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NEWSLETTER

WINTER 1988

volume 6, number 4

WINTER '88 MEETING INFO

Information for the winter '88 meeting was not in at the time this newsletter went to press. If anyone out there knows who is coordinating the winter '88 meeting, please let me know immediatley so I can send them a set of mailing labels for their use (see the editor's address below).

SUMMER '89 MEETING REMINDER!

The summer meeting is set for June 3, 1989 in Morehouse Parish. We will meet at the Chemin-a-haut (she-minnow-hawt) State Park front gate at 8:30 AM. This is approximately 10 miles north of Bastrop off of La. 139 on the Hamburg Road.

Chemin-a-haut facilities are as follows:

Cabins with central air/heat, 2 double beds, kitchen appliances and dishes, maximum 6 people per cabin. Old cabins are \$35 per night, new (have ceiling fans and carpet) are \$40 per night. Reservations are taken beginning January 2, by telephone only (phone 1-318-281-5805). The first night's rent is due in full within 10 days of the call. VISA and Master Card are accepted, and they fill up fast.

Camping sites, which include water and power, are \$9 per night, \$7 for senior citizens - first come, first serve. It is a beautiful campground.

Other options:

The Bastrop Inn	Comfort Inn
US 165 East	US 165 East
phone 1-318-281-3621	phone 1-318-281-8100

Bastrop is about 25 miles north of Monroe via US 165 or La. 139, and is about the same distance from Rayville. I'll have a map for the spring newsletter, which comes out in early to mid March.

DON'T FORGET YOUR DUES!

The dues of a few members are long overdue for 1988. If you know someone who does not receive a copy of this newsletter, their dues are probably overdue. The place to send your \$5 annual dues is:

Elinor Herd
239 Pomeroy
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 uses the following deadline policy. Any information received after the deadline will be included in the next newsletter. Deadlines for the next four newsletters are as follows:

Spring Newsletter:	March 1, 1989
Summer Newsletter:	June 1, 1989
Fall Newsletter:	September 1, 1989
Winter Newsletter:	December 1, 1989

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

ADDRESS CORRECTION:

John Mayronne's address was incorrectly listed in the Fall '88 supplemental newsletter as P.O. 23551 and zip code 70434. It should have read:

John Mayronne
P.O. Box 2355
Covington, Louisiana
70433

A NOTE OF THANKS:

John Mayronne and the LNPS would like to extend a special thank you to members Latimore Smith and Nelwyn Gilmore of Louisiana's Natural Heritage Program for their assistance in developing the list of plants for the Hodges Garden Project. Good work!

THE PAWPAWS OF LOUISIANA

by Charles M. Allen and R. Dale Thomas

Pawpaws are in the genus Asimina, which is the northernmost New World representatives of Annonaceae, the family of woody plants containing the tropical fruits Annona, Custard-apple, Sugar-apple, and Soursop (Little: The Audubon Society Field Guide to North American Trees, Eastern Region). There are two species of Asimina in Louisiana: Asimina parviflora (Dwarf Pawpaw)

and Asimina triloba (Common Pawpaw). Pawpaws are also called Fetid Shrub, banana, false banana, wild banana, and jasminier. Both species are shrubs with alternate, simple, deciduous leaves that somewhat resemble those of deciduous magnolias. The crushed leaves have a peculiar odor that has been described as smelling like "bell pepper" or an "oil well". The flowers of both species are solitary, purplish, and produced before the leaves. Voss (Michigan Flora) says that, as might be surmised by their dark color and strong odor, pawpaw flowers are mostly pollinated by flies. Most flowers probably are not pollinated since few of the pistils develop into fruits during most seasons. The flowers are produced in March and April and the fruits mature by mid-August to early September.

Dwarf pawpaw is smaller than common pawpaw and is usually only one to four feet tall. The leaves are smaller and the brown fuzzy hairs remain on the leaves, buds, and stems longer than on the common pawpaw. The seeds of common pawpaw are flat and those of dwarf pawpaw are plump and rounded. The fruits of Louisiana specimens of dwarf pawpaw tend to be quite dry to woody when mature, and although they are quite tasty, they are definitely not "delicious". The dwarf pawpaws are restricted to sandy upland pine woods. Most populations of common pawpaw seem to have been formed in part by root sprouts. It usually grows along streams and in beech-magnolia woods, although it can be found with bald cypress in the delta parishes. The plants may reach a height of thirty feet and a diameter of eight inches. Fruiting is sporadic and seldom heavy.

Much diversity of opinion exists as to the edibility of the mature fruits. Voss states that the fruit is considered by many to be not merely edible, but choice. Peterson (A Field Guide to Edible Wild Plants) says that the creamy-textured, sweet, yellow pulp is delicious raw or cooked. Medsger (Edible Wild Plants) quotes a poem written by James Whitcomb Riley, who relished the fruit. Medsger commented that boys do not like the fruit, but that it is a taste that one develops after several tries. Elias (The Complete Trees of North America) says the fruits are delicious to eat, provided one can get them before the animals do. Angier (Field Guide to Edible Wild Plants) remarked that the fruit resembles stubby bananas and has an egg-custard pulp that is almost as sweet as it smells. He agreed that it is an acquired taste, but that those who like it think it is the best-tasting of all wild foods. Part of the problem has to do with the great variety of flavor from plant to plant. Harrar and Harrar (Guide to Southern Trees) say there are trees that have inedible white pulp when mature and that the edible ones have yellow pulp. The fruits usually drop to the ground when hard, green, and acrid. Correll and Johnston (Manual of the Vascular Flora of Texas) says that the acrid fruits become edible when slightly frozen or when kept until they ripen. Medsger suggested that the fruits be picked while hanging on the tree and be stored in the haymow or bran bin to mellow. The fruits ripen in about a week if left in a dark drawer, but they tend to fill the house with a strong permeating odor. Strausbaugh and Core (Flora of West Virginia) report seeing the fruits for sale in Wheeling and other parts of the state. Krochmal and Krochmal (A Naturalist's Guide to Cooking with Plants) give recipes for pawpaw ice cream, pawpaw snow, pawpaw pie, pawpaw chutney, and pawpaw freeze. The fruits have been credited with helping DeSoto's explorers survive during their 1541 expedition in the lower Mississippi Valley and with helping the Lewis and Clark Expedition survive a rationed diet of one biscuit per day when returning through Missouri on the way back from the Northwest.

Because of the desirability of having the fruits available for food, many attempts have been made to develop cultivars. Vines (Trees, Shrubs, and Woody Vines of the Southwest) lists eleven clones and two hybrids that have

been made available. The fruits were prized by the Indians and according to Peattie (A Natural History of Trees of Eastern and Central North America) they were transplanted by the Creek, Cheraw, and Catawba tribes. The seeds are difficult to germinate and have to be stratified by storing in wet sand. Vines suggests storing them in wet sand at 50 degrees F. for 100 days, but Dirr (Manual of Woody Landscape Plants) suggests 60 days at 41 degrees F.

Various other uses have been made of pawpaws. According to Michaux (North American Sylva) the people of Pittsburg were making an alcoholic beverage out of the fruits. According to Elias, the early settlers made a yellow dye out of the ripe pulp of the fruit. Peattie writes that Louisiana indians wove the bark into cloth. Sargent (Manual of the Trees of North America) says the inner bark was used as a fish stringer. One of the authors (Thomas) spent many pleasant times as a youngster helping to weave bottoms to straight chairs from pawpaw bark gathered each spring. Krochmal and Krochmal (A Guide to the Medicinal Plants of the United States) give three uses for pawpaw plants: the powdered seeds were used to destroy head lice, seeds were used to induce vomiting, and fruit juice was used to treat intestinal worms. The bark of both species contains an alkaloid analobine that has been used as bitters. The fruits have always been a prized part of the diet of many animals, including opossums, racoons, bears, gray foxes, turkeys, and others. A related species from Florida was used by the Seminole Indians to treat kidney problems (Lewis and Elvyn-Lewis: Medical Botany).

Some people can develop contact dermatitis just by touching the leaves or the fruits of the pawpaws. Kingsbury (Poisonous Plants of the United States and Canada) warns that certain individuals may exhibit severe gastrointestinal symptoms after eating the fruit even though they are insensitive to contact of the plant with the skin. The authors suggest that you try the fruit in moderation until your sensitivity to the plant is established.

One of the authors (Thomas) transplanted two pawpaw plants (Asimina triloba) to his lawn in Monroe with good success. The fruits are eaten fresh and have the taste of a blend of egg custard, banana pudding, and papayas. When picked and allowed to ripen until the skin is blotched with black and the pulp is soft, the fruits can be wrapped in aluminum foil and frozen. They can then be nibbled any time throughout the year and taste much like high quality frozen yogurt. Although northerners wait on frost to bite the pawpaw fruits to make them more edible, the same thing can be accomplished in Louisiana in August by putting them in the freezer for a few minutes and then storing them in a cool dry place for ripening.

The dormancy of the embryo in the seeds is broken when the seeds pass through the digestive system of mammals. If one looks on old logs in woods where pawpaws occur, one can usually find deposits of large, flat, black seeds of Asimina triloba that are still viable. These can be planted and will germinate without further stratification.

GIRL SCOUTS SUPPORT WILDFLOWER PROJECT

Louisiana Girl Scout Troop 652 received recognition recently for their efforts in maintaining the native wildflower project in Brechtel Park. The project is sponsored by the Federated Council of New Orleans Garden Clubs in cooperation with the New Orleans Park and Parkway Commission. Brechtel Park is located in New Orleans, on the west bank of the Mississippi River. Keep up the good work, Troop 652!

HAZEL MEADOWS OF RUSTON GARDEN CLUB WRITES:

At its October 5, 1988 meeting, the thirty-five member Ruston Garden Club unanymously agreed that the indiscriminate use of herbicides to control plant growth along our Louisiana highways is more a detriment than a help. The practice has caused wholesale destruction of native plant stands and leaves our roadsides looking scorched and barren. The Ruston Garden Club would like to see the practice discontinued, citing the effects of spraying on the impressions our state makes on citizens, visitors, and tourists.

A FUN WORKDAY AT BRIARWOOD

by Karlene Defatta

Saturday, October 15 the Northwest Chapter and Ruston Chapter of the LNPS met at Briarwood for a workday. Jessie and Richard Johnson led the way down the trails. The foliage of Virginia Creeper, Dogwood, Blackgum, Sweetum, etc. was beautiful. Beside a stream, Cardinal Flower highlighted the crude bridge with their bright, velvet-red blooms. The woods were so peaceful, they made you feel all warm inside - everything was right with the world!

In a clearing we came upon some rock steps, then onto another level of land, then to a rebuilt one-room log cabin nestled in the quiet woods. The beautiful native rock chimney and the handmade roof shingles (made from pine trees killed by pine beetles) stood out. Rock steps led you into the cabin. The mantle and a one foot high rock hearth were charming. Wood shutters outside every window helped finish a perfect picture.

The purpose of the cabin is to recapture the past. In the 1920s and 1930s Caroline Dorman escaped to the original cabin to write and paint undisturbed. The hope is that some day, writers doing articles on Briarwood can visit the cabin to get a feel for Briarwood - where Caroline Dorman wrote and painted.

Our job was to pile debris - limbs and branches - into huge piles where they could rot into rich humus. Some of the men cut down and dug up stumps. It was great fun, working together.

For lunch we picnicked together near the new visitor center. It was nice to see old friends again, and make new friends from the Ruston Chapter.

On the way home, Jessie led us to Bienville Parish where we saw a huge bog (Kepler Lake area), that was on both sides of the highway. There we saw hundreds of golden-flowered Bidens, Bidens cernua, or Slick-leaf Bidens. In bloom along the edge of the bog were green Spider Orchids, Habenaria repens. It was breathtaking to stand and look out on such beauty. I would like to thank Jessie for all of us, for taking the time to show us such a beautiful place after a hard day's work!

GROWING WILDFLOWERS

by Beth Erwin

I have always been a person who dreaded winter. I am extremely cold natured. However, this year it seems like it cannot possibly last long enough for all that I need to get done in my garden. Most of the late blooming perennials have mature seed, and are ready to collect and plant. If you have been collecting seed this year, now is the time to get them in the ground. My columbine seeds are germinating rapidly and the Hebertia (Pine Woods Lily) seeds I was given this summer are too. The columbine seeds were sown in the semi-shady bed I have designated for them. The Herbertia seeds were started in potting soil in one of the clear plastic take-out salad containers that I

am so fond of. I am afraid that I have far more seeds of assorted plants than I will ever be able to plant this year. Terry has had excellent results with the pawpaw seeds that he planted last year in our seed starting box. It took about five months for them to germinate, but nearly all of them came up.

An Audubon Society member from Natchitoches called a while back to report on her success with root cuttings of Callirhoe (Poppy Mallow). She took up her plants in the autumnal stage in August. Some of the roots were broken in the process. She stuck them all in the ground and watered them. Leaves appeared on the cuttings in a very short time. My Coreopsis grandiflora plants appear to be making new plants up on the old flowering stems. I plan to snip them off and put them in the ground at Ben's school and hope they form roots. We've already sown gaillardia seed at his school. We have also acquired some sensitive fern and chain fern from a friend to plant in a low, shady wet place at the school in hopes that they will invade the area.

Those of us who attended the conference in Memphis really had a great time. I think that I speak for the majority of us when I say that the high point was shopping at the Lichterman Nature Center fall native plant sale. I bought a Tiarella (Foamflower) and a plant that I have wanted for some time, Penstemon smallii. I also bought a Viburnum nudum for Terry and a Quercus Michauxii for a friend here. The Foamflower has been given a shady spot on the north side of the yard, plenty of decayed oak leaf mulch, and a commitment on my part to provide plenty of water year round on this dry hillside. On the other hand, the penstemon got full sun and plenty of sand and gravel as recommended.

Watch your perennial wildflowers and learn to recognize them. Leave the seedbearing structures attached, label them while they are in their autumnal stage, and test yourself so that you can spot them in the wild. You can begin dividing those in your yard in late January. It will soon be time to take up liatris corms for division. Consider sharing your divisions with your fellow flower lovers, who may be unfamiliar with our natives. Nursing homes and housing projects for senior citizens, schools, and businesses are places to consider. Hope you all have a Merry Christmas!

WILD PLANT GARDENING

by Annette Parker

I learned much during my first full year of wild plant gardening. I began by recognizing the special natives already growing in my yard. These include five kinds of orchids, Pine Woods Lily, Cardinal Flower, white and pink wild azaleas, and probably every fern of central Louisiana. Passers-by must wonder about the presence of dozens of orange ribbons attached to sticks throughout the yard. These mark the locations of special plants, some only inches tall.

A big undertaking has been to remove many inappropriately planted ornamentals, gifts from the previous owners. Century Plant and Opuntia roots simply will not die. Unhealthy azaleas have been hacked out with an axe, as have roses and Rose-of-Sharon. Several white-fly-infested crape myrtles are living on borrowed time.

Here are accounts of my experiences with four of my favorite natives.

Cyrilla racemiflora Titi, is an easily grown but presently unvalued woody shrub. I transplanted several in mid-summer from one part of my yard to another. They responded by immediately putting on new growth. When given the proper space, Titi makes an excellent accent plant. Titi is notable for showy, long-lasting flowers and fruits, fall color, interesting bark, and an unusual weeping form.

All "authorities" state that magnolia seeds must be kept moist until planting time. In the fall of 1987 I was given some pyramid magnolia seeds

which had already dried. Another two weeks passed before I planted them in a bare area of the yard. I was quite surprised to find a neat little row of baby pyramids in mid-March, with germination having been about 100%. They were later transplanted into pots and are now becoming dormant.

Erythrina herbacea, or Mamou, can be challenging to germinate. I think the secret must be to collect the beans as soon as the pods swell, about mid-July. I found a plant that had many beans in early August - but the beans had already germinated in the pods (it had rained during the previous few days). This created a spectacle as the green of the baby leaves was quite conspicuous against the red of the ruptured seed coats. I rescued them and had small plants within three days. With "normal" beans, soaking first and then watering frequently hastens germination.

I had many vigorous Indian Blankets, Gaillardia pulchella, in flower during the entire growing season. I religiously clipped the spent flowers to promote further flowering while sacrificing seed formation. The clipped stems accumulated around the plants and served as a mulch. To my astonishment I now have about ten million baby Gaillardia. The seeds evidently become viable very soon after the petals are shed. I suspect that their viability decreases rapidly as time after flowering increases. I had always collected Gaillardia seeds at a later stage. These plants are free to anyone who drops by!

WEST CENTRAL CHAPTER NEWS

by Annette Parker

Our first meeting back in September was well attended and enjoyed by all. We hiked into a scenic area within Kisatchie National Forest. Participants were thrilled to hear a coyote pack off in the distance at mid-day. This added to the almost mystical remoteness of the area. We were also thrilled at the quantity of Rock Club Moss, Selaginella riddellii, found. Spring outings are now being planned. Organizers include Darlene Jhanbatsch, Robert Murry, Doug Adams, and Annette Parker. Look for more information in the March newsletter!

PLANT REQUEST

Your editor has been trying to locate a yellow-flowered plant of one of the Trillium species native to Louisiana, preferably Trillium foetissimum or Trillium gracile, which do well in the New Orleans area. Yellow flowered Trilliums of other species (from southern Alabama, etc.) can't take the heat here in New Orleans. See my address earlier in the newsletter.