



NPSOT News

North Central Texas

Native Plant Society of Texas, North Central Chapter Newsletter
Volume 20, Number 4, June 2008

The President's Corner Hester Schwarzer

Garden Field Trips

Plant sales are delightful! Carts become loaded with potted promises of beauty for our corner of the world. We can visualize the completed picture-perfect project. We see waves of textured greenery with bursts of color. There will be trees standing guard over a favorite resting spot. It is such a tantalizing notion.

In stark contrast are the plants suffering in pots outside my door. They helplessly await permanent placement in my shabby landscape. How I need to be inspired by seeing the results you obtain with the lovely plants you purchase!

Maybe a series of field trips is in order. Think about it. If you have a special area of your landscape that gives you joy, many of us would love to see it. Invite the Native Plant membership over for an hour some weekend. We can learn so much from your successes.

Many members have talked about having a garden tour. This would be a step in that direction. Let's plan for one the fall of 2009. This year we could make short visits, enjoy your landscape, ask questions, do a dig if you have something you wish to share, and possibly make plans for inviting the public in 2009.

If even one of you would be willing to share a view of your yard, let me know. I'll bring the lemonade and cookies.

Help Wanted

We need help from a couple of talented members, one to work on publicity, and another to fill the post of Historian.

If you're interested, contact Hester Schwarzer at 817-861-4909 or Hwschwarzer@aol.com.



Stella Rowan prairie, page 2

June meeting

Thursday, June 5, 7:00 pm,
Fort Worth Botanic Gardens, Deborah Beggs Moncrief
Garden Center, Orchid Room

Program: Rainwater Harvesting by Dotty Woodson,
Extension Program Specialist for water resources with
Texas AgriLife Extension.

Visit us at
npsot.org and
txnativeplants.org

Plant of the Month Josephine Keeney

Plains Coreopsis, *Coreopsis tinctoria*, Family Asteraceae



This lovely Texas native wildflower will blanket prairies and roadways in a mantle of golden yellow during springtime. Plains coreopsis is an annual

but is very easy to grow from seed. It should be scattered on prepared soil in the fall.

Height 1-2 feet.
Light requirements sun to part shade.
Prefers moist sandy soil.

There are many different species of coreopsis that are native to Texas, some annual and others perennial. Two species are endemic to Texas, the Rio Grande tickseed, *Coreopsis nuecensoides*, a perennial, and golden tickseed, *Coreopsis tinctoria* var. *similes*, an

annual. Texas is home to thirteen additional native species of core-



The Stella Rowan Wilderness and Prairie Site Jan Miller

The property that now houses the Resource Connection and the attached 70-acre Stella Rowan prairie wilderness area was donated in the early 1970s for the development of a state school. It was then owned by the Amon Carter family. The Rowan family was not related to the Carter family, and the prairie's connection to Mrs. Rowan is not known.

Mrs. Rowan was an enthusiastic gardener, a trait she may have inherited from her father, who was a naturalist and landscaper of several state institutions in Austin. Arch Rowan and his brother moved to the Fort Worth area in the early 1920s. They bought their first oil rig in 1923 and later founded Rowan Companies, now located in Houston. Before its donation, Stella Rowan Prairie had been ranchland, grazed for a period of time, but never plowed. Mrs. Rowan's heirs donated the land, and stipulated it as a wilderness area for the recreational use of residents of the state school.

During the 25 years that the area was part of the State School it was securely secluded and

little used.

In 1992 Governor Richards selected the Fort Worth site as one of the state schools to be closed; since that time the property has come under the control of combined county and state agencies.

For the six years following the closing of the state school, the land within the wilderness area was owned by the state under the auspices of its Mental Health and Mental Retardation agency. It still received little use. Tarrant County assumed management of Stella Rowan Prairie, and in 2001, manager Keith Etheridge received an award from the Native Plant Society of Texas (NPSOT) for excellence in stewardship. In late 2004 or early 2005, Stella Rowan Prairie was purchased from the state by Tarrant County, which continues its management.

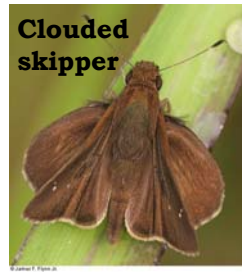
The first organization to occupy the Resource Connection in 1994 was New Lives School, the FWISD program for pregnant and parenting students, who began a botanical study of the wilderness area and developed a plant list. The students invited many botanists and naturalists to visit the

area. Consequently their list has been revised, reviewed and added to by visiting botanists, including Jane Molpus (BRIT), Suzanne Tuttle (FWNC), Bob O'Kennon (BRIT) and Jeff Quayle (TMN).

Today, Stella Rowan Prairie/Wilderness Area hosts occasional cross-country runners on its mown trails but is otherwise left to the varied wildlife that calls it home. Turkeys, bobcats, coyotes and many other species have been reported, and it's a great place for bird and butterfly watching. But the main attraction is the solitude and the incredible plant diversity, so close to downtown Fort Worth. It is a Fort Worth prairie, with its hills of shallow clay over limestone. The bloom season begins early in February with trout lilies, then moves into March with pastel pinks, whites and purples (*Allium* spp., skullcap, Englemann's salvia, prairie hyacinth, New Jersey tea, etc.). In April the palette shifts to vibrant colors (Englemann daisy, prairie coreopsis, Texas star, Barbara's buttons, prairie verbena, prairie foxglove, purple coneflower,

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Butterflies and the Grasses, Part 2 Jo Ann Karges



All satyrs hear you long before you see them, as they have hearing organs (phonoreceptors) on the underside base of their forewings; their hearing is unusually acute.

It is unlikely that you will find the satyr caterpillars even after hours of diligent searching blades of grass. They are elongated in shape with a tiny split “tail” and will be stretched along the grass blades, mostly green with obscure fine lines and soft setae—or, in the case of the Little Wood Satyr, a dark beige—as it nibbles on drying grass. Also they tend to be night feeders. So well hidden and camouflaged are they that even experts have found few larvae and consequently can name only a few of the native grasses that they use. We know they will use lovegrass (*Eragrostis hypnoides*), bluestem (*Andropogon* sp.), Kentucky bluegrass (*Poa pratensis*),

Tridens (*Tridens flavus*) as well as St. Augustine and Bermuda.

The other group of butterflies consists of the grass skippers (Hesperiidae: Hesperinae) also called folded-wing skippers and banded skippers, of which there are more than 25 species in this area. Difficult to identify, these little skippers with their golf-club antennae and slightly fuzzy bodies are gold and brown (the Sachem, the Fiery Skipper, the Zabulon) or black with white dots (the Clouded Skipper), or a warm grey (Eufala Skipper). They land with their hindwings spread and their forewings upright—the little “jet plane” position. They come readily to almost all flowers, including some, like morning glories, that other butterflies cannot reach.

The designation grass skippers comes from their obligate use of grass for their larvae. The

female lays a single egg on a grass blade; the short, plump larva, each species with distinctive head markings, lives on grass blades, folding the blade over so that the edges meet and “sewing” them together (actually pasted with a glue-like substance in their glands). At night the larvae emerge from their protective shelter, munch greedily on the grass blade, and then in the morning “stitch” the blade together again. After their several instars, they will pupate within a grass blade. They use many different grasses, native and alien, including crab grass, Johnson grass, bamboo, fescues and bluestems.

These little grass skippers are much more likely than the satyrs to be in your garden, skipping from one flower to another and nectaring and pollinating as they go. Welcome them!

Stella Rowan Prairie, continued from page 2

white compass plant, etc.) before the heat of summer sets in. Don't delay a visit or you'll find the prairie on summer break, as the county mows usually in mid to late June. But soon the grasses and wildflowers will resume the show with aster, liatris, big bluestem, Maximillian sunflower, Indiangrass and many more, in time to provide food and cover for fall migration.

Directions:

From I-20, go north on Campus Drive and turn left onto Raymond Barber Drive. Turn right at the stop sign onto Circle Drive. Stella Rowan Prairie/Wilderness Area is the area north of Circle Drive to Seminary Drive, and west of Campus Drive to Sycamore Creek, near Carter Park. Continue to follow Circle Drive to an unnamed dead-end road that leads north to a shelter at the bottom of a hill.

This makes for a good access point to explore the prairie. You can also park along the side of the dead end road, but please do not park on the prairie. Also, please observe the 20mph speed limit on the TRC campus, but that won't be a problem...you'll be watching the prairie.

Thanks to Jeff Quayle for major contributions to this article.

New York Avenue Blackland Prairie Jan Miller



What a busy month! For two Saturdays, NYABP hosted volunteer groups: April 12 saw about 20 energetic student

and staff volunteers take on the trees and brush of the prairie as part of UTA's annual "Big Event." They weren't content to just trim; they took on the big trees! Then, on April 19, seven volunteers from Fort Worth area Sierra Club removed tree re-growth, which really improved the look of the native prairie in preparation for the annual spring tour. Our guest volunteers asked really good questions and some even sampled the toothache tree. Hope they'll be back again soon.

Update on adjacent warehouse construction issues:

- Concrete Batch Plant air quality permit application: This application has been cancelled



by TCEQ: Whew!!!

- A temporary perimeter fence is complete around north and east park boundaries. Thank you, APRD!
- Adjacent construction excavation has been tremendous;

be prepared if you haven't visited NYABP in awhile. It now sits like a slab of blackland brownie overlooking barren land to the north and east.

This year's spring wildflower walks turned out to be a triple header! A group of 20+

started by touring Southwest Nature Preserve and being awed by its botanical diversity, many songbirds and a harvester ant colony (thank you, Ann Mayol!). On the way to lunch, the group stopped for a look at the most newsworthy plant in North Texas: the parasitic invasive exotic branched broomrape, *Orobanche ramosa*,



recently discovered along the Hwy 287 access road. (Ref. www-aes.tamu.edu/mary/brmrape/brmrape.htm) Then, for something completely different from the morning's crosstimbers woodlands, we toured the wide-open blackland prairie, rich with blooms of prairie larkspur, primrose, gaillardia, Indian plantain, spiderwort, still a few prairie celestials and many more.

The month's most magical moment: As the UTA group was leaving, Barbara Fleischman and her son Ethan were walking the prairie looking for early wildflowers. They began watching prairie celestials, which had been tightly closed due to the chilly weather. With the warm noonday sun, they noticed that the flowers were opening before their eyes. They called the rest of the group and soon five of us were crouched as a large colony of prairie celestials unfurled, taking about 10 minutes to open. Celestial, indeed....wishing you magical moments.

Thanks to Wesley Miller for photos and for hosting the guest volunteer groups.



Wildscape Update John Dycus



They're coming out of the wood-work (and the hedge and the cedar grove) to get a piece of the wildscape.

Impassioned volunteers, the only kind we have, conducted three tours in three days — the largest accompanied walk-through ever undertaken at the wildscape — for all 300 polite, attentive students of Dallas Maynard Jackson Middle School. The Dallas Junior League awarded the school a grant to create a wildscape, and the teachers and students wanted to see the best around.

Nancy Swan contributed to basic organization, and Ann Knudsen and Hester Schwarzer, captains of the wildscape outreach team, returned from vacation to participate. Ann completed planning for the big event overnight, quickly masterminding the schedules for each of the volunteers who responded to short-notice calls for help.

Back at the keyboard, Grace Darling is applying for a Texas Parks and Wildlife grant to fund educational materials, transportation, and lunch for Title I students in the region to tour the wildscape. Outreach is the ultimate purpose of the wildscape, but expansion from its original half-acre to the present four acres has kept everyone too busy to be dirt docents, strolling about and pointing. Now that the wildscape includes all the ecosystems plus the rejuvenated erosion area, maybe it's time to get aggressive about showing it off.

Speaking of spreading the word, Ann Knudsen launched the first Saturday mini-workshop with a talk on making inexpensive rain barrels to catch water from our roofs. On May 3 Julia Burgen continued the series with tips on increasing your backyard bird populations. Mike Warren and his Tarrant County Juvenile Services crew partook of Julia's expertise after they mulched some wildscape trails. Longtime wildscape friend Suzanne Tuttle, director of the Fort Worth Nature

Center, will lead the first Saturday mini-class, June 7, on native plants.

The vandalized pond and creek areas will be restored shortly, and the original buffalo grass patch will be reconfigured into a much smaller lawn, in keeping with water conservation recommendations. The area behind the new, smaller turfallo lawn will be planted with super-drought-resistant native plants — red yucca, agarita, cenizo, black dalea, blackfoot daisy, calylophus, gayfeather, desert willow — that, once established, will need little supplemental water other than rainfall.

On May 17, 50 outstanding high school sophomores at the HOBY Leadership Conference at SMU visited the wildscape, which was approved as a volunteer environmental project for them. Wildscape volunteers are looking forward to the opportunity to inspire these students to return to their communities and provide sorely needed environmental leadership.



Next Meeting

Thursday, June 5
7:00 pm
Fort Worth
Botanic Gardens

Dotty Woodson

Rainwater Harvesting

Visit us on the Web
at
www.txnativeplants.org

Join the Native Plant Society of Texas!

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 with the appropriate remittance to:

Native Plant Society of Texas
PO Box 3017, Fredricksburg, TX 78624
830-997-9272

_____ Student	\$15	_____ Couple/Family	\$40
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The North Central Texas
NPSOT News

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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