



N P S O T

**North Central Texas
News**

Native Plant Society of Texas, North Central Chapter Newsletter
Volume 20, Number 7, September 2008

The President's Corner *Hester Schwarzer*

Thanks, Everyone

We owe a big "Thank you" to the members who bring items for the raffle each month and to everyone who spends a few bucks for a chance to take them home. This helps to pay for the meeting room. Special words of appreciation go to the Marshall Grain Company and Redenta's Nursery. They have routinely supplied very nice gift certificates. Last month the Stuart Nursery in Weatherford joined them by giving us attractive plants for the raffle.

Time and Energy

Have you ever wished you could clone yourself, multi-task, or complete jobs with the speed of a tornado? Of course you have! There is never enough time or energy to accomplish all you wish to do.

The North Central Chapter of the Native Plant Society, like so many other similar organizations, depends on members willing to volunteer their precious time and resources for a cause they respect. Thousands of hours have been willingly donated by many of you to projects that benefit the local communities. The Molly Hollar Wildscape and New York Avenue Prairie in Arlington, the gardens at the Southwest Regional Library and the Tarrant County Sub-Court House in Fort Worth are recipients of many of those hours. These projects only scratch the surface of all the

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Help Wanted

We need help from a talented member to fill the post of Historian. If you're interested, contact Hester Schwarzer at 817-861-4909 or hwschwarzer@aol.com.

**Inside:
Where are the
butterflies?**



September meeting

Thursday, September 4, 7:00 pm,
Fort Worth Botanic Gardens, Deborah Beggs Moncrief
Garden Center, Orchid Room

Program: Native Grasses, by John Snowden, owner of
Bluestem Nursery

Visit us at
npsot.org and
txnativeplants.org

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things in which we could, or should, be involved.

Volunteers are crucial for the garden shows held several times each year. Plant sales require hours at home preparing plants for marketing as well as the time needed to have the actual sale. Several members use their considerable knowledge and time to present programs to various groups.

Shall we be actively pursuing plant rescue missions? How can we best influence cities and neighborhoods to use more na-

tives? Schools need help with their gardens. Can we devote more time to assisting them and educating our youth? Field trips and garden tours require our effort. Where shall we place our emphasis?

As we plan for the growing interest in native plants and our limited ability to meet every need, what shall we do? It is an awesome challenge that lies before this organization. We need every member's input and assistance. Your volunteer efforts are crucial as we seek to make a difference in the future.

Seed Sharing

at the September meeting. Bring your native plant seeds to the next meetings and we'll provide envelopes for labeling.

Fall Botanic Garden Plant Sale

Saturday, October 11, 2008
9:00 am to 2:00 pm
On the grounds of the Fort Worth Botanic Garden.

Plant of the Month Josephine Keeney

Cardinal's feather, Round croton, *Acalypha radians*



This adorable little plant of the family Euphorbiaceae is native to our area and is mentioned in the book *Flora of North Central Texas* on page 589 and pictured on page 591.

Cardinal's feather is almost unknown to the average person, but it deserves to be well known because of its beauty and hardiness in spite of its delicate looks. Even though I like to go on plant walks and have rescued many plants from unexpected places, I wasn't lucky enough to find this one. It was given to me at a plant swap by a friend from the San Antonio area who has them

growing wild on his ranch.

Cardinal's feather is a winter-hardy perennial herb. I left mine outside in their pots, where they went dormant and came back in the spring just fine.

The plant is only about a foot tall and wide and very delicate looking, with lovely leaves covered by soft hairs. Male and female flowers occur on separate plants. The male flowers are only 2 inches long, in lovely shades of cream, orange and red. The common name is derived from their feathery appearance. The female flower is totally different, with only two small petals coming out of the center.

I only have the male plant, so cannot propagate by seed, but the plant is easy to propagate by cuttings.

Cardinal's feather likes sun and good drainage, doesn't need much water, and blooms for six months out of the year.

Seven *Acalyphas* are native to North Central Texas:
Cardinal's feather, *Acalypha radians*
Slender copperleaf, *Acalypha gracilens*

Slender One-seeded copperleaf, *Acalypha monococca*
Hop hornbeam copperleaf, *Acalypha ostryfolia*
Lindheimer's copperleaf, *Acalypha phleoides*
Rhomboid copperleaf, *Acalypha rhomboidea*
Virginia copperleaf, *Acalypha virginica*

Editor's note: Don't forget to visit Josephine's remarkable Texas native plant database at www.texasstar.org/.



Butterflies Jo Ann Karges

Where Are the Butterflies?



This is a question frequently asked this summer, and the answers may be more theoretical than factual. The spring started off well with plenty of butterflies and other insects and good growth of larval host plants. Until, that is, about the end of May when the rains became few and far between; the plants were neither growing as well nor blooming as abundantly as usual for the time of year. By June 7th when the annual Tarrant County 4th of July Butterfly Count was held, there was an absolute dearth of butterflies. Not just in the wild fields at such places as the Fort Worth Nature Center, but even in the well-watered, carefully maintained Fort Worth Botanic Garden. To illustrate: In 2005, the group, covering exactly the same area, found 54 species, 1047 individual butterflies; in 2007, the total was 52 species and 1843 individuals. This year the group worked just as hard, covered the same territory, and came up with a mere 40 species and only 160 individuals. Certainly we cannot attribute this shortfall to global warming but we can at least in part to the drought, the fact that larval plants were doing poorly, some drying and toughening so that small larvae would have had a hard time, too. One theory is that this is a cyclical event, one that happens every

six to ten years or so but is just more evident this year because there are more people looking for butterflies. (The scarcity of butterflies has not been uniform across the county nor across North Central Texas as some areas, particularly the northeast sectors, have not experienced the severity that many of us have—but it has been evident in much of Central Texas as well.) Not only butterflies, either, as there has been such a lack of all kinds of insects that one wonders how the insect-eating birds have fared, or how those paper wasps that usually take caterpillars for their larvae



have managed. I have peanut feeders and suet feeders that I keep out all year, and I have had an abundance of chickadees, titmice, downy woodpeckers, blue jays, as well as house sparrows feeding on these constantly, so that I replenish or replace the sources twice a week.

Now, as I write in late August, we are beginning to find a few more butterflies: Queens and Monarchs on mist-flower, Gulf Fritillaries hovering near passion vine, and an occasional Pipe-Vine Swallowtail. We know that the Monarchs have begun their long

migratory trek to Mexico, some drifting south-westward even now from the Atlantic states. Hopefully with the recent rains being rather general throughout the area, we will see a return of good butterfly activity.

For now we can mull over the reasons why this year has been so drastically insect-less and hope for more butterflies in the future.

Plant Rescue

Recently several large live oaks were moved with considerable effort in south Arlington. Although experts must have been involved, we have to wonder if this tough treatment at the height of summer will yield the hoped-for results.

Photo credit: Max Faulkner, Fort Worth Star-Telegram



Wildscape Update John Dycus

They must be living right out at the wildscape, because the soil serendipity just keeps rolling.

After the Hugh O'Brian Youth (HOBY) leadership students planted the berm in May, the only thing lacking was about 8 more yards of dirt on the back side. While wildscape volunteers pondered how that could possibly happen, an Upward Bound counselor called to inquire if 40 high school students could be utilized for a couple of hours. Insert exclamation points here.

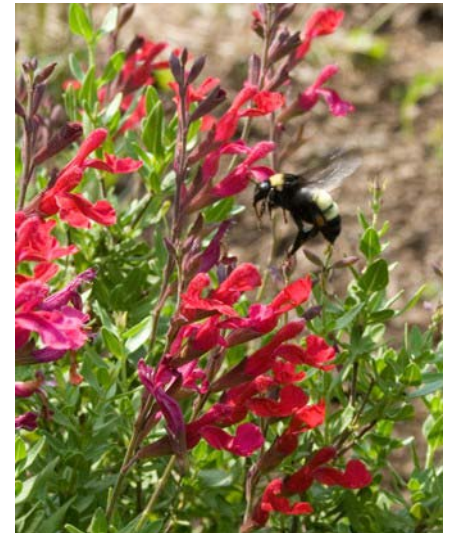
The wildscape's super Arlington Parks & Rec crew, working with very short notice, got the dirt there in time for the Upward Bounders, who toiled with smiles on their faces as if they were having a party as they speedily moved that mountain. Wildscape ringleader Molly Hollar couldn't contain herself: "Tomorrow's world will surely improve with such terrific young people taking it over."

Wildscape volunteers should have the back of the berm planted by the time you read this. Turfalo, donated by Redenta's Garden, will be planted to complete upgrading the former meadow into a demonstration area for water conservation landscaping. Homeowners following this example can reduce watering to 1-3 times a year after the grass gets going in about 2



years. Once established, even with no water except rainfall, the grass may go dormant in summer and return the following spring. Contrast this to traditional landscapes in 100-degree heat needing copious amounts of water to survive.

You can take home loads of lantana, grasses from Bluestem



Nursery, and other low water plants at the fall plant sale from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturday, Sept. 27, at the Randol Mill Park greenhouse. See the plant sale flyer in this issue, or visit thewildscape.org for a full list of plants available and more things to make you smile, including photos of a baby bunny living in the wildscape.

Mini-classes for volunteers will continue Saturday, September 6, when Josephine Keeney will advise us on attracting butterflies. Recently, Sandy Fountain conducted a session on attracting bluebirds, and John Darling talked about vermicomposting.



Wildscape Mini-Classes (tentative)

Sept	Attracting Butterflies	Josephine Keeney
Oct	Native Landscape Maintenance	Lucy Harrell
Nov	Water Conservation	Greg Schadt
Dec	Native Trees and Their Care	Heather Dowell
Jan	Propagating Native Plants	Pat Lovejoy
Feb	Good Critters in Our Soil	Ann Mayo

Fall Native Plant Sale Scheduled Molly Hollar

Our Wildscape native plant sale will be held on September 27 from 9:00 am until 1:00 pm at the greenhouse at Randol Mill Park. There will be a large supply and variety of Texas native plants, including perennials, groundcovers, vines, grasses, shrubs, trees, and water and bog plants. Most of our plants have been propagated and grown from indigenous native seed and cuttings so they are better adapted to our amounts of rainfall, heat, and cold than plants from other areas. For more details and a plant list, see our Wildscape Web site, www.thewildscape.org.

Annual NPSOT Meeting: Beaumont, October 16-19

(Editor's note: The article below provides a detailed introduction to the subject of this year's Annual Symposium. For more information about the annual meeting and symposium, go to www.npsot.org.)

Come to the Land of Transitions and Diversity, The Big Thicket of East Texas

By Ellen C. Cover and Robert W. Corbett, Lamar University, and Lisa Jameson, National Park Service

In October 2008 you have the opportunity to come and explore an amazing part of Texas, the Big Thicket National Preserve and associated areas. The existing units of the Big Thicket National Preserve are spread out over vastly different habitats.² The preserve with its associated areas is truly a biological crossroads. Within the units you can find habitats with soils that range from sand to clay, calcareous to acidic, dry to moist to flooded.² You will also find uplands, bottomlands, slopes, seeps, oxbows, floodplains, creeks, rivers and lakes. This biological diversity includes 1300 species of flowering plants, 26 species of ferns and allies, 20 species of orchids, and four species of carnivorous plants.¹

The diversity is so impressive it is hard to even categorize the communities of plants present. The upland areas between the streams of the thicket are longleaf pine *Pinus palustris* – bluestem habitat maintained by fire. The longleaf pine begins in a “grass stage.” Fire inhibits potential competitors and insect damage to

the seedling, allowing it to bolt into the “candlestick” stage. From there the tree matures, producing branches and height. The longleaf pine – grassland community supports a high diversity of species including the federally endangered Texas trailing phlox (*Phlox nivalis texensis*). Many partners make up the Texas Trailing Phlox



Working Group, which is dedicated to implementing a recovery plan to reintroduce Texas trailing phlox to the longleaf pine habitats.

Fire suppression has changed much of the Big Thicket, and the pine grasslands are no exception. Today a common upland pine forest consists of longleaf pines mixed with loblolly pine, *Pinus*

taeda, and upland oaks¹ with wildflowers, including bird's foot violet (*Viola pedata*),² the native Texas violet with the largest flower.³ Other forbs that may be seen blooming in October include the prairie gayfeather (*Liatris pycnostachya*) and the rattlesnake master (*Eryngium yuccifolium*), which may finish blooming in early October. The uncommon *Silene subciliata*, the scarlet catchfly or prairie fire pink, is usually found on deep, well-drained sandy soils into the longleaf habitat, and has been reported in the Turkey Creek Unit of the Big Thicket Preserve.

A second upland plant community is the Wetland Savannah or Pine Savannah Wetland, which is considered to contain the richest diversity of life in the preserve.¹ One study indicated that over 100 species of forbs were found per acre of wetland pine savannah.⁴ The forested wetlands have red bay (*Magnolia virginiana*), galberry holly (*Ilex coriacea*),¹ wax myrtle (*Morella cerifera*), and titi (*Cyrilla racemiflora*).² Along the wetlands' ground you may see the snowy orchid (*Habenaria nivea*), the rare Chapman's orchid (*Platanthera*

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chapmanii),⁵ and several species of ferns including the regal fern (*Osmunda regalis*). Three major groups of carnivorous plants can be found here, including pitcher plants (*Sarracenia alata*), bladderworts (*Utricularia sp.*) and sundews (*Drosera sp.*).² Transitional areas between the savannah and the uplands can be sites for pale grass pink orchid (*Calopogon oklahomaensis*), snake mouth orchid (*Pogonia ophioglossoides*) and a carnivorous plant, the blue butterwort (*Pinguicula pumila*).

Another transition occurs in low lands with acid bogs and baygalls. Baygalls are formed in floodplains when rain run-off in water channels is blocked by deposits of debris and soil. Baygalls appear to be named for the major tree species of the area, white bay and gallberry holly. Geraldine Watson² has said that these acid bogs–baygall communities provide the “aura of the Big Thicket.” On the transition edges of the baygall you can find black titi, mosses, liverworts, ferns, and carnivorous plants.

Another transition can occur from baygalls into the floodplain regions where you could find hardwood pine forest or cypress tupelo swamps. Depending on the age and conditions of the area, the hardwood pine forest can consist of loblolly pine and American beech (*Fagus grandifolia*) with American hornbeam (*Carpinus caroliniana*)¹ as part of the understory. If you find oxbow lakes and sloughs and lots of flooding, you will find the cypress tupelo swamp, featuring bald cypress (*Taxodium distichum*) with its characteristic “knees” and tupelo (*Nyssa aquatica*) trees. The cypress tupelo swamp is disappearing as land is developed. The Kirby Nature Trail of the Big Thicket N.P. has a loop that can take you to a nice example of this type of swamp.

Natural changes occur with slope plant communities. Transition occurs from the upper slope pine–oak communities, with longleaf pine and southern red oaks (*Quercus falcata*), to the mid and lower slope beech–magnolia–loblolly forests. In the borders between the uplands and the pine oak communities, you rarely find the Carolina lily (*Lilium michauxii*), and certain orchids such as whorled pogonia (*Isotria verticillata*) and crane fly orchid (*Tipularia*



discolor) can be found growing under beech trees. The Beech Creek Unit provides a good example of this forest type, as do parts of the Lance Rosier Unit.

One of the least expected areas found in the Big Thicket is the arid sandyland, since most people think of swamps. These sandylands can be found near Village Creek. A Nature Conservancy site, the Roy E. Larsen Sandyland Sanctuary is a good place to explore this plant community. Beside longleaf pine and oaks like bluejack oak (*Quercus incana*), blackjack oak, and post oak, hickory (*Carya texana*) can also be found here along with the rare

Texas Trailing Phlox.

The Big Thicket Preserve encompasses an incredible diversity of plant assemblages spread through ten land units and six corridor units. For your mapping and planning of field trips, the units include Beaumont, Beech Creek, Big Sandy Creek, Hickory Creek Savannah, Lance Rosier, Turkey Creek, Loblolly, Neches Bottom and Jack Gore Baygall, and Canyonlands. The Stream corridor units include the Menard Creek, Neches River Upper and Lower, Pine Island/Little Pine Island Bayou corridors, Big Sandy Creek to Big Sandy corridor unit, and Village Creek.

Come join us for the annual meeting of NPSOT in Beaumont, and come to the land of transitions and diversity, the Big Thicket.

Literature Cited and Reference Materials

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4. Tveten, J. and G. Tveten. 1993. Wildflowers of Houston & Southeast Texas. University of Texas Press, Austin, 309 p.
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Next Meeting

Thursday, September 4
7:00 pm
Fort Worth
Botanic Gardens

Native Grasses
John Snowden,
Bluestem Nursery

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

<input type="checkbox"/> Student	\$15	<input type="checkbox"/> Couple/Family	\$40
<input type="checkbox"/> Senior Individual (65+)	\$20	<input type="checkbox"/> Group	\$50
<input type="checkbox"/> Senior Couple (one 65+)	\$30	<input type="checkbox"/> Patron	\$100
<input type="checkbox"/> Individual	\$25	<input type="checkbox"/> Benefactor	\$250
		<input type="checkbox"/> Supporting	\$500
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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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