



THE TEXAS SAGE

Native Plant Society of Texas, North Central Chapter Newsletter
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The President's Corner



Last month I attended a program at the Wildflower Center called "Rooted in Texas Pride." It was aimed at the production and marketing of natives.

The program began with State Representative Robert Puento of San Antonio, reminding us of our water concerns. One example: in 2050 we will be short of water by 5 million acre feet. He was preaching to the choir, but we always need reminding. He also told us of a task force to create ideas for water conservation. My notes are iffy, but here are a few: 1) set a goal of number of gallons of water per person per day; 2) cities over 330,000 population must practice water conservation; 3) 16 regions will provide water plans for public awareness like the "Don't Mess with Texas" campaign; 4) House Bill 645 – http://www.texaswatermatters.org/conservation_laws.htm; 5) home builders

recycling gray water; and others. Take a look at HB 645 and see if you can use it with your home owners association.

Then came the marketing of natives. Brice Creelman from Shades of Green in Dallas said it best, "Natives are easier to grow than to sell." He mentioned that when selling natives it's important to talk about summer hardiness, not winter. You can ask Molly Hollar about selling natives. She operates a full-sized production at the Randol Mill Park greenhouse and knows the stubborn growth patterns of natives. The truth is, natives look lousy in pots, but great in the landscape; not a very good marketing tool is it? If you are interested in being a part of the industry, become a member of the Texas Nursery and Landscape Association, GoTexas, or botanic gardens, and attend trade shows. Visit retail garden centers and landscape contractors, and help them sell your plants. Set yourself apart from everyone else, and get a Texas Floral Nursery Certificate. Pat McNeal had the priceless comment, "Load up the trunk and take 'em to the nursery."

The final portion of the event included two hours at Native Texas Nursery in Austin; it's 40 acres of wholesale production of natives and adapted plants. Ironically, the sales manager is a young man with a horticulture degree from Purdue who's doing a great job here in Texas.

Thank you for your support the last two years. I know you will continue your support of our new President, Pat Lovejoy; Vice President, Anne Alderfer; returning Secretary, Hester Schwarzer and Treasurer, Devanie Fergus. I'll see you on December 2—and don't forget to bring something for the raffle. Until then,

Gailon



Master Gardener Jack Mitchell and County employee Roosevelt Collins help resurface pathways with decomposed granite at the Granbury Road Sub Courthouse



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December meeting:

Thursday, December 2, 7:00 pm, Fort Worth Botanic Gardens, Orchid Room

Our speaker will be Eleanor Tuck, Tarrant County Master Gardener and Texas Cooperative Extension Entomology Specialist. She will speak on "Insects in Our Landscape" and will bring her good bug/bad bug collection to show us, as well as a special butterfly collection.

Butterfly of the Month: The Satyrs *Joann Karges*



Common Wood Nymph

They are called “satyrs” because they are members of the brush-footed family of Satyrinae. In classical mythology, the satyrs were the sprites of woods and hills and attendants of the god of wine, Dionysius. While the classical satyrs were grotesque, being part human and part animal, there is nothing grotesque about these butterflies, some of which we call nymphs (also fairy-like creatures of nature). Their basically brown or grey-brown coloration goes along with their woodland habits, because all frequent shady areas, some the moist stream-side areas—but always in the vicinity of their larval host plants, the grasses. In addition

to their rather somber tones their veins appear swollen and prominent. Unusual for the order are the hearing organs on their wings, which make them acutely aware of approaching footsteps.

The largest of all North American satyrs is the Common Wood Nymph (*Cercyone pegala*) with a wingspan of nearly 2”. The butterfly appears in abundance in our area in the spring and remains common through the summer. On the corner of its upper wings is a yellow patch with large yellow and black

eyespots. After dancing about among the grasses and trees, it will perch on a tree trunk where it will show its streaky underside, camouflaging it in the shadows.

The other species found in this area are smaller. The Little Wood Satyr (*Megisto cymele*) has two eyespots on each wing. The Red Satyr (*Megisto rubricata*) has rusty-red flushes on its wings—and prefers liveoak groves and canyons. The smallest is the little Gemmed Satyr (*Cyllopsis gemma*), definitely a creature of shady, moist woods; a cluster of tiny silvery eyespots at the edge of its lower wings are indeed gem-like.



Red Satyr

Occasionally one spots a Common Wood Nymph nectaring on flowers or taking sap from weakened trees; they may all come occasionally to rotting fruit, but in reality these sprites seem rarely to feed. Their elongated larvae, however, eat grasses of several kinds. Most often recorded are the bluestems, purpletop, and Bermudagrass.

One does not have to go far from this area in Texas to find additional species of satyrs. Not far south and east of here there are species that never are seen in this area. East Texas has a number of species in its thick deciduous or piney woods. In the Trans-Pecos there are species that are even more canyonland inhabitants than our Red Satyr.



Little Wood Satyr



Gemmed Satyr

Garden Cuttings *Jim Leavy—Adapted from The Texas Sage, December 1998*

Fall is here and perhaps by the time you read this, Jack Frost will have struck. It's time to clean up the garden and ready it for winter. Remember to consider all the wildlife you have invited into your garden before you start pruning and clipping. Anything with seed heads and berries should be left standing for as long as you can tolerate. Even those few coneflower heads could make a nice lunch for a goldfinch or any other feathered or furry friend. The blooms of autumn sage (*Salvia greggii*) will be dwindling, so this would be a good time to light shear them to at least where the bloom spikes begin on the branch or even a few inches farther. Save a drastic shearing until after its spring blooms start to dwindle. This approach will increase the likelihood that the severely pruned plant will leaf out properly. An autumn sage that is severely pruned back to wood in the winter may never come back and might simply rot in the ground. Don't ask me why.

Ruellia brittoniana and 'chi-chi' ruellia can be pruned back to the ground at this point. Seed or no seed, they share it too readily with the rest of the world. If we could devise a way to spread the word as efficiently as the Mexican petunias, our job

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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: White Milkwort *Amy Trauth-Nare*



The white milkwort comes from a group of plants that is close to my heart. White milkwort, or *Polygala alba*, is a member of the family Polygalaceae. As an undergraduate, I studied plants in the genus *Polygala*. I spent a great deal of time crawling around along forest edges, in prairies, and in open fields looking for these diminutive weeds. As a group, the species in *Polygala* are beautiful little herbs that often go unnoticed by plant lovers. All species in *Polygala* are known commonly as milkworts because they were once thought to increase milk production in cows. There are more than 500 species in *Polygala* found worldwide, but only about 20 species occur in the United States and Canada. Many species of milkworts have been used medicinally to treat such things as snakebite, bronchitis, insomnia, and depression.

Often mistaken for legumes because of the shape of their flowers, they are only distantly related to beans. White milkwort is a perennial with a stout rootstock that grows vertically in the soil. It is a short herb that only reaches about 18 inches tall. The leaves are thin and narrow, up to about 2 inches long but less than 1/8 inch wide. The flowers have five sepals; the two outer ones are large and petal-like. There are only three white petals, which are fused at their bases and the lowermost petal is keeled or boat-shaped. The combination of petal-like sepals and delicate fused petals gives the flowers their characteristic legume appearance. These flowers are clustered together at the tips of stems.

White milkwort grows from North Dakota to Texas and as far west as Montana. It is documented from all parts of the state except east Texas. This plant prefers rocky and sandy soils and full sun or part shade. In the right conditions, it will bloom from April to August. Although it might not attract big game to your yard, white milkwort is a native plant worthy of your attention and a spot in your native wildscape.



Molly Hollar Wildscape at Veterans Park *John Dycus (Adapted from the Post Oak, October 2004)*

Butterflies by the dozens flutter, flutter, nectar and lay eggs on the flowers blooming in the Molly Hollar Wildscape butterfly garden. The hordes of Monarchs migrating through to Mexico join the Queens, Gulf Fritillaries, Giant Sulphurs, Giant Swallowtails, Skippers and other butterflies to add their movement and brilliant hues to this remarkable display.

Fall, with its cooler days, coaxes plants out of their summer heat shutdown into a glorious explosion of color. Red salvia greggii, mealy blue sage, yellow zexmenia, purple fall aster and purple coneflower tempt the butterflies. Hummingbirds hover over the coral honeysuckle, red salvia coccinea and red Turk's cap as they fuel up for their migration to warmer winter areas. Pollinating bees and iridescent dragonflies add to the spectacular activity. Lizards chase each other on the rail fences.

On October 30 a UTA photography class surrounded the butterfly garden and captured the fascinating scene with their cameras. More than a dozen Boy Scouts dug-in the stone borders and water bars crossing the decomposed granite trail. Half a dozen composters watered and turned the decomposing leaves into the magic material that our volunteers spread around the native plants to encourage this riot of color. Texas Parks and Wildlife urban biologist John Davis brought more than 20 new master naturalists for their annual urban field trip, as they reconnect with nature in this little wilderness within the city.

On Nov. 9, about 90 students from the neighboring Montessori School arrived for "A Walk on the Wild Side." Begun several years ago, this latest outreach was organized and directed by Jean-Marie and Steve Smith. It consists of a morning of wildscape tours, environmental games and journaling at the pavilion. The children, divided into small groups, rotate through these activities to connect with nature and hopefully begin to value environmental causes.

Molly matters: "All of this would not have happened if Julia Burgen had not suggested the possibility of a wildscape as a project of the Arlington Conservation Council 10 years ago. She led the search for a site in the beginning, and through all these years she has strongly supported it. From her low-profile activity of personally keeping the original entry weed-free and neat, to using her very considerable influence as a means of promoting the wildscape, her support turned the possibility of a wildscape into a reality."

Garden Cuttings *continued from page 2*

would be done. All plants except those that are tender or really come on with the heat can be planted or transplanted now. As you prune shrubs and trees and cut back your perennials, start mulching each finished area little by little. This will save your back and make the job less tedious. Mulch with whatever organic matter you have available. Replenish that layer to 3 to 4 inches under trees and shrubs and 2 to 3 inches under perennials and annuals. In any case try to finish the task before the freezes of January and February arrive. Then, if you don't already have enough to do, donate some time to making our demonstration gardens look wonderful. Your help is always needed and appreciated. Thanks and happy gardening!

Chapter President
 North Central Chapter
 Native Plant Society of Texas
 2311 Perkins Rd
 Arlington, TX 76016

Next Meeting

Thursday, December 2

7:00 pm

Fort Worth Botanic Gardens

Eleanor Tuck

Master Gardener and Texas

Cooperative Extension

Entomology Specialist

will present

Insects in Our Landscape

Visit us on the Web at
www.txnativeplants.org

Join the Native Plant Society of Texas!

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.

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 information about contributing to the newsletter, please contact the newsletter editor.

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