



Spring 1984
vol. 2, no. 1

The LOUISIANA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

A LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Members,

First, let me thank you for our successful winter meeting. To those of you that could not come, we missed you. Dr. Ben Martin presented one of the best programs I have ever experienced. We would like to thank Dr. Charles Allen, LSU-Eunice, and Dr. R. Dale Thomas, Northeast Louisiana University, for their help with the program.

Our summer meeting will also be a special one. A tour of the Kisatchie Wood is to be the main feature. In case you are unfamiliar with this area, it is a very unique one of sheer cliffs, sandstone rocks, hills, and unusual plants. The date set for this is Saturday, August 18, 1984.

Now is the time to prepare for our January 26, 1985 meeting and plant sale. Pot up more plants than you intend to bring to the sale, for if you are like me, some will not prosper. I would suggest using metal cans or plastic pots, as paper cartons have a way of disintegrating on the way home. Balled and burlapped plants are OK but should be root pruned this spring prior to lifting next winter.

Now that we have our Louisiana Native Plant Society, let's use it. If you see something that needs to be done, please speak up. If you have information about unusual or rare plants, and would like to share the information, let our editor know. If you can lead a field trip to an unusual area, we ask that you contact your local chapter.

Sincerely,

Richard L. Johnson

Richard L. Johnson
President, LNPS.

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE LOUISIANA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY
by Neil Bertinot

The annual meeting of the Louisiana Native Plant Society was held Saturday, January 28, 1984 in the Woodworth Center at LSU Alexandria, at 1:00 PM.

The meeting was brought to order by President Richard Johnson, Secretary Ruth Griffin read the minutes of the last meeting (August, 1983) and the minutes were accepted as read.

President Richard Johnson then called for reports from the area chapters of the LNPS. Reports were given by the following chapters: Greater New Orleans, Ruston, Red River, Shreveport, and Acadiana. Dr. Ben Martin reported on the progress being made in organizing the Central Louisiana Chapter which is presently in formation.

Jim Robbins gave an informative talk about the Bossier Parish Nature Study Center, which is located on Linton Road in Benton, La. Members were invited to visit the Center.

The composition of, and numbers of members on, the nominating committee was then discussed by Mr. Johnson. He said that after much discussion and deliberation by the By-Laws Committee, it was decided the by-laws should be amended so that the Nominating Committee would be comprised of one member from each area chapter. A motion was made by Beth Erwin to implement these changes. The motion was duly seconded by Diane Laborde, and carried. Mr. Johnson directed that, as soon as possible after the Winter Meeting, each chapter select one member to be appointed to the Nominating Committee.

The next order of business was the election of officers for the coming year. Mr. Johnson asked the Nominating Committee to present the nominees. The following members were nominated by the Committee and unanimously elected by the membership to the offices shown:

President - Richard Johnson
Vice President - Dr. Ben Martin
Secretary - Neil Bertinot
Treasurer - Elinor Herd
Editor - David Heikamp

The publication of a newsletter was then discussed. David Heikamp said he felt that putting out 4 newsletters a year was about what he could manage. Mr. Johnson informed the chapters that furnishing chapter news to the editor was a responsibility of the chapter secretaries. Mr. Heikamp set February 29 as the deadline for reception of articles and news for inclusion in the Spring issue of the newsletter.

Mr. Johnson then brought up the matter of obtaining more people to conduct workshops, and asked that the membership provide him with the names and addresses of qualified individuals who would be willing to conduct workshops.

There being no further official business, the meeting was adjourned.

TREASURER'S REPORT, La. Native Plant Society

Balance on hand as of 1/25/84.....\$425.00

A BEAUTIFUL NATIVE

by Neil Bertinot

Louisiana is blessed with many fine and beautiful native plant species. Our native irises must surely be considered to be one of the most beautiful in this select group. The species, and natural or man-made hybrids, are collectively called 'louisiana iris', with the exception of *Iris virginica* (including var. *shrevei*) which will not be considered here.

This member of the genus *Iris* belongs to the series *Hexagonae* consisting of several closely related species which occur in Louisiana. Some occur in a few other states as well.

Modern garden cultivars have been produced, largely by amateur hybridizers by cross pollinating selected varieties, planting the resultant seeds, and then keeping only the best and most beautiful offspring. This mixing of the genes from different species, and their color variants, has resulted in a kaleidoscope of color. Colors range through shades of white, cream, yellow, pink, tan, brown, orange, red, and blue to deepest purple (almost black). Consider the additions of blends, bitones, and bicolors and you have some idea of the rainbow character of this plant.

The modern cultivars available today are due to the pioneering efforts of people like Mary Swords DeBaillon, Caroline Dorman, Professor Ira Nelson, W.B. MacMillan, G.W. Holleyman, Charles Arny, Sidney Conger, Frank Chowning, Claude Davis, Joe Mertzweiler, Kenneth Durio, Marvin Granger, and others. Those of us who are following - who are working with these plants now - are largely building on the solid foundation created by these individuals, several of whom are still leading the way.

Anyone interested in viewing these plants in all their splendor should consider attending the Spring Show of the Society for Louisiana Irises, held annually in Lafayette, Louisiana. This year the show will be held April 14-15, 1984, in the USL Conference Center. The show is open to the general public on Saturday afternoon and on Sunday. There is usually a tour of the C.W. Arny garden on Saturday morning. Visiting the Arny garden is quite an experience as the visitor (Mother Nature permitting) will see hundreds of varieties and literally thousands of blooms of our beautiful native, the louisiana iris. For more information concerning the show, or the Society for Louisiana Irises, write Aline M. Arceneaux, Sec-Treas., P.O. Box 40175, Lafayette, Louisiana 70504.

DEADLINE FOR SUMMER NEWSLETTER!

All articles, information, etc. to be included in the summer newsletter must be received by me no later than May 31, 1984. Please send to the following address as early as possible:

David Heikamp
717 Giuffrias
Metairie, Louisiana 70001

HE FINDS RARE SILKY CAMELLIA

by Jack Price

(Ed. Note: Jack is from the Shreveport-Bossier area)

Stewartia malacodendron is a native camellia of Louisiana, Mississippi, south Arkansas and in one area of Texas. These large shrubs or small trees are rare, especially in our area. The only silky camellia I had ever seen until this year was in Inez Conger's garden in Arcadia.

In May, 1980 I was a member of a group which visited an area in the east Texas Big Thicket where a colony of these plants is protected. The silky camellias were in full bloom on both occasions and easy to identify.

A couple of weeks ago my wife and I were in an area in north central Louisiana searching for plants when I noticed an odd-appearing shrub with distinct foliage and odd fruit (seed pods). Upon arriving home a search of several reference books and discussions with several wildflower friends led us to the discovery we had indeed found the silky camellia. Our native camellia is a large shrub or small tree with several large 3 to 4 inch main trunks emerging from the same root system to form a circle. Trunks and limbs seem not to grow too tall but bow over fanning outward for 15 to 20 feet.

The flowers of the Stewartia are really something to see, they are on very short stems and, as a rule, only one flower on each stem. There are five snow white petals which curve slightly up at the ends. The petals widen out on the outer edges and overlap for about $\frac{1}{2}$ of their length, then spread out. Petal edges are wavy and slightly veined.

The five petals join in the center with a small green ball forming in the center. This ball is surrounded by many stamens; the filaments (stems of the stamens) are dark purple; anthers are sky blue. Seed pods (green balls) enlarge after the petals shed until they are about $\frac{1}{2}$ inch in size. They mature in October, turn brown and split open. These pods are in five equal sections, each section holds one to three seeds (usually two). Seeds look like oversized apple seeds, brown in color and lenticular in shape, they are covered by a water resistant coating and a very hard seed cover. Seeds can be dormant for years before germination.

Leaves are dark green on the top and pale green below with a very soft hair covering. They alternate on very short stems up the twigs in tight clusters. The leaves are noticeably veined, with the veins alternating, two to three inches long, $1\frac{1}{2}$ to 2 inches wide, oval to elliptic in shape and will burn easily in direct sun. Foliage for the coming year begins to form on the Stewartia during October when the seeds are maturing and the leaves are shedding.

The Silky Camellia is the aristocrat of all our native plants. It is deciduous and transplanting should be done during the winter months.

(Ed. Note: According to several of my wildflower friends here and in Alabama, Stewartia malacodendron is very difficult to transplant, often fails to thrive even under ideal conditions, is almost impossible to grow from seed, but is fairly easy to root by cuttings taken in August/September. Several nurseries now offer this beauty, including Woodlanders of Aiken, So. Carolina.)

Celastrus scandens in Louisiana

by Garrie Landry

The Climbing Bittersweet, Celastrus scandens L., a medium woody vine, is considered to be a rare Louisiana native. However, a newly discovered population of this elusive plant gives some indications that it could be far more common in the state than was previously thought.

Celastrus is characterized by having alternate, elliptic to ovate leaves with serrate margins. The plant is a diffuse (spreading), climbing and twining vine rather than compact in growth form. The leaf characters alone are sufficient to identify the species and to distinguish it from all other native vines. In June and July, it produces panicles or racemes of small, yellow-green flowers. Like its nearest relative the Strawberry Bush, Euonymus, Celastrus is known for its colorful fruits which are bright orange to red and occur in clusters. The fruits mature in winter and are frequently used in floral decorations in areas where the plant is commonly found.

The Climbing Bittersweet is a very wide ranging species, occurring from Quebec and Ontario west to Wyoming and south to North Carolina, Georgia, Louisiana and Texas. It is generally considered rare in the southern part of its range. Its habitat is usually that of rich upland woods. Until recently, there were only three collections recorded for the state. The first came in 1971, when John W. Thieret discovered a population in a hilly region east of Opelousas in St. Landry Parish. In 1973, Hazel Delcourt of Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge, found Celastrus growing in deep ravines north of St. Francisville in West Feliciana Parish. Later in 1974, Dr. Charles Allen of USL, discovered this species growing in the ravines of Weeks Island in Iberia Parish. This last collection is apparently the southern most location for the species in eastern North America. All of the plants in these populations were found to be sterile, i.e., no flowers or fruits, and the populations shared a common feature of being of rich woods associated with much relief; either hills or ravines.

The most recent find by Stephen Shively of Lafayette, in October of 1983, occurred in Vermillion Parish near Abbeville. This location differs significantly from the others in that the plants are found in relatively low woods bordering a Cypress-Tupelo swamp. Habitats such as this are quite common in Louisiana. This new locality indicates that Celastrus need not be confined to the hills and ravines of the state but may indeed be more widely distributed. This population consists of several robust vines to 20 feet in height along a small trail bordered by swamp on the south side and mixed hardwood forest on the north side. Although the plants appeared to be vigorous, no evidence of any flowers or fruits could be found.

After researching other collections, it appears that Celastrus scandens has not been observed to flower or fruit in its southern most locations. However, it has been reported to do so in cultivation at Briarwood in northcentral Louisiana. There are apparently no locations for this plant in southern Mississippi and Alabama, and it is entirely lacking in Florida.

The southern Louisiana populations of this plant are very perplexing, and a number of questions remain unanswered. How do the populations maintain themselves if flowering and fruiting do not occur? Where did the scattered populations come from? Considering the primarily northern range of this species, it is evident that the Louisiana locations represent range extensions beyond the norm for the species. The sporadic occurrence of populations in the state may be due to seed dispersal by birds. Perhaps the plants have never flowered in Louisiana. Or, perhaps only under unusual conditions such as a

severe winter are the plants able to produce flower buds and thus very seldom reproduce. There are several possibilities. This year the population in Vermillion Parish will be observed regularly to determine if any flowering or fruiting occurs.

Although Celastrus scandens is still regarded as a rare plant in our state, new collection data indicates it may be found in habitats previously thought of as unsuitable. Further exploration and study of existing populations are needed to better understand this rarest of vines in Louisiana.

MOSESSES AND THEIR USES IN A WILDFLOWER GARDEN

by Karlene DeFatta

Plants popularly known as mosses range from flowering species such as Spanish Moss to algae (sea moss) to lichens (such as reindeer moss).

Botanically though, mosses include only certain "lower plants". Lower not because they grow close to the ground (though indeed they do) but because they lack certain characteristics common to more evolved species.

True mosses have a complex life cycle that includes the production of "spores" rather than seeds. The spores are generally produced at the end of a long stalk in a covered case which opens when the spores are mature.

The mosses cover many places along the roadside, on the sides of ravines, and in shady damp woods. In my yard and wildflower garden are many places covered by a beautiful soft green carpet of moss. I love to examine them with my magnifying glass. I especially love the Silver Moss, *Brynum argenteum*, only a half inch tall. Look for this dense shiny green cushion of overlapping leaves closely pressed to the stems along roadsides and trails. It has a red spore case that droops. Another of my favorites is the Woodsy Star Moss, *Mnium cuspidatum*. Found along roadsides and in the shade, it has inch and a half tall stems bearing oval leaves. It can also be found in woods and fields. There are many other mosses, nameless to me, that I enjoy in my wildflower garden even though I cannot identify them.

To conserve water in my wildflower garden along my "water shed" I've constructed several dams to hold back part of the water that would otherwise run off in a short time. This allows the water time to soak into the ground. I water nearby plants myself, but have planted mosses, ferns and violets on the dams themselves. These help to stabilize the dams and prevent them from washing away. I've also built an overflow pipe into each dam to channel excess water on to the next dam.

Mosses come in such beautiful shades of green, and are so easy to transplant to a shady nook in your wildflower garden! Just scoop off a sheet of moss with an inch or two of soil, settle it into a shallow hole, and water well. Just like magic you've created a pretty, cool green, velvety nook to enjoy for a long time to come!

RUSTON CHAPTER HAS MUCH TO OFFER

The Ruston Chapter is composed of people with varying interests in wildflowers. Some are interested in wildflower gardening, others in landscaping with natives, others with preservation, and still others with the medicinal uses of native plants. Dues for the Ruston Chapter, like most chapters, have been set at \$5 per year, and meetings are held the first Wednesday of each month at 7:00 PM in Room 101 of Carson Taylor Hall at Louisiana Tech. Talks at the meeting have ranged from Louisiana ferns to the identification of woody plants in winter. The Ruston Chapter has had several field trips, including a joint trip to The Caroline Dorman Nature Preserve (Briarwood) with the Alexandria Chapter. Keep up the good work, Ruston Chapter!

ACADIANA CHAPTER NEEDS SLIDES

The Acadiana Chapter is in the process of gathering 35 mm slides to be used in slide presentations. The first slide presentation they would like to complete is entitled "Landscaping With Native Plants of Louisiana." If you have any slides of natives used in landscaping and would like to offer them for duplication (credit given) please contact the Acadiana Native Plant Society at the following address:

Beth Erwin
P.O. Box 203
Leonville, Louisiana 70551

HYMENOCALLIS

Eileen Whalen of the University of Oklahoma plans on doing her doctoral thesis on the Caroliniana Alliance of Hymenocallis, a formidable task indeed!

Part of her research will involve collecting plants in the southeastern United States over the next two summers. Anyone with any information on locations of wild populations can help out by sending her that information at the following address:

Ms. Eileen A. Whalen
Department of Botany and Microbiology
University of Oklahoma
770 Van Vleet Oval
Norman, Oklahoma 73019

HYMENOCALLIS FROM SEED

Ed. Note: The following appeared in a letter I received from Dr. Thad Howard of San Antonio, Texas.

The best way I know to germinate Hymenocallis seed is to put them in zip-lock bags containing very slightly dampened milled sphagnum moss or vermiculite. Then seal the bag and wait for them to put out radicles. The medium must only be barely moist, to maintain humidity, but not so damp as to make the seed rot. Actually if a sterile medium (such as mentioned) is used, there is not apt to be any damp-off. If in doubt, you can punch a few holes in the plastic, but usually this is not necessary. Once the seedlings begin forming bulbs, it is time to pot them up. I use this method for big seeds like Hymenocallis and Crinum.

VOLUNTEER NEEDED FOR SEED EXCHANGE PROGRAM

Many of our members have expressed a desire for some sort of seed exchange for our society whereby seeds of our native wildflowers could be made available to members who desire them. Needless to say, such a program will require a good deal of planning and effort, not to mention cooperation by the membership at large in collecting and mailing in surplus seeds. Anyone who is willing and able to devote the time and effort necessary to administer such a program can contact either this newsletter or our President, Richard Johnson:

La. Native Plant Society
Newsletter
717 Giuffrias
Metairie, La. 70001

Mr. Richard L. Johnson
Route 1, Box 151
Saline, La. 71070

ARTICLES ON WILDFLOWERS NEEDED

To a great extent, the success of this newsletter depends on you, the individual member. I would like to thank those who have taken the time to write articles for this newsletter. Any member wishing to contribute an article to the newsletter can do so by sending it in to the newsletter. Anything you think might interest fellow members is fair game. Articles on preservation/propagation are especially needed. Share your experiences!

EXACTLY WHAT IS THE LNPS?

The Louisiana Native Plant Society is a loosely knit group of native plant/wildflower societies from all over the state of Louisiana. The organization is set up such that one can be a member of a local chapter or society and not a member of the LNPS, or vice versa. Dues for the LNPS are \$5 per year, as is membership in most of the local societies. These dues are separate from your local society dues, and need only be paid if you wish to join, membership is not mandatory. Many who receive this newsletter do not yet belong to the LNPS, as each member of each local society will receive a copy of the Spring Newsletter whether they have joined or not. This is our way of introducing everyone to the LNPS. The LNPS is a new organization, and one with a bright future. If you would like to join, and we certainly hope that you do, send your dues directly to the LNPS Treasurer. Dues are not payable thru your local society. The Treasurer's address is:

Mrs. Elinor Herd
239 Pomeroy
Shreveport, Louisiana 71115