



THE TEXAS SAGE

Native Plant Society of Texas, North Central Chapter Newsletter
Volume 16, Number 7
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The President's Corner



The city of Arlington recently offered a contest to recognize Arlington residents who have incorporated environmentally friendly yard management and design into a "smart yard" using the

design concepts from Texas SmartScape. The rules were clear, asking for applicants to select two categories per address and submit pictures taken in June or July 2004. It was specified the yards would be evaluated by a panel of judges and the photos must be received by July 23.

Because I would be out of town for several weeks during May-July, I decided to take my contest pictures early. However, I finished my business in mid-July and decided to retake the pictures to show a few more weeks of summer growth. As I walked down my 400-foot driveway on that

hot July day, I was shocked to see the city had mowed my entire "hell strip", the property between the sidewalk and the street. It is called that because very little will grow there. Yes, the property is a city easement and they have the right to mow it. However, my beautiful 18" seep muhly, frogfruit, blackfoot daisies, and winecups were history. Even the mulch was mowed to reveal the soil. I called the city and asked them some questions: 1) Did I have the right to landscape that particular piece of property? Answer: Yes. 2) Why did they mow it? Answer: If it's over 18" tall, it gets mowed, no matter what it is. Well, so much for "environmentally friendly yard management and design." I guess their thoughts for me are to return to bermuda grass, which has to be watered to stay alive and mowed to meet city code. Not a chance!

Join us on September 2nd for our next meeting and don't forget to bring something for the raffle. Until then,

Gailon

Before



After



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September meeting:
Thursday, September 2, 7:00 pm, Fort Worth Botanic Gardens

Don Wilhelm from the US Fish & Wildlife Service will be our speaker. Don will speak on "Using native plants to reduce pesticides and fertilizers."

Butterfly of the Month: September Surprises *Joann Karges*



Many of us like to hike trails in a spirit of exploration: to find plants new to us or not common in the area. Butterfly-watchers do this too, looking for the unexpected, the uncommon, those butterflies that may be common elsewhere but rarely seen locally. In the summer and fall of 2003, there was an abundance of Mallow Scrub Hair-streaks (left), a small mallow-feeding butterfly that surely bred here since there were some flying into November.



Zebra Long-wings (upper right), heliconians that use our passion vines, were also common. These two species are scarce this year, but like last year we are seeing Orange-barred Sulphurs (lower right), large golden yellow butterflies, the male with a swab of orange on the upper wings. Larval-host plants are various sennas,

perhaps partridge pea (*Chamaecrista fasciculata*); the butterflies have bred here again this year.

Unlike these possible breeder-immigrants, other species fly in from more tropical regions for reasons difficult to imagine. These are the drifters, the wanderers; usually their larval host plant is not available in this area, and even when the plants are common natives, the butterflies are not known to use them. Some of these lucky finds are: Soldier; Julia; Common Mestra; White-patched Skipper; Sickie-winged Skipper. Other migrants that we see every year are Lyside Sulphur and Large Orange Sulphur. Needless to say, September through until frost can be an exciting time to look for butterflies.



Garden Cuttings *Annotated from Jim Leavy with Gailon Hardin*

Now is the time to start preparing for a fall garden or an area for a new garden to plant in the spring. Start by killing the perennial weeds—warm-season grasses, nut sedge, etc. The weeds are growing actively from the rain we received the second week of August and will respond to several methods of eradication.

Spraying a glyphosphate (Roundup) is effective, but sterilizes the soil. I used Roundup to kill my front yard bermuda, and it not only killed the grass but eliminated the earthworms and other beneficials in the soil. It did, however, get rid of my mole's food source, thus the mole problem—which Martha would say, "Is a good thing." I don't really like sterilization, and there are alternatives.

Solarization might be an option. The area to be turned into your flowering Mecca is delineated by digging a trench around it to a depth greater than the roots of your problem weed. A continuous skin of clear 6-mil poly is put on top of the potential bed. The edges of the plastic should fall into the trench and then be covered with soil to seal the area tightly. The soil temperature under the plastic is supposed to rise high enough to kill everything within 6 inches of the soil surface. The drawback is that this process takes about 2 to 3 months; if October and November are cool, then the process may not work (Texas Sage, September 1998, Jim Leavy).

Another alternative is to delineate an area with an impenetrable edge, then cover the surface with several layers of newspaper, making sure to overlap and cover the area tightly. Then apply a foot-deep layer of hot animal-based compost over the newspaper. Wet down the site thoroughly and then turn everything over after 1 or 2 months. You might have time to do this, but it is not always easy to find a hot manure-based compost (Texas Sage, September 1998, Jim Leavy).

If you are not looking to start another garden area and September does not bring cooler weather, sit back with a cool beverage and enjoy nature at work.

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: Gayfeather *Amy Trauth-Nare*



You might find it surprising that gayfeather or blazingstar is in the same plant family (Asteraceae) with sunflowers, marigolds, lettuce, ragweed, sagebrush, thistles and artichokes. Because of its members, Asteraceae is known commonly as the sunflower family. There is some debate among botanists about which is the largest family of flowering plants, whether it's the sunflower family or the orchid family, but Asteraceae contains some 25,000 species. No matter what your botanical opinion, the sunflower family is a large and varied group. By comparison, gayfeathers, scientifically known as *Liatris*, number only around 45 species. Several species of gayfeather are used extensively in cut flower arrangements. Historically, the roots of these plants were used to treat snakebites.

Gayfeather grows throughout eastern North America, but in my opinion, it is most beautiful in the prairies of Texas and Oklahoma. It is unmistakable as you drive along the highway, with its tall, bright purple or pink spikes of flowers and dark green foliage. The flowers begin to open from the terminal end of the spike and slowly descend toward the base, causing quite a show in your garden or landscape. Normally, it blooms from late summer to early fall and grows best in full sun. It prefers well-drained soils, but will thrive in clay soils, as evidenced by the plants in my yard. Gayfeathers, especially *Liatris pycnostachya*, are commonly sold in garden stores. For instance, I saw some at Weston Gardens. On the other hand, if you like the challenge of propagating your plants from seed, Wildseed Farms (www.wildseedfarms.com, 800-848-0078) can supply you with seed. Planting seed in the fall is best, so the root of the plants can germinate and establish before the first frost. Like all well-behaved perennials, it takes gayfeathers at least two growing seasons to become established from seed, so patience is essential.



Native Plant Sale *Saturday, September 25, Molly Hollar Wildscape at Veterans Park, Arlington*

It's almost time for the big fall sale again. It runs from 9:00 am until 3:00 pm and all sales will benefit the Molly Hollar Wildscape. Here's what you can expect to find:

PERENNIALS:

Blackfoot daisy
Butterfly weed
Columbine, yellow
Fall aster
Four-nerve daisy
Lanceleaf coreopsis
Mealy blue sage
Mex. butterfly weed
Pavonia
Purple coneflower
Salvia coccinea
Zexmenia

GROUNDCOVERS

Cedar sedge
Frogfruit
Golden groundsel
Horseherb
Lyreleaf sage
Texas sedge
Violet ruellia
White avens

VINES

Coral honeysuckle
Passionvine
Snapdragon vine

SHRUBS

Beautyberry
Flame acanthus
Lantana horrida
Salvia horrida
Salvia greggii
Turk's cap

TREES:

Carolina buckthorn
Eastern red cedar
Mexican buckeye
Roughleaf dogwood
Soapberry

GRASSES (and misc. from Bluestem Nursery)

Lindheimer's muhly
Mexican feather grass
Little bluestem
Indian grass
Giant rudbeckia
Obedient plant
Willow leaf sunflower

BOOKS:

Native Texas Plants, 2nd ed, Wasowski & Waskowski
Texas Wildscapes: Gardening for Wildlife, Damude & Bender
Butterfly Gardening for the South, Geyata Ajilvsgi

ALSO: Garden gloves, handouts, and experts to answer your questions

PRICES: 4" pots, \$2; qts, \$3; 6" pots, \$4; 1gal \$6; trees in larger pots \$10-\$15

Next Month's Meeting
October 7, 6:00 pm

Come **early** and tour the new Native Plant Garden at the north entrance to the Botanic Gardens, followed by heavy snacks provided by the Executive Board before our Annual Plant Swap. Start now to get those plants ready: label or provide info on the plant you are swapping. Hope to see you there.

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

Next Meeting

Thursday, September 2

7:00 pm

Fort Worth Botanic Gardens

Don Wilhelm,
 US Fish & Wildlife Service
 will present

**Using native plants to
 reduce pesticides and
 fertilizers**

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

<input type="checkbox"/> Student	\$15	<input type="checkbox"/> Group	\$35
<input type="checkbox"/> Senior Citizen	\$15	<input type="checkbox"/> Patron	\$50
<input type="checkbox"/> Individual	\$20	<input type="checkbox"/> Benefactor	\$100
<input type="checkbox"/> Family	\$25	<input type="checkbox"/> Corporate Sponsor	\$1000

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For changes of address or
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