



THE TEXAS SAGE

Native Plant Society of Texas, North Central Chapter Newsletter

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May 2003

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The President's Corner

Names are indispensable guides to plants. They tell a story of conspicuous features, describe smells or tastes, tell us what area they grow in or what season they flower. Plants have scientific names, yet all plants have common names as well, a name your grandmother called them. I seem to do better with common names, but the problem is that many plants have multiple common names. In Barney Lipscomb's presentation at our last meeting, he explained that the first word in the botanical name is the genus and can be used alone. The second is the specific epithet and is never used alone. Genus and species are usually followed by the name of the botanist who first described the plant. Now, let's see if I can put this wonderful knowledge to good use.

Helena, Vickie, and I went to Fredericksburg in April and stopped along the roadside to identify the local wildflowers. Helena spotted a white poppy that had prickly foliage. We grabbed Geyata Ajilvsgi's *Wildflowers of Texas* and looked in the white color-coded section. Voilà, we found white prickly poppy (*Argemone albiflora* subsp. *texana*). Down the road a piece we spotted Western peppergrass (tastes like pepper), plains fleabane (maybe due to its tiny yellow daisies), four-nerve daisy (small nerve lines in the petals), then finally snake cotton. We got out of there before we found out how it received its name. We decided indian paintbrush should have another name in the Hill Country. It should be named "beautiful-deeper-color-drop-

dead-gorgeous indian paintbrush with many palette variations." That might be too long, however.

I'd like to remind members that the NPSOT State Symposium will be held in Fredericksburg this October. This is a small town with a large visiting population and the entire month of October is German Fest. I suggest you make your reservations at a hotel now (see Helena's article on page 2).

Another must-do for your calendar is the second Lone Star Regional Native Plant Conference in Nacogdoches, May 28-June 1. Helena and Stephen Haydon went to the first conference and both recommend it. See the information in our newsletter or visit *NPSOT.org* and click on Upcoming Events sponsored by other organizations.

Don't forget our workdays at Granbury Road Subcourthouse, where Pat Lovejoy and I have a new project. We are collecting the seedlings that come up in undesired locations and sharing them with the volunteers. The last Tuesday in April we shared blue mistflower. We have cancelled the second Saturday in May, however, due to the plant sale at the Molly Hollar Wildscape—learn more about the plant sale in this newsletter. Join us on the last Tuesday of May and find out what we have available.

I hope I will see you at our next meeting and we will learn more about birds. Please bring a raffle item and enjoy the refreshments Nelda Fortson provides.

Until then,

Gailon

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May meeting:

Thursday, May 1, 7:00 pm, Fort Worth Botanic Garden

John Darling will present *Our Birds and Their Plants: A Biased View*. John is a local birdwatcher, composter, and environmental busybody.

Fredericksburg Trip Report - April 11-12, 2003 *Helena vanHeiningen*

On April 11-12, Gailon Hardin, Victoria Neal and I attended the quarterly State Native Plant Society board meeting in Fredericksburg. The bluebonnets, zexmenia, and indian paintbrush along the roadway provided a visual feast. We were often forced to pull over and examine the brightest, the pinkest, the reddest, or the most profuse examples of Texas wildflowers.

The meeting Saturday morning was exciting as both the Molly Hollar Wildscape and the Granbury Road Subcouthouse were presented with \$500 checks from the demonstration grant committee. Mike McBride, the NPSOT Vice-President, discussed the annual symposium scheduled for October 16-19, 2003. Make your reservations soon so you don't miss out. Headquarters will be the Sunday House Inn & Suites, 501 E. Main, Fredericksburg. (Reservations at 888-900-0058 or sundayhouseinnandsuites.com). Be sure to mention you are with the Native Plant Society.

For other lodging, contact the Fredericksburg Convention and Visitors Bureau at 888-997-3600 or fredericksburg-texas.com. Registration information will be published in future additions of "The NPSOT News."

We headed toward home via Highway 16. We had been advised to take the Willow City Loop and were well rewarded. We traveled up and down beautiful rocky terrain and through swaths of bluebonnets. At one photo stop we looked south to a small river and north to a swampy area near a home surrounded by water and trees. As we pulled away, we realized that the water was really huge masses of bluebonnets. It was a feast for the eyes without any calories.

From Our BRIT Reporter *Amy Trauth Nare*

It is likely that most everyone reading this knows what a redbud tree looks like. It is a conspicuous tree here because of its outstanding features. Redbud or Judastree is a member of the Fabaceae or Legume family. The common name, redbud, is pretty obvious, originating with the beautiful bright pink to deep purple (or white in some cultivars) flowers that emerge in the spring before the leaves. Tradition holds that this was the tree from which Judas hanged himself, thus the common name, Judastree. When most people think of legumes, however, beans and peas usually come to mind.

Technically, the pods that dangle from the branches of redbuds in the fall and through the winter are legumes. Botanically speaking, a legume is a dry, dehiscent fruit from a single carpel that splits on two sides at maturity. The Legume family is a huge group with nearly 16,500 species, and is broken into three subfamilies based on flower shape. It is the legume fruit that all species in the family have in common. The Legume family provides humans with many important things, including soil amendment, timber and food. Legumes provide us with the single most important source of vegetable protein on earth. When you think legumes, several different things might come to mind. Green beans and edamame, which are entire legume fruits, are eaten. Other legumes include lentils, peas, soybeans, chickpeas and peanuts. In the case of these, only the seed of the legume is eaten. While many have suggested that the flowers and young fruits of redbud are edible, research advises otherwise. Redbuds contain compounds called saponins, which are toxic.

We Texans are lucky to have three different varieties of redbud to admire and appreciate. Eastern redbud, *Cercis canadensis* var. *canadensis* grows best in east Texas, where rainfall is 35 or more inches per year. It prefers sandy or sandy loam soils, but will tolerate clay and has large, thin leaves. Mexican redbud, *Cercis canadensis* var. *mexicana* is found in the southern edge of the Trans-Pecos on alkaline soils and has leathery leaves with wavy edges. The redbud that grows best here in the Metroplex is *Cercis canadensis* var. *texensis*, the Texas redbud. It will tolerate the thin limestone soils found here and has leaves thicker, smaller and glossier than eastern redbud. I have seen several cultivars of redbud sold at garden stores, including the white-flowered cultivar. Call me a purist or call me a snob, but I prefer the pink-flowered Texas redbud. No matter what your preference, redbud is easy to find.

Finally, redbuds are great wildlife plants, attracting deer to browse on foliage and quail, pheasant, and goldfinches to eat the seeds. Redbuds are relatively disease-free and make attractive landscape trees.

Demo Garden Opportunities

Granbury Road Subcouthouse Meet at the site on second Saturdays and last Tuesdays for general maintenance. We begin at 9:00 am and work for 2 or 3 hours. The subcouthouse 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: Mealy Blue Sage *Evaline Woodrey*

LATIN NAME: *Salvia farinacea* (SAL-vee-ah fare-eh-NAY-see-ah)

RANGE: Calcareous soils throughout Texas and New Mexico

SIZE: 2-3 feet tall, spreading

LEAVES: Oblong, sometimes shallowly toothed with white or purplish hairs

FLOWERS: Dark blue to white 3-9 inch spikes

SOIL: Sand, loam, clay, caliche, limestone; well drained

EXPOSURE: Full sun, part shade

BLOOM PERIOD: April to frost

WATER: Drought tolerant

NATIVE TO: Nearly all of Texas

This salvia is readily found in the nursery trade. Although "mealy blue" applies to the leaves, those growing wild in this area have a grey, smoky-blue bloom, also giving the bloom a mealy look, while the nursery plant is a darker blue. I also have a white version which is called Porcelain.

Like the blackfoot daisy, this plant likes very dry, calcareous soil so they would look good planted together. In light shade it must be kept thoroughly dry.

In old Latin *salvera* means to save or heal, alluding to the medicinal properties of many of the species. The seeds of some species were used as food by Native Americans. Scott Ogden says they make good cut flowers.



Photo from NPSOT Kerrville Chapter web site, npsot.org/Kerrville

Native Plant Sale **Saturday May 10, 8:00 am – 4:00 pm. Veterans Park, south parking lot.**

Volunteers have been propagating and preparing for months for this special sale that will benefit the Molly Hollar Wildscape. Among the plants that should be available for sale are

Coralberry	Mexican buckeye	Purple coneflower
Little bluestem	Eastern red cedar	Yellow columbine
Rough-leafed dogwood	Hercules club	Salvia coccinea
Rusty blackhaw viburnum	American beautyberry	Mealy blue sage
Black-eyed susan	Horseherb	Turk's cap
Katie's ruellia	Wood violet	Mexican feather grass

2nd Lone Star Regional Native Plant Conference

In association with the CULLOWHEE NATIVE PLANT CONFERENCE

Nacogdoches, Texas, at Stephen F. Austin State University, Wednesday May 28, 2003 - Sunday June 1, 2003. Learn about gardening with natives while networking with other native plant enthusiasts

For more information contact Dr. David Creech; dcreech@sfasu.edu or 936/468-4343, Peter M. Loos; info@ecovirons.com or 281/362-1107, or Elyce Rodewald; erodewald@sfasu.edu or 936/468-1832

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 Arlington, TX 76016

Next Meeting

Join us Thursday, May 1,
 at 7:00 pm at the Fort Worth
 Botanic Gardens for
***Our Birds and Their Plants:
 A Biased View***
 presented by
John Darling

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:

Native Plant Society of Texas
 P.O. Box 891, Georgetown, TX 78627
 512-868-8799 or 512-931-1166

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For changes of address or
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