



THE TEXAS SAGE

Native Plant Society of Texas, North Central Chapter Newsletter
Volume 16, Number 6
August 2004

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The President's Corner



An early summer storm allowed me to spend the last two months in the High Plains, Amarillo to be exact. Besides applying new paint inside and out, getting a new roof and updating the kitchen for my mother's house, I decided to put in a new native garden. I took along Sally Wasowski's book and found there are few trees indigenous to the area. Trees that do survive are some conifers, bigtooth maple and chinquapin oak. The conifers, however, grow to be a bazillion feet tall and are not suitable for small lots. I noticed one lot that had three junipers in the front yard that completely hid the house. The next resource I checked was NPSOT.org/Amarillo chapter. There were three demonstration gardens provided by the local chapter: Wildcat Bluff Nature Center, Panhandle Plains Historical Museum and Palo Duro Canyon State Park. I visited all three to get ideas about the native flora.

Another problem is lack of water. The area gets 17-20 inches of rain a year. The Ogallala aquifer has provided the water for the region but has been low since the '50s. In 1963 Lake Meredith was built a

stone's throw away but it's too salty. The next challenge I found was climate. Imagine that, too. They've had record lows of -16 degrees to well over 100 in the summer—and no water to boot. My ultimate tree choices were three desert willows and a chinquapin. Good luck on finding the chinquapin; Amarillo nurseries never heard of it. The perennials I planted were datura, lantana horrida, purple coneflower, blackfoot daisy, fall aster, four-nerve daisy, and

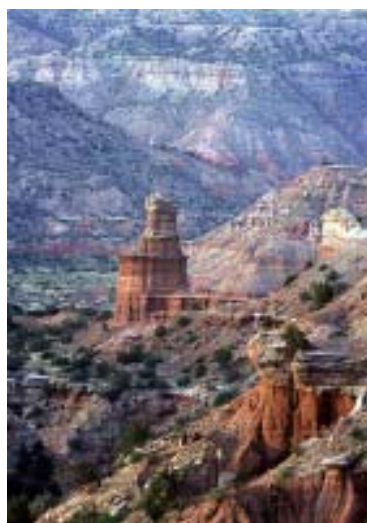
non natives 'Powis Castle' artemesia and oxeye daisy—all of these will grow here. Then I covered the planted area with lots of mulch, something I saw little of in residential yards. I don't know if any of the plants will live, but it was a better sight than the 25 foot arborvitae, the dead mulberry and the tam juniper.

My point is that it's not hard to do a little research for your own site to have a beautiful and environmentally friendly garden. We have wonderful resources available and a ton more plant selections than some areas of

Texas. We may not have as many choices as eastern and southern Texas, but still it's a nice selection. It would be great to see some of your gardens in our newsletter. Send our editor a picture and a few words about your landscape. This would be fun for all to read.

Please join us August 5 for our next program and don't forget to bring something for the raffle. Until then,

Gailon



Nature's demonstration garden



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August meeting:
Thursday, August 5, 7:00 pm, Fort Worth Botanic Gardens

John Davis, Urban Biologist, Texas Parks & Wildlife Department is scheduled to speak. John's topic will be "Listening to the land for design decisions".

Butterfly of the Month: Variegated Fritillary *Joann Karges*

In North America there are 32 species of butterflies called Fritillaries (frit'l-er'es), some of which are very hard to distinguish in identification. The common names as well as the taxonomy may also be confusing. The most abundant one in this area is the Gulf Fritillary, which is neither a true heliconian, though it has long wings like true



Gulf fritillaries. Copyright Paul Opler

heliconians, nor a true fritillary, though like most of "true" ones it has silver spots on the underside of the wings. Still, they are all placed in the nymphalid subfamily Heliconiinae because they all will accept *Passiflora* species as host plants in the laboratory if not always in natural conditions.

The Variegated Fritillary (*Euptoieta claudia*) is not a true fritillary either (that is left to those of the genera *Speyeria* and *Bolaria*, all found north of this area and all of which use violets as their natural larval host plant). A denizen of fields, open woods, and meadows, the butterfly flies fairly low and comes readily to flowers for nectar. It perches, wings spread, as it nectars. It is an orange-brown creature with several black lines crossing its wings and a number of black spots toward the middle line. The underside (with no silvery spots like those of true fritillaries) is orange with less distinct lines. It can be confused with no other butterfly in this area and may be seen at any time during the year.

Unlike most of the other Heliconiinae, the Variegated Fritillary uses host plants in a number of families. Preferred plant in this area appears to be flax (*Linum* sp) but will also use passionvine, violets, and plantain. The caterpillar is handsome; the pupa is gem-like.

Among this butterfly's favored nectaring plants are lantana, purple coneflowers, mist-flowers, and zinnias.



Variegated fritillaries

Garden Cuttings *Annotated from Jim Leavy*

At this point in the year, there is really not much to do other than water, dead-head spent blooms and record observations to make a better garden. Look at those plant combinations that are lacking and decide what needs to be moved where and what needs to be omitted or added this fall or next spring.

If you are planning a new garden, now is the time to eradicate noxious perennial weeds. By fall the area should be ready to amend and plant. Check your mulch layer to see if it is adequate. A continual layer of mulch at a depth of 3 to 4 inches around shrubs and trees and a depth of 2 or 3 inches around perennials and groundcovers will help conserve water and money.

If the daytime temperatures are too hot for you to work in the garden, try working at night under the beam of a battery-powered spelunker's head light, which can be purchased at any good camping supply store. The garden should take on a whole new light.

Demo Garden Opportunities

Granbury Road Subcourthouse 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 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 fourth Thursday of the month at 8:30 am during the summer, 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 information, contact Molly Hollar at 817-860-5580.

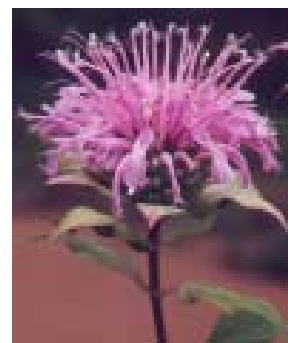
Native Plant of the Month: Wild bergamot *Amy Trauth-Nare*



Wild bergamot, or *Monarda fistulosa*, is a member of the Lamiaceae (Labiatae) or Mint family. Along with wild bergamot, other important members of the mint family are spearmint, peppermint, rosemary, basil, oregano, sage, lavender and thyme—many important aromatic herbs. Oh yes, and do not forget henbit, that confounding spring weed we find in our lawns. Any member of the mint family can be easily recognized by a few characteristics: herbs with simple leaves arranged opposite each other on stems, tubular flowers that are bilabiate (having an upper and a lower lip) and aromatic oils that result in a pleasant scent when vegetation is crushed.

The genus *Monarda* is named after the 16th century Spanish physician and botanist, Nicolas Monardes, who wrote about medicinal plants of the New World. There are approximately 19 species in the genus *Monarda*, with seven of those occurring in north central Texas. Other common members of *Monarda* native to north central Texas are *M. citriodora* (Lemon beebalm) and *M. punctata* (Sandy-land-sage or Horsemint).

Wild bergamot is a rhizomatous perennial, growing one to four feet tall, with fine, soft hairs on the leaves and stems. The flowers occur in clusters or heads, one to four inches across, at the ends of stems. The petals are usually lavender, but can be pink or rarely



white. Wild bergamot flowers from May through July, making it a good choice when you are looking for summer blooming plants. The rest of the year, wild bergamot supplies your garden with accent foliage.

Wild bergamot grows well in many soil types including sand, clay, and loams. Wild bergamot plants will grow tall in moist conditions and prefers well-drained soil. It tolerates full sun to partial shade conditions. Wild bergamot can be propagated by root divisions or from seed, optimally started in the fall.

Source: Diggs, G. M., B. L. Lipscomb, and R. J. O'Kennon. 1999. *Shinners and Mahler's Illustrated Flora of North Central Texas*. Sida, Botanical Miscellany 16.

Garden Wins Award *Evaline Woodrey*



The Southwest Regional Library Garden was given a "Beautiful" award by the Fort Worth Garden Club at a luncheon at the River Crest Country Club in May. Dotty Woodson presented Evaline Woodrey with a permanent metal sign which has been installed at the garden entrance. Thanks to Nancy Dozier for suggesting this garden to the committee that reviewed the gardens for consideration.

Photos: Master Gardener interns spread mulch at the Southwest Regional Library on June 12.



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Mike's Garden Center, 5703 Crowley Rd, Fort Worth, TX 76134, 817-293-8736.

Native American Seed P.O. Box 185, 127 N 16th St, Junction, TX 76849, 800-728-4043, seedsource.com.

Rabbit Hill Farm Natural fertilizers and soil amendments. 288 SW CR 0020, Corsicana, TX 75110, 903-872-4289 aogc.org/pages/rhf/.

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 2311 Perkins Rd
 Arlington, TX 76016

Next Meeting

Thursday, August 5

7:00 pm

Fort Worth Botanic Garden

TPW Urban Biologist
 John Davis will present

**Listening to the land for
 design decisions**

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www.txnativeplants.org

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We invite you to become 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.

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THE TEXAS SAGE

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

For changes of address or information about contributing to the newsletter, please contact the newsletter editor.

The deadline for submitting articles for inclusion in next month's newsletter is the 15th of every month.

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