



THE TEXAS SAGE

Native Plant Society of Texas, North Central Chapter Newsletter

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The President's Corner

Dotty Woodson, Tarrant County Horticulture Extension Agent, was our speaker at last month's meeting, and she presented a lot of good information. Here are a few high points:

An issue of growing importance is the pollution that enters our waterways via storm drains. Water hits our increasingly paved terrain and the runoff carries pollutants through storm drains eventually to the Trinity River. Runoff poses two major concerns: automobile and "legacy" pollutants. Automobile pollutants are gas, oil, brake fluid, etc. that make our streets slippery when it rains. Legacy pollutants are chlordane, DDT, and other synthetic chemicals that we put on our yards.

Fort Worth, Arlington, Dallas, and other area cities use water collected from 11 reservoirs, and the treated wastewater is discharged into the Trinity River. A small portion of that treated water finds its way into a downstream reservoir where it is pumped back to the Metroplex, treated, used again, and returned again to the Trinity. Last stop is the Houston area, where it is used again before it ends up in the Gulf. What we are all drinking, cooking with and bathing in recently contained used oil, gas, brake fluid, chlordane, and synthetic fertilizers. Yuk!

On a happier note, Dotty discussed the efforts of the North Texas Council of Governments to educate its nine-county area with the Texas Smartscape CD. This tool explains how residents can manage

their yards environmentally with plants that use less water, pesticide, and fertilizers. The CD lists over 200 plants for this area. Half are native and the rest are well adapted species. City officials distributed 200,000 CDs in 2002, and now the program is online at txsmartscape.com. The program will eventually cover all of Texas.

Well, March is here and I'm sure a lot of residents are spraying pests, fertilizing lawns and planting petunias so they can have the "yard of the month". This is where we come in. Educate your neighbors. Bring them to meetings and ask them to help in our Native Plant Demonstration Gardens. Tell them about natives and about the Smartscape program. We did just that at the Fort Worth Home and Garden Show in March. Thanks to all the volunteers who handed out native plant material and invited folks to our meetings. It was a two-hour stint that went by fast and allowed us to meet new people. We plan to attend the fall Home and Garden Show and I hope you will participate.

Not many people usually volunteer to go to the state Board Meetings with Helena and me. However, the next meeting might catch your eye. It's April 12 in Fredricksburg, and what a neat town that is. Give me a call if you are interested in making the trip.

Next month join us to learn where plants get their names, have some refreshments and join in on the raffle fun.

Until then,
Gailon



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April meeting:

Thursday, March 6, 7:00 pm, Fort Worth Botanic Garden

Barney L. Lipscomb will present *How Plants Get Their Names: On Names and Naming!* Barney holds the Dorothea L. Leonhardt Chair of Texas Botany at the Botanical Research Institute of Texas.

Here's a little part of what he will cover: Where do Latin names and common names come from and what do they mean? We'll explore the history of Latin and common names and their origins.

March Workday at Molly Hollar Wildscape *John Darling*

Hardcore volunteers braved the cold to work at the newly renamed Wildscape at Veterans Park, and Arlington Master Composters held their first workday at the Wildscape compost demonstration site.

Over a dozen composters joined Wildscape regulars to take the first step toward a major facelift for the compost site. They tore down the old pallet bins in preparation for installing a structure that will hide leaf bags, provide protected storage, and support educational displays.

Marian Hiler, Ann Trenton, Jennifer Hiler, Ashleigh Barnett and Jan Miller trimmed grasses and placed the trimmings for erosion control, planted eastern red cedars (5 gallons worth, donated by Ann Trenton), and a dozen gallon-sized little bluestems donated by Shirley Craig.

Shirley also donated 19 roughleaf dogwoods and 6 rusty blackhaw viburnums.

They also scattered seedballs in the pocket prairie. Molly Hollar, who seemed to be everywhere as usual, said that these seedballs were constructed specifically for this tiny patch of grassland. They contain appropriate pioneer prairie species like partridge pea, cowpen daisy, gayfeather, and purpletop grass. Volunteers at Molly's Friday morning propagation sessions had made about 600 seedballs for the occasion. That's enough for 30 to 60 square yards, which must include a big portion of the prairie. Seedballs are great for entertaining kids who are drawn to their innate mudness, but it turns out that they protect the seeds from birds and insects until a good rain gives them a start on germination.

From our BRIT Reporter *Amy Nare*

False garlic, or *Nothoscordum bivalve*, might not be one of the favorite perennials planted in your garden, but it is an abundant spring flower throughout Texas. Instead you might find false garlic growing as an adventive in your lawn, on the edge of woods or in a disturbed prairie remnant. Its diminutive stature belies its beauty. Although the flowers are not large and showy, they are nonetheless pale and pretty.

False garlic grows in much of the southeastern United States, reaching as far north as Ohio and Virginia. Many botanists place false garlic in the Lily Family (Liliaceae), but in reality it is more closely related to onions (*Allium* spp.) than to lilies. *Nothoscordum* lacks any odor, due to the absence of sulfur-containing compounds similar to those present in its onion relatives. So false garlic won't make you cry if you break the skin, but they should NOT be eaten, since they contain toxic compounds.

False garlic bears an underground bulb, much smaller than a cultivated onion, but similar in appearance. The stem is usually 3-18 inches long and linear leaves arise from the base of the plant. The flowers are typical of lilies, onions and other monocots, with parts in multiples of threes. There are six petals, which are normally white to yellow with a pink midrib, and six stamens, each two millimeters long. The flowers are borne in an umbel inflorescence (all flowers arising from the same point) of 3-12 individual flowers.

Tolerance of many soil types, from clay to sand, is one reason why *Nothoscordum bivalve* is such a common spring flower. It grows best in full sun, but will tolerate partial shade. Seeds of this plant should be sown in the fall or bulbs can be transplanted. Flowers will appear from March through May and again in September through October, if a good autumn rain occurs. It may not be a showstopper in your yard or in natural areas, but it is a harbinger of spring and a native plant worthy of your admiration.



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Spring Plant Sale & Perennials on Parade at the Fort Worth Botanic Garden April 19 10:00 am - 2:00 pm.

Demo Garden Opportunities

Granbury Road Subcourthouse Meet at the Subcourthouse on second Saturdays and last Tuesdays for general maintenance. We begin at 9:00 am and work for 2 or 3 hours. The subcourthouse is 2 miles south of Loop 820 on Granbury Road. Contact Gailon Hardin, 817-457-4703, or ghardin@flash.net, for more information about the garden.

Hulen Library We meet at the garden for grooming and maintenance on the last Thursday of the month at 10:00 am through April, other days as needed. Contact Ev Woodrey at 817-295-4683 for additional information.

The Molly Hollar Wildscape Workdays are on the first Saturday of every month at Veterans Park, 9:00 am until noon. Activities include planting, gathering seed, weeding, pruning etc. For more information, contact Molly Hollar at 817-860-5580.

Plant of the Month: Blackfoot Daisy

Evaline Woodrey

LATIN NAME: *Melampodium leucanthum* (mel-am-POH-dee-um looKAN-thum)

RANGE: Limestone and calcareous soils in West Texas, Panhandle, Trans-Pecos and Edwards Plateau

SIZE: 6-12 inches tall, very spreading

LEAVES: 1-2 inches long, narrowly elongate, evergreen turning dark red or purplish in cold weather

FLOWERS: 1 inch, white daisy-like with yellow centers

SOIL: Sand, caliche, limestone; well drained

EXPOSURE: Full sun, part shade

BLOOM PERIOD: March to November

WATER: Drought tolerant, needs very good drainage

NATIVE TO: Lampasas Cut Plain to East Cross Timbers, south and west to West Texas



(Photo by the authors.
Reprinted from Wasowski S, Wasowski A:
Native Texas plants: landscaping region by
region. Houston, Gulf Publ, 1991.)

This woody, perennial sub-shrub is perhaps the most popular Texas native next to *Salvia greggii*. Even though it is short lived, it will reseed if given the right conditions. I heard someone say it liked to reseed into his gravel path.

Among its best attributes is the honey-like fragrance released by strong sunshine. Its biggest problem is over-watering. Plant with bluebonnets, perhaps near or under an old rose called Old Blush. The color combination is really beautiful. This daisy gets its generic name from the Greek *melus*, black, and *podos*, foot.

Workdays at the Granbury Road Subcourthouse *Gailon Hardin*

In January, Master Gardeners Pat Lovejoy, Warren Tingley, Art Wikoff, Julie Shaw, and I worked a shivering two hours. February we got rained, snowed and iced out; however, March always comes in like a lion and so did the helpers. The 2002 MGs Judy Ratzlaff, Fatima Gameriro, and Jim Woodlief brought their gloves, pruners, loppers, and choppers and joined in on the fun. MG Art Wikoff limped in with a sprained ankle but still lent us his talents with his wicked clippers. A group new to our crew was the 2003 MG Interns: Jim Potter, Jack Mitchell, Bev Adkins, and Blake Hardy. Some of them were introduced to natives, and I hope we can recruit them to NPSOT. It was chilly and overcast but NPSOT members Nelda, Lorene, and Helena whacked away to make way for the new blooms to come.

We hope more of you will join us on our bimonthly workdays second Saturdays and last Tuesdays. Maybe you can enjoy some of the delicious blueberry muffins or fresh fruit Helena brings. I only go for the food.

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Next Meeting

Join us Thursday, April 3,
 at 7:00 pm at the Fort Worth
 Botanic Gardens for
***How Plants Get Their
 Names***
 presented by
Barney L. Lipscomb

Visit us on the Web at
www.txnativeplants.org

Join the Native Plant Society of Texas!

We invite you to participate as a member of the Native Plant Society of Texas. Membership is open to any individual, family, or organization. Membership is renewable annually and extends for a year from the date we receive your original payment.

If you wish to join, please indicate your category of membership, then clip and mail this application along with the appropriate remittance to:

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