

The Texas Sage



Native Plant Society of Texas, North Central Chapter Newsletter
Vol. 12 No. 1
January 2000

President's Corner . . .

What a monumental year! It is amazing what our chapter has accomplished this year thanks to the efforts of the members working together. The list is long and varied.

The overall theme for this year's speakers was gardening in our own neighborhoods and backyards. Topics included our own demonstration gardens, native trees, oak wilt, attracting birds, native grasses, garden worthy native plants, learning plant families and working with the political system to help protect and foster native plant gardens. And in April, special speakers from the Botanical Research Institute of Texas presented the development of the new *Shinners and Mahler's Illustrated Flora of North Texas*, and signed books during the meeting. This book is a milestone in the study of

native plants in our area. We look forward to the promised wildflower guide for this area by the same authors. Thanks to Stephen Haydon for his efforts in scheduling and introducing all the speakers this year.

Field trips this year included Tandy Hills Park (Trout Lilies!), Spring Creek Forest Preserve, Mineral Wells State Park, the Fort Worth Nature Center, the Stella Rowan Wilderness, and Clymer Meadow. Each of these was coordinated by our own native plant expert Jeff Quayle and attended jointly with members of Master Naturalists.

These trips are a good way to become acquainted with other organizations that share our goals of promoting ecologically sound activities. In addition, our members were encouraged to volunteer with other organizations, especially at Veteran's Park in Arlington and with Texas Parks and Wildlife and North Richland Hills sponsored activities to preserve and enhance native landscapes.

Twice a year, special social events are planned. The January meeting was a "New Year's" party, where we passed the baton to the new officers and

(continued on page 2)

CONTENTS

President's Corner	1
What's Happening	3
Slate of Officers for 2000	4
Johnson Creek Corridor Plan . .	4
The Better Bugs	5
Increased Songbird Predation . .	5



HELPING HANDS - Volunteers from Cub Scout Pack 520, led by Drenda Murzin (center), work hard at the Veterans Park Wildscape. Thanks for all your help!
- Molly Hollar

President's Corner

(continued from page 1)

celebrated with a wild and crazy "Chinese Gift Exchange" and partook of all sorts of wonderful treats. In July, we gathered at the home of Sharon and Jerry Wood on Lake Amon G. Carter in Montague County. They hosted an entertaining and spectacular fireworks display.

Our fundraiser for the year was the Landscape class taught by Jim Leavy, immediate past president, with the help of several other members. This course consisted of six classes in three weeks – very intensive! Students were guided through the process of designing a native plant garden for their own yards.

The maintenance of our demonstration gardens was a very high priority this year. Again, Stephen Haydon was responsible for organizing the effort and recruiting stewards who have pledged to maintain the gardens. A great deal of work went into their creation, and the stewards will make sure that the gardens will continue to be outstanding examples of native plant gardens in the community.

Special events this year included lectures by Scott Ogden, who spoke on "Gardening Success in Difficult Soils", and Andy Wasowski, who entertained us with the "Gardening Revolution", which is also the title of his new book soon to be published.

The year's highlight was most certainly the Member's Garden Tour in October. Eight gardens were visited during the day, all different, all special, all inspiring. This was the most anticipated and well attended event of the year. Stephen Haydon and Janan Rabiah organized the entire day, and hosted a late lunch for all the participants at their garden when the tour was over, so that all were able to share their thoughts on all that they had observed during the day.

It was all the accomplishments above that were the reason we were honored at the state Symposium this year with the Education Award. We have shown by teaching and example that native plants are part of a revolution in attitudes toward landscaping and the environment.

The plans for the year 2000 will no doubt continue the work begun in 1999 and previous years. The new leadership will no doubt expand and broaden our horizons on these foundations. Your input will be key to the success of the year, so be sure to become involved and let them know your thoughts and expectations. We also have a unique opportunity this year to really "show off", too, as NPSOT members gather in our area this coming October to attend the state Symposium in Denton. This Symposium will be a joint effort of the five local chapters and promises to be one of the best state meetings ever. Be sure to mark the third weekend of that month so that you can attend!

All the accomplishments of this year would not have happened without the commitment of so many of our members. I want to thank all of the current officers and committee members who have made this a vibrant chapter. Without their help, we would simply not exist. They have organized our efforts, kept us informed, entertained us and become very good friends. It has been a pleasure working with you this year. Thanks for the opportunity.

- Jeanne Erickson

Have you renewed your subscription to The Texas Sage?

Subscriptions to this newsletter are renewed each year in January. And it's that time!

(New members who subscribed at the tail end of 1999, won't have to renew until 2001.)

12 issues for \$10

Make checks payable to NPSOT and mail to:

Jean-Marie Smith, Treasurer

720 Highland Dr.

Arlington, TX 76010

What's Happening . . .

Saturday, January 8 **9:00-12:00 AM** **Veterans Park Wildscape, Arlington**
 The monthly workday at the Veterans Park Wildscape will be held on January 8th. We'll be transplanting small trees into holes that the Parks Department was kind enough to dig for us! We may have some other small plants to transplant as well, so bring shovels and gloves. Weekly maintenance is also performed every Friday morning. If you would like more information, contact Molly Hollar at (817) 860-5580 or Mike McCorkhill at (817) 465-0763.

Sunday, January 9 **2:00-4:00 PM** **Fort Worth Botanical Garden**
North Central Chapter meeting. We will have our annual potluck meal and 'Chinese' gift exchange. Bring a potluck dish and a gift that your native gardening friends will enjoy. Gift ideas from last year include: plants, gardening paraphernalia, books, t-shirts, calendars, and gift certificates.

Saturday, January 15 **Arlington**
 Election Day in Arlington for the Johnson Creek Corridor Plan. Early voting will be available on December 29-30, January 3-8, and January 10-11 from 8am to 5pm.

Saturday, January 29 **Dallas**
 TxDOT Project Meeting. On December 4th a brainstorming session on highway right-of-way management, with an emphasis on managing roadsides naturally, was held in Dallas. People from many agencies and organizations participated. The group decided that the most successful approach to improving R.O.W. management would be a project oriented one, where suitable areas were selected for revegetation with defined goals in mind. A steering committee was chosen and their next meeting to review potential projects will be on January 29. If you have a project in mind, take slides of the site and come prepared to define specific goals for the site. Representatives of the TxDOT will be there. Call Kip Kiphart at (214) 361-0085 for more information or to schedule time to present a project.

Thursday, February 3 **7:00 PM** **Fort Worth Botanical Garden**
 North Central Chapter meeting. Speaker to be announced.

Saturday, February 26 **8:00 AM-4:00 PM** **Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center, Austin**
 A native plant symposium called "A Place for Every Native Plant" will be held at the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center in Austin.

Topics include: "Native Plants in Formal and Natural Landscape Designs" with David E. Will,
 "Container Gardening with Native Plants" with Andrea Delong-Amaya,
 "Native Plant Protection in Residential Developments" with Rufous Stephens,
 "Native Plants in Schoolyard Habitats" with Elizabeth Drozda.

Workshops include: "Native Plant Propagation" with Reid Lewis,
 "School Yard Habitats" with Elizabeth Drozda, and
 "Container Gardening with Native Plants" with Andrea Delong-Amaya.

The cost of \$25 per person includes lunch. Workshops are \$10 per person. For more information contact Jonathan Ogren at ogren@wildflower.org or (512) 292-4200 ext. 115.

Mark your calendar with the dates of our **chapter meetings** for the year 2000: February 3, March 2, April 6, May 4, June 1, July 6, August 3, September 7, October 5, November 2, and December 7. All meetings (after January) will be on the first Thursday of the month at 7 PM.

Slate of Officers for 2000

Retiring: *President*, Jeanne Erickson
Vice President, Stephen Haydon
Historian, Suzanne Tuttle
Refreshments, Janice Emerson

Officer 2000 Nominees:

President Nominee, Glen Nerwin

Glen has been a long-standing member of our group and is dedicated to promoting the use of Native Texas Plants and rescuing them when their habitat is threatened. In the past, Glen has worked closely with North Richland Hills Parks Department promoting "natives". This veteran member has the drive and enthusiasm to lead the group into the new millennium.

Vice President Nominee, Gailon Hardin

Gailon has done a marvelous job as publicity officer for the group. She has offered to expand her responsibilities to include the Vice President's job. Gailon's attention to detail and reliability will be a valuable asset to the group.

Newsletter Editor Nominee, Debbie Fierros

Debbie has tirelessly edited and produced our newsletter for several years and has offered to continue in this role.

Treasurer Nominee, Jean-Marie Smith

Jean-Marie has kindly offered to continue as officer in charge of finances.

Education Officer Nominee, Sharon Woods

Sharon has done this job for several years. Sharon has several wonderful slide presentations and does an excellent job of presenting them on our behalf. We are delighted Sharon has offered to keep up this good work.

Historian Nominee, Eve Woodrey

Eve is a dedicated member of our group and has offered to be the custodian of our scrapbook and to continue to document our history.

Refreshments Nominee – NEEDED!

We enjoy the refreshments at each meeting and need someone to coordinate efforts so they will continue. You do not need to be a master baker, just round up a few volunteers each month and remind them before the following meeting.

Web Master, Michele May

Michele has done a great job of giving us a presence in cyber space. She is our pioneer in this respect and has agreed to continue to be our Web Master(or mistress or person, I am not very good at being politically correct). Anyhow, be sure to visit the site at www.txnativeplants.org . Michele has worked very hard on it.

Stephen Haydon

Johnson Creek Corridor Plan

Please help us spread the word! The Johnson Creek Corridor Plan needs to pass in the January 15, 2000 sales tax election to become a reality. Although primarily for flood-management, the Johnson Creek Corridor Plan is a multi-objective project which would provide a greenway along 11 miles through the center of Arlington. Along the way, it would provide nearly 15 miles of trails that would link neighborhoods, 2 major community centers and parks, a heritage center and UT Arlington. In addition, the project would protect three highly significant natural habitat areas along the creek. Where the creek would need widening, only one side would be disturbed, and local, native plants would be used in restoration. Linking the three preservation areas with the restored areas would provide a very important corridor for wildlife.

This is a large project, covering approximately 21 square miles, and costing millions. If approved, the sales tax would increase by ¼ cent. Cost is expected to be approximately \$149 million over approximately 15 years and includes a perpetual care fund of \$30 million, beginning with construction. But when funded, the project will provide many benefits: 100 year flood protection for homes, businesses and streets, new recreation and transportation options, preserved and restored wildlife habitats and new opportunities for a community to appreciate them. If you'd like more specifics, see www.friendsofjohnsoncreek.org or www.arlington.ci.tx.us.

The current Johnson Creek Corridor Plan has been designed with a tremendous amount of citizen input, but with polls showing the vote nearly evenly split, continued support by groups like ours is crucial. During the final weeks of the campaign, help will be needed putting out yard signs, making phone calls, etc. Or spread the word by talking to friends, coworkers and neighbors. If you would like to help, please contact me at 483-0579 or jmiller@star-telegram.com.

– Jan Miller

Insects in the Garden: The Better Bugs

Many people, including those gardeners with a special sympathy for nature, have a distinct aversion to all the “creepy, crawly” things of this world, especially “bugs”. Of course they recognize and welcome the lady bugs (beetles) that devour aphids and the praying mantids that are also carnivorous predators, but most others are considered nuisances at best and pests at worst. In truth, however, there are many other insects that are doing favors to gardeners by controlling herbivores. In this series, we will discuss some of these, and we will start with the true bugs, the order Hemiptera, which attack their insect prey and kill by sucking dry the body juices.

The largest of these beneficial insects is the wheel bug, an inch and a half monster with a spiny ridge on its thorax. It consumes caterpillars and other creepies but specializes on the Japanese beetle. Smaller but more numerous are the assassin bugs, some species preying exclusively on leaf-hoppers, while other species take a variety of insects. Both wheel bugs and assassin bugs are predatory even in the young, or nymph, stage, and their prey includes eggs, larvae, and adults of insects. The ambush bug is small, less than a half-inch long and may be described as both colorful and grotesque. It sits on a flower or nearby leaf and grabs flying insects, even some three times its size. We may abhor, in general, the stinkbug because it emits a foul odor most of the time. Also called shield bugs, because there is a likeness of a shield on their backs, they may be green, brown, gray, reddish, depending on the species. Among the 4500 species in North America, there are some that are beneficial. The spined stinkbug, which is brown and black, is a predator especially on cutworms and other caterpillars, while the eyed stinkbug, with a “Y” on its shield preys on beetles, including the Colorado potato beetle. Other stinkbugs have specific prey, but it must be admitted that many species are not carnivorous and thrive on garden and orchard crops.

Spined Assassin Bug

(drawing by Joann Karges)

Observing these insects and their behavior can add a new dimension to gardening experience and might even turn aversion into interest.

- Joann Karges

Increased Songbird Predation Linked to Non-Native Shrubs

An article published in the December 1999 issue of “Conservation Biology” reports the results of a six-year study on nest predation of American robins and wood thrushes in a preserve near Chicago. The 500-acre woodland preserve in this study is being invaded by non-native shrubs – honeysuckle is replacing arrowwood and buckthorn is replacing hawthorn. The researchers, Christopher Whelan and Kenneth Schmidt, found that predation of robin and thrush nests was higher in the non-native shrubs than in the native trees and shrubs. They attribute the increase to the physical differences between the native and non-native shrubs. Buckthorn doesn’t have the hawthorn’s sharp thorns and honeysuckle provides sturdier branches for predators to climb. The study also shows that the thrushes and robins are almost as likely to nest in an exotic shrub as a native shrub. The robins initially showed a preference for natives, but during the study they were increasingly choosing honeysuckle as a nest site. Just one more reason to keep pulling out those exotic honeysuckles when you see them!

- Debbie Fierros

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Debbie Fierros, Editor
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Benbrook, TX 76126

Next Meeting:
Sunday, Jan. 9th at 2PM
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.

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The Texas Sage
is a monthly publication of the
North Central Chapter of the
Native Plant Society of Texas.

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the newsletter, please contact:

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The Texas Sage is printed on
recycled paper.