



WINTER 1987

volume 5, number 4

The LOUISIANA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

DON'T FORGET YOUR DUES ARE DUE!

The 1988 LNPS dues are due! So, if you haven't renewed your dues, or know someone who hasn't, 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:

| | |
|--------------------|-------------------|
| Spring Newsletter: | March 1, 1988 |
| Summer Newsletter: | June 1, 1988 |
| Fall Newsletter: | September 1, 1988 |
| Winter Newsletter: | December 1, 1988 |

Every effort will be made to have the newsletters in the mail within 7 days following the deadline. Your editor's address is:

David Heikamp
717 Giuffrias
Metairie, La. 70001

SEND YOUR SEEDS TO ANNETTE ADAMS

Annette Parker Adams is our new seed exchange chairman. Her address appears later in this newsletter in an article (on collecting seeds) that's been repeated from our last newsletter. Be sure to mail your seeds in!

SEND YOUR QUESTIONS TO BETH ERWIN

LNPS Secretary Beth Erwin would like to hear from anyone that has questions or 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

GROWING WILDFLOWERS

by Beth Erwin

Well, it's that time of year again, folks. Hopefully, you've already planted your wildflower seeds. December is a little late, but you can still plant. Try to get perennials in the ground by Christmas. The Tuesday before Thanksgiving we planted an acre split into three areas here in Bastrop, La. I was glad we didn't plant any earlier, the seeds would have washed down the Ouachita River in the BIG RAIN!

We chose seven species, all native to Morehouse Parish, and mixed them ourselves. The city provided labor and equipment. The gentleman in charge of our streets invented a shallow harrow especially for the wildflower plots. It is pulled behind a tractor. All of our city workers are enthusiastic about the project and our mayor came along to help. I'll let you know how well it worked next spring - we took lots of pictures.

Terry and I have been having fun with the book Growing and Propagating Wildflowers by Harry R. Phillips. We had collected some Iris cristata seeds in Minden, and the book recommended planting the seeds upon collection rather than storing and chilling them. We went with the book's recommendation, and within a few weeks, nearly all had sprouted. There's nothing more rewarding than achieving good results with seeds! We should have iris plants for the winter plant sale.

It isn't too late to order plants by mail. I'll include some sources and comments at the end of this article.

Now, to the question I've received since the last newsletter: what is merkle (or merkel, or markle)? It is a bush or small tree that occurs in the swampy habitats of Jackson Parish near Jonesboro. The bark is whitish with black markings.

As for sources of native plants, the list at the end of this article is of sources I would not hesitate to recommend. Please don't overlook your local nursery, especially if it is run by a LNPS member, as a number are. The best plant for your yard is a locally, container-grown plant - not collected from the wild. Strive for those plants grown in a climate most like your own. Believe me, you will be much more successful. Encourage your local nurserymen to handle native plants, and encourage your friends to buy them.

Tom Dodd Wholesale Nurseries offers many natives in their 1987-1988 catalog, all seed-grown or nursery propagated. They include Fever Tree (Pinckneya pubens), Yellow-wood, Gordonia, numerous native hollies, magnolias, and rhododendrons. Encourage your nurseryman to inquire.

Bill Dodd's Rare Plants carries a wide variety of ericaceous plants. His quality is good, and so are his prices.

Of course, for sheer variety and quality, you can't top Woodlander's. Everyone should have a copy of their descriptive catalog, just so they can translate Bill Dodd's price list!

Two sources whose representatives we encountered in North Carolina this summer bear mentioning. Passiflora Wildflower Company is, as far as I can ascertain, the only east coast source for wildflower seed that grows what it sells. It is owned and operated by a very knowledgeable and hard-working

young lady who has her Ph D. in botany. Because her seed are mostly home-grown, she offers a number of species not too often seen either in packets or by the pound. She has both red and blue lobelias, foxglove, columbine, foam flower, and blue-eyed grass.

Native Gardens of Tennessee offers plants and some seeds, all 100% nursery propagated. These include alumroot (Heuchera americana), Fire Pink, lobelias, wild blue indigo, pentstemons, and others.

A word of caution about the Tennessee and North Carolina plants. I brought back one potted specimen each of Great Blue Lobelia and Cardinal Flower this past July. Both suffered in the heat and humidity and I think I lost the Great Blue Lobelia to spider mites. Some locally rescued blue lobelia wasn't touched by the spider mites, and neither was the Cardinal Flower planted just two feet away. I'm hoping that by planting in the winter, the plants I've ordered will acclimate themselves. I haven't had any trouble with plants from Woodlander's shipped and planted in the winter months.

As a final note, if you have any propagation questions, or would like to share personal experiences or techniques in wildflower propagation, please send them to me, and I'll get them in the next newsletter. Now, for those addresses I promised:

Woodlander's
1128 Colleton Ave.
Aiken, S.C., 29801

(send a long, SASE [37 cents] for price list or
\$1.50 for their descriptive catalog)

Bill Dodd's Rare Plants
P.O. Drawer 377
Semmes, Ala. 36575

(long, SASE for price list)

Passiflora Wildflower Co.
Rt. 1, Box 190-A
Germantown, N.C., 27019
Ph. 1-919-591-5816

(long, SASE for price list, \$1.00 for color
catalog, 8 pp., including a list of books for
sale)

Native Gardens
Rt. 1, Box 494
Greenback, Tn., 37742

(long, SASE for price list)

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 perennials. 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

PLANT CONSERVATION

Our President, Diane Bullard, and LNPS member Nelwyn Gilmore both sent in a brochure published by the Natural Resources Defense Council. The brochure addresses conservation and recommends that homeowners obtain plants by purchasing them from nurseries that propagate the plants they sell. Plants collected in the wild have a very poor chance of survival, and the pressure on wild populations from collecting is enormous. Another source of pressure on wild populations is the popularity of commercial mixes of wildflower seeds that frequently contain species not native to the local area. These may eventually become severe pests. For a listing of nurseries that propagate the native plants they sell, you can contact the National Wildflower Research Center at the following address (a long, SASE would be a good idea):

National Wildflower Research Center
2600 FM 973 North
Austin, Texas 78725

LOUISIANA PROJECT WILDFLOWER UPDATE

LPW's first quarterly newsletter came out this fall. LPW is an incorporated, nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving our native wildflowers and developing a dynamic highway wildflower planting program.

Their focus will be to act as a communications network for highway personnel and individuals alike. Proposed projects include the establishment of a wildflower trace, the promotion of seed farming, preparation of a manual for the DOTD and others who maintain Louisiana highways, documentation of statewide projects, and minimization of mass herbicide use. Anyone interested in joining should send in their \$5 per year dues to:

Louisiana Project Wildflower
Lafayette Natural History Museum
637 Girard Park Drive
Lafayette, La. 70503

WILD PETUNIA SHEDS FLOWERS BY NOONTIME

by Jack Price

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

There are around 200 members of the *Ruellia* family worldwide. We have about six varieties in our area. *Ruellias* (often called Wild Petunias) are perennials and will do well in almost any garden. They prefer dry to semi-dry soil and plenty of sun.

One species, *Ruellia Caroliniensis*, is found in open fields and along roadsides. This twelve- to fourteen-inch plant is very noticeable in the early morning when it is in full bloom; the flowers shed by midday. The entire plant is covered by rough hairs, but it does not sting or stick. Leaves are approximately four inches long, two inches wide, ovate to elliptic in shape, and dark green with heavy veins. Leaves are about two inches apart on the stems and branches. Main stems branch, giving the small plant a bushy appearance.

Flowers are blue-lavender in color and open at first light, shedding before noon. Blooms form at leaf junctions, several on a plant at once. The flowers are trumpet-shaped, and about one and a half inches long, flare at the open end, and are about two inches across with five deep lobes evenly spaced around the edges.

Root systems are several inches below the soil surface, roots (five or six) are spread out four to five inches. A few new roots are added each year as the old roots wither away. A single root system will develop three to five stems each year which wither in early fall. New growth starts to develop just under the soil level in the fall. This growth takes shape during the winter months. New shoots emerge from the growth in early spring to start the blooming cycle by April and on into July.

Ruellia Noctiflora is another species found in our area. Not too abundant, it has white flowers. This *Ruellia* opens late in the evening and the flowers shed before noon the next day. Foliage is slightly hairy to almost smooth. Leaves are light green, opposite on the stem, lanceolate in shape with wavy edges.

The root systems of the two species are similar. Flowering time for the White *Ruellia* is July to September; the white flowers are about the same size and shape as their blue cousins. You will often find a couple of white plants growing next to blue *Ruellias*.

You can transplant *Ruellias* with ease. Simply remove a soil ball about ten inches across and three to four inches deep. Place the ball in a box so as not to disturb the soil too much, place the box in a plastic sack. Remove the soil ball from the sack and the box and plant in a sunny area in your garden. Be sure to water the plants immediately after planting. Keep your plant shaded from wind and direct sun for several days. A thick colony of plants will be established after a few seasons from reseeding.

NEW BOOK ON SOUTHERN LANDSCAPE DESIGN AVAILABLE

Identification Selection and Use of Southern Plants for Landscape Design, a book by Neil Odenwald and James Turner is now available from Claitor's Publishing in Baton Rouge. The book costs \$39.95 plus \$2 delivery and insurance. Claitor's address is:

Claitor's Publishing Division
3165 S. Acadian at I-10
P.O. Box 3333
Baton Rouge, La. 70821

BOOK ON EUPATORIEAE NOW AVAILABLE

Now available from the Missouri Botanical Garden is "The Genera of

Eupatorieae (Asteraceae)" by R.M King & H. Robinson. It has been published as "Monographs in Systematic Botany" from the Missouri Botanical Garden, volume 22, 580 pages, 8 1/2 by 11 inches, color frontispiece, handbound. October 1987." If you would like a copy, send \$70 plus \$1.50 postage and handling to:

Department Eleven
Missouri Botanical Garden
P.O. Box 299
St. Louis, Missouri, 63166-0299

IS ANYONE GROWING CRABAPPLE IN NEW ORLEANS?

Are any of our New Orleans area members growing Crabapple on their property? According to "Gardening in New Orleans", a 1952 publication of the New Orleans Garden Society, neither Crabapple nor Wild Cherry will grow in the New Orleans area, even though Crabapple is common in St. Tammany Parish. Your editor has spotted one Wild Cherry (appears to be Prunus serotina) over 35 feet tall in a back yard on Jonquil Street in New Orleans (Gentilly). If anyone has seen a Crabapple growing in New Orleans, send a note to your editor so it can be mentioned in the newsletter!

KARLENE DEFATTA REPORTS ON MEETING AT HODGES GARDENS

The Northwest Chapter of the LNPS attended a wildflower seminar at Hodges Gardens near Many, Louisiana, on October 24, 1987. Kathy Hall, Horticulturist at Hodges, welcomed the group of more than 60 people to the lovely old Hodges home on the island. This was the first time a meeting has been held in the home in over twenty years.

Amy Burgess, President of the Northwest Chapter, gave an interesting and informative talk on how to create a wildflower garden. Karlene Defatta showed slides taken of her wildflowers, trees, and shrubs.

After a lunch break, Richard and Jesse Johnson presented a very interesting talk and slide show on Louisiana irises being grown at Briarwood.

When the seminar was over, members of the Northwest Chapter met the other members of the LNPS in attendance at the Hodges Gardens gift shop. Kathy led the way to an area where the LNPS is to create a wildflower garden. Several paved trails wind up, down, and around the area. Some plus features, besides the paved trails, are a small pond, many Silverbells, Wild Azaleas, Hawthornes, Dogwoods, etc. There is also a sprinkler system, and Hodges Gardens employees will care for the planting.

Members agreed that the first thing to do is to tag the plants already growing on the site. Surplus plants on the site may be potted and sold in order to generate funds to buy plants needed to landscape the area. More information on this project will be forthcoming from our society President, Diane Bullard.

THE NATIVE MAGNOLIA RELATIVES OF LOUISIANA

by Charles M. Allen and R. Dale Thomas

The Magnolia family in Louisiana includes five species of Magnolia as well as tulip tree, star vine, and stink bush.

Tulip tree (Liriodendron tulipifera) is also known as yellow poplar, white poplar, hickory poplar, white wood, yellow wood, saddleleaf, saddletree, canoewood, cucumber tree, and lynn tree. It is the state tree of Indiana,

Kentucky, and Tennessee. Tulip tree is the fastest growing and tallest (to 200 feet) hardwood tree in North America. The leaves are deciduous, alternate, simple, and aromatic, with a broad, truncate and usually notched apex with two large lateral lobes below. The twigs have stipular ring scars and duck-billed shaped buds (buds are sometimes said to be shaped like a drum major's hat). The flowers are yellowish-green with an orange spot at the base, 3 to 4 inches across, and are produced March to April. The fruit is a cone-like aggregate of samaras. The bark (mostly of the roots) has been used as a tonic, heart stimulant, as well as for chronic rheumatism and dyspepsia. It was once believed to have antimalarial virtues.

The wood is light (26 pounds per cubic foot), soft, moderately brittle and easily worked. It has been used for veneer, boxes, crates, plywood, pulp, millwork, musical instruments, shingles, boats, fuel, and is usually marketed along with magnolia wood as yellow poplar. It is easily stained and milled to look like any other desired pattern and so is widely used in the furniture industry. Indians made dugout canoes from it. Tulip tree is widely distributed in the state on better drained soils, usually in the same habitat as beech and southern magnolia. It reaches up to seven feet in diameter in the Smokies. This native is our most beautiful tree for yard plantings for its leaf shape, its flower, and its ability to grow and be well-shaped in most any soil. Its yellow leaves in the fall are showy also.

Star vine (Schisandra glabra or coccinea by some) is also known as Wild Sarsaparilla and Bay Star Vine. It is a vine with whitish bark that climbs by twining. The leaves are deciduous, alternate, simple, elliptic, entire, and 2 to 6 inches long by 1 to 2 inches wide. They are quite succulent and aromatic. The plants are monoecious, but both the male and female flowers are red. The flowers are about 1/2 inch in diameter and produced May to June. The fruits are red berries. Star Vine is infrequent or rare in the state and found only in well-drained upland areas in East Feliciana, St. Helena, West Feliciana, Evangeline, Rapides, and Natchitoches parishes.

Stink Bush (Illicium floridanum) is also known as star anise, purple anise, and Florida anise tree. It is a shrub to 20 feet tall and usually grows in dense clumps or patches. The leaves are evergreen, alternate, simple, entire, elliptic, and 3 to 8 inches long by 1 to 3 inches wide. The leaves are usually clumped at the ends of the branches. When crushed, the leaves have a strong (some say stinking) odor. The flowers are drooping, dark red, 1 to 2 inches in diameter and produced February to April. The fruits are star-shaped with about 10 points. The seeds are pale tan and very slick. Stink Bush is restricted to the Florida parishes and is found along the floodplains of streams. It could be cultivated along floodplains in sandy soil in other parts of the state. Illicium anisatum is introduced and cultivated in some areas of the state. Illicium verum is found in the Orient and produces anise-smelling fruit that is used as a spice. Sometimes these last two are placed in the Illiciaceae and Schisandraceae respectively.

GLIMPSE OF THE PRAIRIE

by Celia and Jim Bollich

(Memories of the Acadiana Native Plant Society's trip between Esterwood and Jennings on September 26th.)

What is a prairie? We thought we knew that definition: monotonous expanses of grass, sod.

Maybe that's why we hesitated and found excuses why we couldn't take the

trip led by Dr. Charles Allen and Dr. Malcolm Vidrine of LSU-Eunice to see remnants of the original prairie. Fortunately we changed our minds.

Drs. Allen and Vidrine have been following the ten prairie strips (5 miles long) since February, 1987, making trips every two weeks. Dr. Vidrine took photographs of the flowers. They plan to write a book with color photographs of the changing faces of the prairie, with a list of the plants and when each flowers.

The prairie, if you are fortunate enough to see the original, is awe-inspiringly beautiful. Wildflowers of infinite variety of form and color grow in clumps brightening the sky or hiding low in the grass. Butterflies so plentiful they were 'common' like the rich orange Gulf Fritillary and the yellow Cloudless Sulphurs were tumbling through the air along with the more sedate swooping varieties of dragon flies.

All of this was amazing because we'd traveled miles of roads bordered by noxious weeds and worse, grass and bushes browned and sered by overly liberal doses of herbicides. According to a quote from Dr. Dale Thomas in the last issue of the LNPS Newsletter this destruction is enormous, "I have found that as a result of herbicide application in the past 15 years the wildflower population along the roadsides has decreased by about 95%."

In the prairie, fall was not yellow as elsewhere where the only surviving flowers are sunflowers and goldenrods. This was a landscape of purple spired Blazing-star (Liatris squarrosa and L. pynostachya), pink Meadow Beauty (Rhexia mariana), the fragile-appearing Sweet Goldenrod (Solidago odora), which when crushed emits the pleasant fragrance of licorice, the more robust Common Goldenrod (Solidago canadensis), pink and white flowered Foxglove (Agalinis fasciculata and A. oligophylla), the last showy yellow sunflowers (Helianthus mollis) and the white waxy flowered Eryngium (Eryngium yuccifolium).

Hidden in the grass were velvety white Bluets (Houstonia nigricans), lavender Wild Petunia (Ruellia humilis), and Pencil Flower (Stylosanthes biflora).

We thought that the area could not be more beautiful, but knew that it had been even more glorious a few weeks before, because we were surrounded with tall stalks heavy with seed. And we knew that there were more pleasures to come, because asters and goldenrod were in tight bud.

Equally as amazing as the wildflowers were the large varieties of grasses. Large clumps of the towering (ten feet) finger-like seed heads of Giant Bluestem (Andropogon gerardii), the more modest tufted Little Bluestem (Schizachyrium scoparium), Switch grass (Panicum virgatum), and Slender Bluestem (Schizachyrium tenerum).

This small stretch of railroad right-of-way, which is all the surviving prairie, is squeezed by the railroad on one side and the road on the other - a bare 30 feet in width, is badly fragmented by soybean fields, plowed land, areas so disturbed that briars with their thorns have replaced flowers, areas rutted by heavy trucks, piles of trash and other evidences of man's carelessness and disregard for nature.

It saddens one to see tiny patches left of what was once miles of over head-high grass and a glory of wildflowers. The good news is that the Louisiana Conservancy is negotiating to lease this area. It gives us hope that this glimpse of unspoiled land will be saved.

NLU HERBARIUM WRITTEN UP IN SOUTHERN LIVING MAGAZINE

The November issue of Southern Living magazine has a nice piece on the herbarium at NLU entitled "School Books on the Bayou". Don't miss it!