



THE TEXAS SAGE

Native Plant Society of Texas, North Central Chapter Newsletter
Volume 16, Number 1
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The President's Corner



Welcome to a new NPSOT year. Let me begin by introducing a few folks to you.

Our vice president, **Pat Lovejoy**, was Secretary of NPSOT last year. Pat is

a Master Gardener Intern Advisor and has been instrumental in introducing Master Gardener Interns to our demonstration gardens. Last year Pat and the 2003 Interns put in about 900 hours at the Granbury Road Sub Courthouse and the Molly Hollar Wildscape at Veterans Park. Pat was also named Tarrant County Master Gardener of the year for 2003.

Hester Schwarzer, a retired school teacher, is our Secretary, a Master Naturalist and a participant in the 2004 Tarrant County Master Gardener program. Our Treasurer, **Devanie Fergus**, is a Tarrant County Master Gardener and has been instrumental at the Wildscape during her internship. **John Darling, Helena vanHeiningen, Evaline Woodrey, Dagmar Higgins, Michelle May, Amy Nare, Joann Karges and Jeff Quail** will return for yet another season on our Board. New members of our Board to help

with Outreach and Education are Parker County Master Gardeners **Leeann Nave, Dorothy Babbitt, and Homer Babbitt**; a Lubbock NPSOT transfer, **Sandy Balch**, and locals **Ann Aldefer, John Bridges, Molly Hollar, Taylor Stephens-Parker and Ann Trenton. Joyce Miller** is a Master Gardener and will be our most important Board Member—Hospitality Chair. Please help her when she calls and asks for your help with refreshments.

Let's begin our new year by practicing something I read in the Wildflower Center's Winter 2003 issue of *Native Plants*. Find out which plants are invasive in our area and teach others about them. Volunteer at one of our demonstration gardens; we have three gardens to maintain. Talk to landowners and educate them about natives and invasive exotics. Be careful what you plant in your own backyard. Do not import non-natives when you travel. Ask your local nurseries not to sell invasives. Finally, keep planting natives.

Please join us on February 5 as we begin our new year in the Lecture Hall at the Botanic Gardens. We will join BRIT's program then move to the Orchid room for a brief meeting and our raffle. I'm bringing a four-foot Mexican Plum. Joyce will also have coffee for us. Until then,
Gailon



Braving the cold: volunteers Jim Woodlief, Art Wikoff, Pat Lovejoy, Joyce Miller, and Janice Beavers keep up the good work at the Granbury Road Subcourthouse demonstration garden.

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

David and Margaret Bamberger of Selah Ranch will present "Bamberger Ranch Preserve: Land Restoration and Education" in the Dorothea Leonhart Lecture Hall. A reception will begin at 6:30 pm and the program will start at 7:00 pm.



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Butterfly of the Month: Winter Strategies *Joann Karges*

In October and November we saw the Monarchs winging their way southward to their overwintering grounds in Mexico, and one might think that all the other butterflies that we normally see in this area have gone, too. Not so. There are some that as adults can sustain life even on the coldest of winter days, taking shelter in tree hollows, crevices, and tall grasses where they assume a kind of torpor, protected by their own anti-freeze, or glycerol. Red Admirals, Mourning Cloaks, Buckeyes, Variegated Fritillaries, Orange Sulphurs, Sleepy Oranges, and Dainty Sulphurs will fly on days when the temperatures are above 55°. If they nectar at all, it will be on non-native (but well-naturalized flowers) such as dandelions, henbit, vetches, and filaree. Most of the other butterflies are here, too—but in other forms. Beginning in mid-February, if there have been warm spells, we may begin seeing those that have been in chrysalises, such as the Great-Purple Hairstreak and the Grey Hairstreak. A little later the swallowtails (Black, Giant, Pipe-vine,



Sleepy Orange

and Tiger) too will emerge from chrysalises, because by March, if not before, a few native plants such as Forestiera, wild plum, and redbud will be in bloom. These butterflies will mate, and as soon as the first leaves begin to appear on their food plants, the females will begin depositing their eggs. Other butterflies (such as the Soapberry Hairstreak) have spent the winter as eggs; the tiny caterpillars will hatch when the leaves, or in the case of hairstreaks, the flowers begin appearing on their particular food plants. The Hackberry Emperor and the Tawny Emperor have been first-stage caterpillars all winter; as soon as the hackberry leaves appear, they will come out of their dried leaf shelters and climb up the trees for their initial spring feeding. In late February and early March, the Monarchs begin their northward trek from Mexico. It may be April before we see our first Monarchs; some of these may have spent the winter in Mexico but just as possible they may be the first of a new generation.

Garden Cuttings *Jim Leavy—Reprinted from The Texas Sage, February 1998*

January and February are months that some gardeners spend indoors being inspired by a good horticultural book, magazine, or catalogue. Plans and strategy are made in the comfy confines of one's home. For others, the winter months bring gardening opportunities. Many plants, especially natives, can be transplanted with minimal effort at this time of year as long as the ground is not frozen. It's a time to move around plants within existing gardens in order to fine tune a design or color combination. Why not add a few unique plants to your garden by hunting for and salvaging plants from sites that will be developed (with permission of course)?

Many shrubs and small trees can easily be identified and moved by the novice gardener. With a little more knowledge, one can identify many perennials, biennials, and annuals from their winter rosettes or their residual stubble. Plants with thick, fleshy roots, tubers, bulbs, or rhizomes like *Penstemon cobeeae*, *Liatris* spp., *Asclepias* spp., *Callirhoe involucrata*, *Engelmannia pinnatifida*, and *Silphium albiflorum*, to name a few, if dug properly can actually be bare-rooted.

The key to a successful transplant is not to let the roots dry out. Bring plastic trash bags, zip-locks, or the appropriate sealable containers for the hunt; then plant the "goods" as soon as possible; water to minimize large air gaps around the roots of the newly planted; and then mulch, being careful not to cover the crowns of the new additions.

Transplants done in late fall and early winter have higher survival rates than those transplanted in the spring. Remember to move plants of one soil type and exposure to the same or similar soils and aspect.

Although plants from blackland prairie soil types may adapt to cross timber soil types, the reverse scenario is less likely to succeed. So now you know what avid native gardeners do during the winter.

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 last Thursday of the month at 10:00 am October 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 information, contact Molly Hollar at 817-860-5580.

Native Plant of the Month: Sideoats Grama *Amy Trauth Nare*



Winter months are the toughest for me to find inspiration for this monthly article. Normally, I walk outside to see what's blooming, but this time of year and with very little rain, it's hard to find anything growing. Cold weather and drought notwithstanding, there are many Texas plants worthy of being in the spotlight. One of these is sideoats grama. As you may know, *Bouteloua curtipendula* is the state grass of Texas, and rightly so. Once an important component of short grass prairie, sideoats grama is native to most of the United States. The geographic range of sideoats grama doesn't stop at the political boundaries of the U.S., however. It ranges from Canada south to Argentina.

The genus *Bouteloua* was named for Claudio Boutelou, a 19th century Spanish writer on agriculture. It contains 24 species, about 7 of which occur in north central Texas. All grama grasses, including sideoats grama, are part of the family Poaceae, or Graminae, one of the largest flowering plant families with

almost 10,000 species. Grasses are extremely important from an economic standpoint, since all of the world's major cereal crops are in the grass family: oats, wheat, corn, rice, sorghum, rye. It is estimated that grasses account for 20% of the world's vegetational cover. Wild type grasses are especially valuable since they comprise genomes that could be used in the domestication of future crops.

What makes grasses generally difficult are the highly specialized yet reduced flowers. Floral structure can make using a taxonomic key to identify an unknown grass confusing and frustrating. Luckily, all the species in *Bouteloua* are distinctive because the florets are placed on one side of the inflorescence, giving it a fine comb-like appearance.

Sideoats grama is a perennial bunch grass with spreading rhizomes. It can grow up to three feet tall, but most often reaches a height of one to two feet. Growing conditions include sunny or part shade conditions and although it prefers a well-drained substrate, *Bouteloua curtipendula* will tolerate most soil types found in this area: clay, sand, loam, or limestone. It can be grown from seed or by root division in winter when it is dormant.

Sideoats grama flowers in spring and fruits from June to November. It is a beautiful grass to add to wildflower arrangements and is a lovely accent to a garden. The seed provides food for birds in winter. Of course, native grasses are more adapted to the dry, often hot conditions here, more so than any exotic turfgrass sold, which means less watering and less maintenance.

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.



Learn to compost—or become a better composter Annual Master Composter Course

Arlington Master Composters will hold its annual training course on two consecutive Saturdays, February 14 and 21, at Arlington City Hall. The class is free, and anyone interested should call Lorrie Anderle at 817-459-6778. Class graduates will receive books, workshop materials, and a compost thermometer. You can also register online at www.ci.arlington.tx.us. Residents of cities outside Arlington are welcome to attend.

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Green Mama's Organic Garden Market 5324 Davis Blvd, North Richland Hills, TX 76180, 817-514-7336, www.greenmamas.com.

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, www.seedsource.com.

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

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Shades of Green Native and well-adapted plants and organic supplies, 8801 Coit Rd, Frisco, TX 75035, 972-335-9095 sogreen@mindspring.com.

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

Next Meeting

Thursday, February 5

7:00 pm

Fort Worth Botanic Gardens

David and Margaret Bamberger
 will present

**Bamberger Ranch Persevere:
 Land Restoration
 and Education**

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

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