, bank fees, Wildscape donate)	[\$ 460.74]
	_____
Balance (3/21/00)	\$1,550.96



## What's Happening . . . (cont'd)

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**Sunday, May 7**

**9:00 AM - NOON**

**Stella Rowan Wilderness, Ft. Worth**

The North Texas Master Naturalist group will host a tour of the Stella Rowan Wilderness prairie remnant. All Native Plant Society members are invited to attend. This 90 acres of Grand Prairie (located in south Ft. Worth) has over 200 species of plants. At the intersection of I-20 and Campus Drive (where TCJC south campus is located), go north. Turn left at the church. Go to the stop sign, turn right. Park in the first parking lot on your left. Call Jeff Quayle for more information ... (817)738-1322 or prairies@tx.freei.net.

----- **DATE CHANGE** ----- **DATE CHANGE** ----- **DATE CHANGE** -----

**Saturday, May 13**

**Ft. Worth Nature Center & Refuge**

Buffalo Boogie 2000 at the Ft. Worth Nature Center has been rescheduled for May 13<sup>th</sup>!

This non-competitive walk is a fun event for the whole family. There are great prizes that will be awarded on the basis of total contributions collected for various categories. Native Plant Society members are invited to contribute plants suitable for prizes or participant gifts. If you are interested in donating plants or participating in another capacity, please call the Nature Center at (817)237-1111.



**Cheatgrass**

**Rescuegrass**

[All grass photos provided courtesy of John Snowden, Bluestem Nursery]

## Weeds in Our Yards – Imported, Cool-Season Annual Grasses

I've gotten many questions about the thick carpet of what looks almost like a lawn of winter grass coming up in many yards, fields, and gardens. There's a thick stand of grassy leaves, almost thick enough to call a desirable ornamental. These plants will fool you and are a deadly trap to seedling warm-season plants just starting to grow. They are mostly the introduced, annual, cool-season grasses, mostly from Europe. They were introduced as a way to cope with overgrazing, giving cattle something to eat in the spring before the warm-season grasses come up. They turned out to be a trick, dying in the summer heat and drying into nothingness, no nutrition for cows, yet plenty of trouble for our native plants.

The most commonly found ones are Cheatgrass (*Bromus tectorum*), Rescuegrass (*B. unioloides*), Japanese Brome (*B. japonicum*), Perennial Ryegrass (*Lolium perenne*), Little Barley (*Hordeum pusillum*) and to a lesser extent oats (*Avena fatua*) and wheat (*Triticum aestivum*). These plants germinate in the fall, with cooler temperatures and the first rains. They are extremely aggressive about germinating, and will form a fine, green film on the ground after the first good rain. This rapidly fills in during the fall, becoming a thick mat which competes with germinating and early growth of bluebonnets and other spring flowers.

In the spring, the bluebonnets are first to bloom, but the introduced grasses soon catch up. They soon overwhelm the bluebonnets, and keep on growing while the other flowers try to catch on. This

is a period of intense soil moisture and nutrient use by these grasses, as they try to set seeds. This results in a depletion of the top few inches of soil, just where the warm-season wildflowers and seedling grasses are trying to get a toehold. In extreme cases, the introduced grasses form a thick mat, die, and leave absolutely nothing green to grow during the summer! Usually, a few natives manage to eke out a toehold, but they never form a thick stand unless they're strong dominants, like trees or the strongest grasses.

What can we do about this problem? If we put down corn gluten meal as a pre-emergent (weed germination preventor) in the fall, we prevent these grasses AND our desired wildflowers from germinating. If we mow the heads off in spring, we cut off also our flowers. There isn't much to do if these are present in too many numbers to hand-weed your area, except the non-organic approach. That's right, folks: Ornamec, Fusillade, or other grass-specific herbicides. The good news is: they work only on grasses. Apply carefully once the warm-season (desirable) grasses are dormant. Wait a couple of weeks to assess effect. Re-treat if needed. Repeat yearly until the population is small enough to hand-weed.

In the case of wheat and oats... they are usually leftovers from farming. I've had oats on my land since we had horses in the 1970's! They make an outstanding spring ornamental, mixing in with my more desirable natives. Since their heads are quite pretty, I've taken no steps to eliminate them.



**Wild Oats**

Each year, they appear in another place on my land. Mowing off the heads when they appear will short-circuit their life-cycle and gradually eliminate them from your land, if you wish it. Usually, the population is small enough that you could do this with a weed-trimmer.

There are a few native, annual, cool-season grasses hereabouts. The most common is Sixweeks Grass (*Vulpia octoflora*). It has little chevrons in the heads. It's a lot smaller than the introduced weeds, but flourishes in spots they haven't yet invaded. There are a few more. I challenge my readers to find these. Look in Gould's *Common Texas Grasses* (available at the Fort Worth Nature Center) and identify them.

John S. Snowden, owner  
BLUESTEM NURSERY

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**Next Meeting:**  
Thursday, April 6 at 7PM  
at FW Botanical Garden

**Join the Native Plant Society of Texas!**

As a member of the state organization, you will receive an annual subscription to the *NPSOT News*, and you will be invited to attend the NPSOT Annual Symposium.

Memberships :	___ Individual	\$20
	___ Family	\$25
	___ Student	\$15
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Check here if this is a membership renewal

Make check payable to NPSOT and mail this form and check to:  
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P.O. Box 891  
Georgetown, TX 78627

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