



THE TEXAS SAGE

Native Plant Society of Texas, North Central Chapter Newsletter
Volume 16, Number 4
May 2004

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The President's Corner



Spring is a wonderful and exciting time of year; the only problem, it's a busy time and I can't do all that's offered. Just in the last three weeks, I've been to a propagation class, our

regular NPSOT meeting, BRIT's lecture, the state NPSOT Board meeting, our local Board meeting, and tried to pull a few weeds at my own house.

The last weekend in March, Pat McNeal from Austin came to our area and gave a propagation class. It was four hours of advanced training and 25 people packed the City of Arlington greenhouse. Pat gave us tips on sexual and asexual propagation as well as hints on propagating woody plants. We will try to get him to return in the fall, so watch the newsletter. Thanks to Taylor Stephens-Parker who coordinated that event.

Our propagation classroom was filled with Texas natives propagated by volunteers, planted at the Molly Hollar Wildscape or sold at semiannual plant sales that benefit the Wildscape.

Our last NPSOT meeting featured Courtney Blevens, Texas Forest Service, who explained why trees grow where they do. On April 9, BRIT lecturer David Stahle spoke on the Ancient Cross Timbers Project. NPSOT provided refreshments, and I want to thank Joyce Miller who coordinated the refreshments and everyone who brought goodies.

In mid-April the State NPSOT Board meeting was held in Longview where the annual symposium will be in October. Helena van Heiningen and I visited the Eastman property, which will be one of the field trip options. They are doing a wonderful job of educating the public about natives and nature. This week our local Board will meet and I'm sure they will come up with great ideas. Meanwhile, I'm trying to pull a few (million) invasive exotics from my own yard. I'm overcome with pin clover, henbit, rye, chickweed and purple vetch. The more I pull, the more they grow.

As you enjoy spring, please join us in May when we attend the final BRIT lecture. We will meet in the Orchid Room after the talk, so don't forget to bring something for the raffle. Until then,

Gailon



Pat McNeal demonstrates propagation techniques to his class at the greenhouse in Randol Mill Park.

May meeting:

Wednesday, May 5, 7:00 pm, Fort Worth Botanic Gardens

We will attend the final lecture in the BRIT Distinguished Lecturer Series. The subject is Texas Coastal Wetlands and the Houston Wilderness. The speaker is Jim Blackburn, Author of *Book of Texas Bays* and co-founder of the Houston Wilderness Organization.

Butterfly of the Month: Viewing the Blues *Joann Karges*



Eastern tailed-blue



Eastern tailed-blue

They are small, even tiny, those dainty wisps of blue sky that flutter over the flowers. These are “gossamer wings,” or hairstreaks (Lycaenidae), butterflies with a wing spread of only about an inch. They come readily to flowers, especially low-growing ones, and as they nectar, wings closed, the distinctive lines, dots, and chevrons of the pale undersides of the wings become visible. The three most common blues in this area are “pea family” butterflies; that is, they use members of the pea family as larval hosts. Tiny larvae, slug shaped, will consume flower buds, petals, young leaves, and even the seed pods of these plants. Commonly used are Black Dalea, Neptunia, Sensitive Briar (*Mimosa*; *Shrankia*), Medicago, and clovers.

The Eastern tailed-blue (at left) is the only one of the three with “tails,” the hairstreaks, just above the two bright orange “eyes” on the hind wing. The dots and ashes on the wings are small but distinct.

Neither Reakirt’s Blue nor Ceraunus Blue (at right) has tails. On the underside of the wings Reakirt’s Blue has bold black dots, encircled with white, whereas the Ceraunus has more subtle markings. While the males of

both species are blue above, the females have a wash of brown.

All of these will be flying in this area through the summer and into the fall. It may take a little time and effort, but their exquisite beauty makes them worth observing.



Reakirt's blue



Reakirt's blue

Garden Cuttings *Annotated from Jim Leavy*



Spring has sprung and everything is growing including garden pests. If you have roses, then you have aphids. But wait: there is hope. Those strange-looking black and orange creatures are ladybug “tigers.” They may be the ugliest things in your garden, but these ladybug larvae devour aphids and are your best weapon in the fight of good against evil.

Ladybugs are beneficial insects and should be encouraged in your yard. But if your garden is

overrun with with aphids or other pests, the root cause may be your choice of plants and where they are sited. Pest infestations are secondary lines of attack on a plant. Something else (whether it is too much light, not enough water, too little oxygen in the soil, wrong soil pH) is causing the plant to be in a weakened condition, and it will emit certain gases that pests recognize as free meal tickets. Many times the answer to the plant’s sickness is that it is in the

wrong growing site.

You will always have a few pests around, so the key is to create a balance between prey and predators and healthy plants whose own turgor pressure keeps some pests at bay. The key to this balance is to not use pesticides, to put the right plant in the right spot, and to have biodiversity within your garden so that you offer a smorgasbord of potential habitat for as many creatures as possible. If a plant is sickly or constantly being attacked, get rid of it and find another plant that does work. In the long run, it is a lot cheaper to replace a plant than to apply band-aids. In the longer run, you’ll be doing your part to reduce toxins in your own environment.

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 from 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: Columbine *Amy Trauth-Nare*

One of the signals that winter is really gone for good is my columbine. Right about the time I see those beautiful yellow flowers, I get spring fever. Columbines are in the genus *Aquilegia*, one of many horticulturally important genera in the family Ranunculaceae. You might recognize other important plants in the family such as climbing *Clematis* (virgin's-bower), *Ranunculus* (buttercups), *Thalictrum* (meadow-rue), *Delphinium* (larkspur), and *Helleborus* (hellebore). Members of the family, including columbines, are recognizable by certain characteristics: five petals, five often-showy petal-like sepals, numerous spirally arranged stamens, and compound or lobed leaves. Several species of columbine thrive in north central Texas. Three native species are the yellow-flowered *A. chrysantha* and *A. hinkleyana* and the red-and-yellow-flowered *A. canadensis*. Of these three species, *A. hinkleyana* is endemic to Texas with just a few known native populations. Of course, many hybrids are now commercially available, including a blue-violet flowered variety. Many columbines will also hybridize freely with other species when grown close together.



Columbines grow with mounds of foliage, leaves delicately divided like those of a maidenhair fern, but with much larger leaflets. The flowers grow on stalks set higher than the basal mound of leaves. Columbines are herbaceous perennials, can reach one to two feet tall at maturity, and grow in limestone or clay soils. In nature, columbines often grow near rocky water seeps. Perhaps the long, spurred petals of columbine are its most distinctive characteristic. These long spurs serve a purpose: to produce nectar that attracts pollinators for a drink and that might bring hummingbirds, butterflies, or moths to your yard.

Columbines generally prefer shade, but will grow in sunny areas if in a cool spot. An *A. chrysantha* grows in my front yard and receives full morning sun, but is protected from hot afternoon sun. You can generally enjoy the blooms from March to May; however some will bloom through November. While columbines are easily found in many garden centers or nurseries, they can also be propagated from seed, but it might take two years or longer to mature to flowering size.

Native Plant Sale

Local organically grown Texas native plants
 Saturday, May 1, 9:00 am - 3:00 pm
 Veterans Park, Arlington
 Visit our information table! Tour the Molly Hollar Wildscape! Talk to Master Composters!
Directions: From I-20, north on Green Oaks Blvd., east on Arkansas Lane, south on Spanish Trail, second parking lot entrance.
 Sale benefits The Molly Hollar Wildscape at Veterans Park



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

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

Redenta's Garden 5111 W Arkansas Ln, Arlington, TX 76016, 817-451-2149, redentas.com.

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

Wednesday, May 5

7:00 pm

Fort Worth Botanic Gardens
 BRIT Lecturer Jim Blackburn
 will present

**Texas Coastal Wetlands
 and the Houston Wilderness**

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
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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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