FALL 1987

volume 5, number 3

# The LOUISIANA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

## DON'T FORGET OUR TREASURER'S ADDRESS!

If you know someone who did not receive this newsletter, there's a good chance their 1987 dues are outstanding! So, if you have to renew your dues, or know someone that would like to join the LNPS, the place to send your $5 is:

Bill Gebelein
11128 Woodmere Drive
Shreveport, Louisiana 71115

## DEADLINES FOR NEXT 4 NEWSLETTERS:

Don't forget! In an effort to better coordinate the distribution of information concerning field trips as well as other dated information the newsletter is following the new deadline policy. The deadlines for the next four newsletters will be as follows:

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| Winter Newsletter: | December 1 |
| Spring Newsletter: | March 1 |
| Summer Newsletter: | June 1 |
| Fall Newsletter: | September 1 |

Every effort will be made to have the newsletters in the mail within 7 days following the deadline.

## IMPORTANT MEETING SET FOR OCTOBER 24 AT HODGES GARDENS

Hodges Gardens is planning a Louisiana garden planting to be planted exclusively with native plants. Hodges Gardens has requested help from the Louisiana Native Plant Society in the form of plant donations, wildflower expertise, and landscaping skills. A preliminary site at the gardens has been chosen, but can be changed, depending on the advice of LNPS members.

Amy Burgess and Richard Johnson of the Northwest Chapter, along with Hodges Gardens' Cathy Hill have set up a meeting at Hodges Gardens for LNPS members interested in helping with this project. The meeting will be held on

October 24, 1987. Interested members will meet at the gift shop, and the meeting will begin at 3:00 PM. I would like to urge as many members as possible to make the meeting. This is a great opportunity for the LNPS.

There will be a wildflower program prior to the meeting (10:00 AM to 1:00 PM) for those interested.

If you want to attend this meeting, or the program, more information may be obtained by calling the following:

Hodges Gardens: 1-318-586-3523 (for directions to Hodges Gardens)
Cathy Hill: 1-318-586-7891 (for more info on the meeting and/or program)

## ACADIANA CHAPTER PLANS 2 TRIPS

The Acadiana Chapter has two field trips scheduled and has invited all interested members to join them. The first trip will take place September 26 and will be to the gulf coast prairie area. The second triip will take place in early Novemeber and will be to the Lacaissine Arboretum. For more information call Diane Bullard at 1-318-662-5714.

## NEW SEED CHAIRMAN APPOINTED

Annette Parker Adams is our new seed exchange chairman. Her address appears later in this newsletter in an article on collecting seeds. Many thanks to John Larkin, our past seed chairman, for the tireless work he did in getting the Seed Exchange organized and the many packets of seed he mailed on request.

## LNPS's JOHN MAYRONNE WINS AWARD

Congratulations are in order for LNPS Board Member John Mayronne. At the Landscaping with Native Plants Conference held this July at Western Carolina University, John received the first annual American Native Plant Landscape Award for his work on a wetlands reclaimation project he did in Mandeville. Keep up the good work, John!

## SUMMER MEETING ENJOYED BY ALL!

Our summer meeting (June 6) at the Caroline Dorman Nature Preserve (Briarwood), sponsored by the Northwest Chapter, was a big success and was enjoyed by all. Unfortunately, our President and Vice-President were unable to attend. LNPS Secretary Beth Erwin ran the meeting which was otherwise wel attended. Tentative plans were made for future meetings.

Our winter meeting will be held January 23, 1988 at LSU-Alexandria. Bill Gebelein, our Treasurer, suggested that we try to get David Northington, Director of the National Wildflower Research Center, as a speaker and everyo was in favor. Other suggestions for speakers/topics for this meeting should be sent to Richard Johnson at Briarwood.

Robert Murray suggested we plan a field trip to the Ft. Polk area in May 1988, and everyone was in favor. No word on who will be coordinating the trip.

Richard Johnson suggested we try to hold our Summer, 1988 meeting in the vicinity of Copenhagen, Louisiana, and everyone was in favor.

## BETH ERWIN TO ANSWER YOUR QUESTIONS

Starting with the Fall Newsletter, LNPS Secretary Beth Erwin will have a column answering questions and sharing information with our readers concering wildflowers. Beth would especially like to hear from anyone that has developed propagation techniques for various species. Write Beth, and your question/answer or information will be in the next newsletter. Her address is:

Beth Erwin
520 Fairview
Bastrop, Louisiana 71220

## NLU PROFESSOR AMONG ELITE BOTANISTS' GROUP

(Ed. Note: The following article appeared in the local Bastrop newspaper and is reprinted with their permission.)

After 21 years of walking through fields and searching for rare plants, Dr. Dale Thomas, professor of biology and curator of the Herbarium at Northeast Louisiana University, has collected his 100,000th plant specimen, placing him among an elite group of botanists.

What was that 100,000th plant? Well, after hopes of finding a plant new to Louisiana to celebrate his achievement, what he found was the common dwarf snapdragon. However, the plant, which he found in Collinston, is uncommon in Morehouse Parish.

Dr. Thomas came to NLU in 1966 and set out to collect all the plants in Louisiana. While doing this, he and his graduate students have collected so many plants, mainly in Louisiana, Arkansas and Mississippi, that NLU can boast of having one of the largest herbaria in the nation and the third largest herbarium in the south.

"I average a day and a half a week and two to three weekends a month in the field searching for plants," said Dr. Thomas, "Everything I collect goes to the Herbarium. I have no personal collection, which is unusual for a plant taxonomist."

Modestly, Dr. Thomas adds that he is one of only five or six botanists in the history of botany in the United States to collect 100,000 specimens.

"It's really unusual," said Thomas, "I average about 5,000 plants, plus numerous duplicate specimens a year." Thomas is also in a unique category because his collecting comes in addition to his duties as a professor. The other botanists to achieve that goal did so by collecting on a full time basis.

Dr. Thomas, a native of Tennessee, came to Louisiana and NLU primarily to teach botany and to study and collect plants in the state. "When I came to NLU the Herbarium was virtually non-existent. We had three storage cases and very few plants," he said.

Now the walls on the second floor of Stubbs Hall (homer of the NLU Herbarium) are lined with 203 cases filled with more than 276,500 specimens.

The Herbarium, located at one end of the hall behind double doors, has neatly arranged cases and strongly smells of insecticide. "We use 600 pounds of moth crystals a year but we still lose several hundred specimens a year to insects, so it's important that we get them into insect proof cases as soon as possible," he said.

To collect these plants, Dr. Thomas said he and students have been to every nook and cranny in the state. "There's not a city, town, village or

I haven't been in or travelled on in Louisiana." He claims to put 15,000 miles a year on his car.

Just what are all these plants used for one may ask. Well, studies can be conducted to see how the kinds of plants change from year to year or decade to decade in Louisiana. "I have found that as a result of herbicide applications in the past 15 years the wildflower population on the roadsides has decreased by about 95%," said Dr. Thomas.

Dr. Thomas also swaps specimens with more than 175 other botanists nationally and internationally, thus enlarging and enriching the NLU collection. "Because of the swapping I do, most articles written in the field cite NLU because the writers studied one or more of our specimens," said Dr. Thomas.

Collecting these plants is a year round job, but the cold and heat do not deter Dr. Thomas. He uses the outings as therapy sessions and time to escape. "I have been fortunate to have been employed at a job that is enjoyable enough to also be my hobby," Thomas noted.

## HYACINTH VINE OFTEN CULTIVATED

by Jack Price

(Ed. Note: The following article appeared in the Shreveport Times and is reprinted with their permission.)

Hyacinth Vine ( Clematis crispa ) is one of our native flowers which responds well in cultivation. There are several varieties of this plant in our area, varying in color from white, blue-purple, pink, and even a crimson red. Each variety is almost identical in plant structure, the difference being in the design and color of the flowers. Our most abundant variety is known by many different common names, Blue Jasmine, Leather Flower, and Curl Flower.

The first sign of life begins in mid-March. A thin, green vine appears. The vine or stem grows to a length of 6 to 8 feet. In time the main stem of the vine takes on a brown, bark-like appearance. Joints form on the vine every few inches. Additional stems form on the vine every 3 to 5 inches, these stems produce the leaves and flowers. Leaves are usually opposite, compound, some are heart-shaped and some lanceolate. Left stems act as tendrils winding around anything within reach for support.

The single flower develops from the junction of the leaf stems. Flowers appear at first to be small teardrop-shaped green buds. The flowers of the Hyacinth Flower do not have petals, they have sepals. The four thick sepals are up to two inches long, blue-purple in color, spotted with a light gray on the outside. Tips of the sepals curl back to reveal the flower.

The golden-yellow stamens and pistils are located in the center. Bees are attracted to these plants and pollination takes place. Flowers last for several days. One vine will produce many flowers from early March until October.

The root system is composed of a small rhizome about 3/4 of an inch in length. Many root extend out and down from the rhizome, often ten to twelve inches in length. Small eyes are present on the rhizome. Sometimes the rhizome splits to form additional plants. Seed collection is a good way to start Clematis in your garden. They can also be transplanted very successfully. Plant in a moist, well-drained, sunny area of your wildflower garden.

## SEED REMINDER

It is once again time to start collecting seed for the coming year's seed exchange program. There's no time like now to get started. Last year's exchange was a big success, and with more cooperation, this year will be even better. Pay attention to where various wildflowers are blooming, and keep notes as to where they are. If you can somehow mark the spot, or tag the plant with a weather-resistant tag, so much the better. Even in a big city there are many opportunities to collect seed. Some of your neighbors may have trees, shrubs, etc. growing in their yards, and be willing to share some with you.

When to go out and collect the seed depends on both the species involved, and the weather that particular year. As a general rule, annuals will mature their seeds faster than perenials. If the plant is an annual, you can take the whole plant. If it is a perennial, cut off the portion of the plant with the seeds, being careful not to disturb the rest of the plant. In any case, never take all the seeds of a particular species from a given area. Always see to it that enough is left to continue the species in that spot.

Put the seeds in paper bags , label carefully as to the date collected, species (or a good description of the plant), your name for future reference, and where it was collected. When you get home, store the seeds in a cool, dry place. It is generally not necessary to refrigerate them, and in no case store them in a sealed container or plastic bag, as they will mold. Clean the seeds as much as possible. A regular sieve from the kitchen is very good for this.

Finally, send the seeds you collect to our new Seed Exchange Chairman at the address below. Do not send them in an envelope, the post office will crush the vast majority of them if you do - use a small box!

Annette Parker Adams
Rt. 1, Box 348
Anacoco, Louisiana 71403

## WOODLANDERS PRICE LIST READY THIS MONTH

Frequently I am asked where nursery-grown native plants can be obtained. There are a few nurseries that specialize in native plants, Woodlanders has many plants adapted to our area of the south and is one that will mail plants to you. I have found their plants to be of good quality, and they are all nursery-grown. If you would like a price list, send 39 cents postage to:

Woodlanders
1128 Colleton Avenue
Aiken, South Carolina 29801

Note: the editor would like to hear from others who have ordered from various nurseries so information on them can be brought to the attention of the membership.

## NEW ENGLAND WILDFLOWER SOCIETY SEED LIST AVAILABLE

Anyone desiring the 1988 Seed List of the New England Wildflower Society may obtain one by sending a self-addressed, 39 cent stamped envelope (#10,

business size) to:

Seed
New England Wildflower Society/Garden in the Woods
Hemenway Road
Framingham, MA 01701

## LANDSCAPING WITH NATIVE PLANTS CONFERENCE

by Beth Erwin

The annual conference on Landscaping with Native Plants is something we all should attend at least once. It holds something for anyone with any interest at all in plants, native or otherwise. Those newly bitten by the native plant bug can gain as much as the large scale nurseryman and the academic. Two things became very clear to me at this conference.

The first point concerns selection, breeding, and cultivation. We cannot go about haphazardly urging the use of natives. To win the general public over to native species of woody and herbaceous ornamentals we must first select the most tolerant, showy, and vigorous individuals within a species. Currently, in West Germany, one can find a wide variety of our goldenrod species, from dwarf ground covers to back-of-the-border giants. This is the culmination of years of breeding work done on one of our native genera. Much work has been done on our Joe-pye Weed, Eupatorium fistulosum - also in Europe. The English are now enthralled with our lowly Pokeberry, Phytolacca americana .

We as native plant society members, with our eyes constantly tuned to plants around us, should be the first to spot that individual within a species that blooms a little longer than its neighbors, is slightly different in color, or has larger and more plentiful blooms or foliage. One of the most exciting plants I saw presented was a form of the Sweetgum, Liquidamber styraciflua . The plant was discovered in North Carolina and was pictured in a slide presentation by J.C. Raulston, professor at N.C. State. Rather than the traditional points on the leaves, the tips were rounded, giving it a rather oak-like appearance. The best part is the absence of gumballs, the chief complaint about the common variety. The cultivar is aptly named "rotundifolia" and has been released to a few commercial nurseries.

The second point made clear was the overwhelming need for documentation. From roadside wildflower projects to propagation techniques, we need to take pictures, keep notes, and above all, pass that information along. Perhaps within our own newsletter we could begin a column on propagation techniques, our successes and failures. Who knows? We may one day have enough information for a book, or at least to initiate some research projects within our own state.

I look forward to attending this conference in the future and sharing more of the information I've gained from this one.

## THE NATIVE MAGNOLIAS OF LOUISIANA

by Charles M. Allen and R. Dale Thomas

Magnolias are trees or shrubs with simple and entire leaves (Big Leaf and Pyramid Magnolia have lobes near the base of the leaf). All Magnolias have a stipular ring scar around the stem at the base of the leaf. There are five

native members of the genus Magnolia in Louisiana. The most widespread and famous is Magnolia grandiflora or Southern Magnolia. Sweet Bay ( M. virginiana ) is as common if not more common than the Southern Magnolia but is not as famous or as well-known. The other three species ( M. acuminata or Cucumber Tree, M. macrophylla or Big Leaf Magnolia, and M. pyramidata or Pyramid Magnolia) are not as common nor famous as the first two. When lumber is cut from any of the five Magnolias, it is usually marked as Yellow Poplar ( Liriodendron tulipifera ) lumber. All five species of Magnolia can be propagated from stratified seeds.

Southern Magnolia( M. grandiflora ) is also known as Bull-bay, Great Laurel Magnolia, and Loblolly Magnolia. It is the state flower of Louisiana and the state flower and tree of Mississippi. Southern Magnolia is an evergreen tree with tough, leathery, aromatic leaves. The leaves are elliptic to oval with entire but wavy margins. The upper surface is waxy and shiny while the lower surface is covered with brown hairs. The flowers are white, aromatic, and 10 to 20 centimeters in diameter. The flowers are usually produced from April to August. The fruits are ovoid, 7 to 10 centimeters long and 4 to 6 centimeters in diameter with scarlet seeds. Southern Magnolia is found throughout the state except for very wet and very dry habitats. One of the most common habitats is along the edges of streams in association with American Beech ( Fagus grandifolia ). The Beech-Magnolia forest type is common in the gorges of the western part of West Feliciana Parish. Southern Magnolia wood has been used for fuel, baskets, crates, woodenware, furniture, shades, veneer, cabinets, and decorative trim. The bark has been used as a stimulant, tonic, and diaphoretic.

Sweet Bay ( M. virginiana ) is also known as White Bay, Swamp Bay, Virginia Bay, White Laurel, Swamp Magnolia, Swamp Sassafras, Indian Bark, and Beaver Tree. It is a small tree or shrub that is evergreen or tardily deciduous. The leaves are thin, aromatic, oblong to elliptic, and pale green above but distinctly white below. The flowers are white, very aromatic, 5 to 7 centimeters in diameter, and produced from April to August. The fruits are ellipsoid, 4 to 5 centimeters long, 2 to 3 centimeters in diameter with scarlet seeds. The wood has been used for broom handles and other woodenware. The leaves are used as a seasoning in particular for meats. The bark has been used to treat malaria and rheumatism. Sweet Bay is usually found in poorly drained soils in particular in bogs and baygalls. It is found mostly in the pine forest regions of the state.

Cucumber Tree ( M. acuminata ) is also known as Mountain Magnolia, Bitter Tree, Yellow Linn, and Black Linn. It is a large deciduous tree. The leaves are thin, medium green above and below, obovate to ovate and to 30 centimeters long. The flowers are greenish yellow, 8 to 15 centimeters in diameter and produced April to June. The fruits are green, cucumber shaped, 3 to 7 centimeters long and 1 to 2 centimeters in diameter. The wood has been used for cabinets, flooring, interior finish, pump-logs and troughs, venetian blinds, boxes, crates, sidings, and general millwork. The fruits have been used to prevent intermittent fever and infused in whiskey to give it a pleasant bitter. Cucumber trees are uncommon and found on better drained soils of southeast, central, and north central Louisiana. It does not extend into Texas.

Big Leaf Magnolia ( M. macrophylla ) is also known as Cowcumber Tree, Large-Leaved Magnolia, Large-Leaved Umbrella Tree, Big-bloom Cucumber Tree, Silver Leaf, and Elk Bark. It is a medium tree with deciduous leaves. The leaves are large, thin, medium green above, lower whitish silver, obovate to oblong and may be as long as 100 centimeters. There are two ear-like lobes at the base of the leaves. The flowers are white, fragrant, 20 to 40 centimeters in diameter and produced April to May. The fruits are subglobose and 6 to 12

centimeters in diameter. The wood has been used for flooring, cabinet works, and pump-logs. Big Leaf Magnolia is infrequent but obvious in the state. It is found in southeast and central Louisiana on well drained soils.

Pyramid Magnolia ( M. pyramidata ) is also known as Southern Cucumber Tre and Mountain Magnolia. It is a slender tree with deciduous leaves. The leaves are thin, oblong to spatulate, with the upper surface dark green and the lower surface paler green. There are two spreading lobes at the base of the leaves. Flowers are white, 10 to 20 centimeters in diameter, and produce April to May. The fruits are ellipsoid, 4 to 6 centimeters long and 2 to 3 centimeters in diameter. This is the rarest of the Magnolias in the state an is known only from well drained soils along streams in the southeast and west central parts of the state.

## KARLENE DEFATTTA WRITES ABOUT SUMMER '87 MEETING

The LNPS summer meting was held at Briarwood June 5th through 7th. Richard and Jessie Johnson warmly welcomed club members and guests Saturday morning, then guided wildflower lovers along the trails. A number of rare plants were pointed out, including Pinkneya which was very showy beside the big pond. This plant was almost wiped out during the Civil War to supply the Confederate troops with quinine - no longer obtainable because of the naval blockade. Also seen were huge Mountain Laurels, wild azaleas, Star Anise, Stewartia, Hawthornes, and Viburnums - some almost 40 years old.

The Bay Garden was very interesting with all the Louisiana Iris cultivars, pitcher plants, and orchids. A Grass-Pink Orchid was in bloom and was admired by all. Pipeworts were also in bloom.

After picnicing at noon, an outdoor meeting was held. Members agreed that we need more field trips.

After lunch, Richard and Jessie guided members and guests on a tour of 6 or 7 areas to see special wildflowers - including Penstemon murryanus and Shrub Polygonella. One area I particularly enjoyed was a fantasitic bog with blooming insect-eating plants, Grass-Pink Orchids, and Pipeworts. One stop was the very old salt mine area located on the Sabine River. This salt mine was used to supply the Confederate troops with salt during the Civil War, and a salt water well there was the first to use the drilling methods that were later used to drill the first oil well - Drake's Folley. An ancient Indian midden still stands in the middle of the field where the salt was dried, and remnants of the platforms for drying the salt can still be seen. Salt water still flows from the well, and the water was very salty! Every stop had its own treasures to see and enjoy.

On returning to Briarwood, members ate their evening meal, then a slide show was held in the center at Briarwood, narrated by Richard Johnson who knew Caroline Dorman since he was a boy.

Sunday members met Jim Robbins at his place on Cypress Lake (Cypress Lake Park) in Bossier Parish. A natural spring created a series of bogs, and Jim has landscaped the bog with native Louisiana ferns. The entire place is landscaped with native trees and shrubs. Although none were blooming, we saw an area where Shooting Stars, Celestial Lilies and Wild Hyacinths grew in abundance - all very rare plants in Louisiana. A few seed heads were still in evidence on the Shooting Stars. Jim says he has the area mowed every summer to keep the area in grass and free of competing shrubs. Flowers in bloom were the yellow Sensitive Plant, Swamp Milkweed, a very tine rose-lilac Sisyrinchium (it blooms long after the Blue-Eyed Grass has finished blooming).

Many thanks are due to Richard and Jessie as well as Jim for the fine time had by all!