
MISSISSIPPI NATIVE
PLANT SOCIETY
MARCH 1988



PIPEVINE
Aristolochia tomentosa

IN APPRECIATION

This issue of the MNPS Newsletter is dedicated to our immediate past secretary-treasurer, Travis Salley. Mr. Salley has been one of our strongest supporters since the beginning of the society. His efforts as treasurer have been essential to our continued growth. And Travis has given of his time and advice freely, travelling widely over the state and elsewhere in our cause. Furthermore much of our financial success has been due to his efforts at plant sales. Although he is free of the burdens of office, we hope to see Travis frequently at our meetings and field trips. Again we appreciate all that you have done for us. SM

I will never forget the trip I took with Travis Salley last summer, going to a native plant seminar in North Carolina. His unflagging interest kept us from fistfighting every time I needed him to back up so I could get a better look at roadside flowers. Once we got to the seminar, I could not have been in better company. Travis is well-known far and wide, because of his contagious enthusiasm. He presented detailed information on the propagation of native plants at our first native plant seminar last fall, and won several new members to MNPS with his easy way of presenting what he has learned in a plain-spoken, "down-home" manner.

Travis has been one of our most dedicated members and has much to share which cannot be learned from books and stuffy experts. His knowledge has come from bare-knuckle experience. Next time you see Travis Salley, shake his hand hard—and you might just find yourself with a fistful of seeds and an earful of advice! Felder Rushing

Thank you Mississippi Native Plant Society members for allowing me to serve as your president for 1986 and 1987. Without your help, my job would have been much more difficult. ESPECIALLY, I would like to take this means to thank Travis Salley for all he did for me during this time. Travis has served as Secretary-Treasurer for most of the time since the MNPS was organized and has done an excellent job. Your society has been represented well as Travis goes out and speaks about Mississippi native plants. Thank you Travis for all you did for the Mississippi Native Plant Society during your time of service, and thank you for all you will be doing in the future to promote the use of native plants in Mississippi. Faye Swan

NOTE FROM THE PRESIDENT

This year should be a pleasure, and a challenge, for those of us who enjoy learning about native plants. The Mississippi Native Plant Society is, of course, dedicated to the promotion of our native flora, and has been very active over the years in identifying those plants found in the many diverse habitats of our state. Now, however, there is a growing interest in not only learning about our plants, but also in using them in landscapes as well. This is particularly shown by the great number of urban members in MNPS. Vic Rudis has broken our membership down into county statistics, and has presented it in his report in this newsletter. Notice the number of new members from the Jackson area. One thing is clear, that we have the potential for new members from all parts of the state and that all members should work toward letting others know our "secret."

One thing that attracts new members and holds the interest of longtime supporters is the active use of field trips. The executive board met Thursday, March 10, in Starkville to discuss upcoming events. Note that the locations of this spring's field trips have been carefully planned to give us an opportunity to see all parts of the state—but there is more in the works for summer and fall, in case your favorite spot has been sidestepped for now.

The board approved three exciting projects for MNPS which should be of great interest to members and the general public alike. One is the planning of another seminar on the use of natives and wildflowers in the landscape, to be held in Jackson, probably in late June or early July. Also, MNPS has agreed to sponsor a native plant display at Mynelle Gardens in Jackson, and a wildflower meadow display at the Jackson Zoo. Both projects will use trees, shrubs, groundcovers, and lots of perennials and reseeding annuals, and both will be adequately labeled so viewers will be able to learn while they enjoy. These projects will be undertaken by members, "hands on," with plants provided by us and also donated by commercial native plant sources. We should have fun and learn at the same time!

The board also discussed the need for an "arm-wrestling session" over the increased interest in the use of wildflower seed mixes in landscapes, roadsides, and meadows. I am concerned that some inexperienced

gardeners, with great expectations, will find disappointment in the "meadow-in-a can" approach to wildflowers. We need to get together to compare notes and experiences with various approaches to establishing wildflowers, so we can feel confident when talking about them with each other and with the general gardening public. It is vitally important for gardeners who try wildflowers and native plants to have a positive experience, leaving them wanting to try more.

In fact, we are planning to include a survey in the next newsletter to see how much we know collectively about propagating and planting these plants in various situations. It does little good to know how to do something, if we don't share it with others. We will start by seeing how much we know together.

A lot of serious work is going on within our membership. We have resources among us who are top-notch professionals, outstanding gardeners, and dedicated enthusiasts. It will be important for us to recognize those individuals, and to use their talents and ideas in creative ways. You will see some of them highlighted here and there; at the same time, you will have the opportunity to work right beside them, learn from them, share with them, and enjoy their company. It will be fun as well.

My major goals for this year include preparation for the summer seminar, participation in field trips, publicity for MNPS and our activities, and beginning work on handout material on MNPS and native plants in general. Your input and support will be greatly appreciated.

Looks like it will be an interesting year. Felder Rushing

SOME NOTES ON GROWING CARDINAL FLOWER

In autumn, 1986, I received a packet of cardinal flower seeds (Lobelia cardinalis L.) from The Crosby Arboretum as part of their membership renewal drive. Accompanying the seeds were excellent propagating instructions. Members of MNPS may be interested in my experience in cultivating this attractive plant.

As suggested I stored the seeds under refrigeration until spring instead of planting them in the fall. In late March I sowed, without covering, about one-fourth to one-third of the seeds in a small flat of "Terra-Lite Redi-earth" potting soil. The flat was watered from below by keeping it in a tray of water and left outside in a protected corner of a carport. None of the seeds in the initial planting germinated. I feared that none was viable after having been stored in the refrigerator for

some six to seven months. However, I never discard seeds, but rather plant even those I "know" will not germinate.

On May 7, 1987, I planted the remaining cardinal flower seeds. Cultivation procedure was identical with the first sowing. The only difference was in the air temperature: by the time of the second planting the weather was much warmer. Within about two weeks almost all the seeds of the second sowing had germinated. Now I had more cardinal flower seedlings than I could handle.

By continually transferring the largest seedlings to plastic four- and six-packs (the kind in which bedding plants are sold) containing regular potting soil, I had transplanted all of the seedling by June 22. They transplanted easily and do not wilt when kept moist and in the shade. I watered the transplants daily during the hot summer months. The only "pests" I experienced were tiny, unidentified pale green caterpillars, which destroyed several plants before I detected them on the undersides of the cardinal flower leaves and hand-picked them off.

By fall, 1987, most of the plants were forming rosettes. I transplanted nine plants to an existing flower border and the others to one-gallon plastic nursery buckets which I arranged near the southeast corner of a building and buried to the rim with pine straw. (All cardinal flower plants themselves remain completely free of any mulch to avoid rot. Very important!) All nine plants in the border survived the winter quite well and appear healthy. Most of the plants in the buckets also look good, though a few died.

I plant to set the cardinal flowers in a semi-shady bed with a few wild ageratum (mist flower, Eupatorium coelestinum L.) and jewelweed (Impatiens capensis Meerb.) plants, the other two natives I hope will bloom simultaneously with the cardinal flowers.

My experience has been that cardinal flower is easy to grow from seed. By collecting a few seeds in the fall anyone might add this spectacular, bright red-flowered native to his or her wildflower garden.

Reference: Growing and Propagating Wild Flowers by Harry R. Phillips;
University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill; pp. 205-207.

Joe McGee

Rt. 1, Box 148

Hickory, MS 39332

REPORT FROM NEW SECRETARY-TREASURER

Thank you for electing me your new secretary-treasurer. My agenda for this year is to increase the membership and visibility of the organization with the help of the other officers and you the members. Each of you is a representative of the MNPS. Spread the word that we exist. Tell your friends and neighbors about the MNPS!

In going over the mailing list (1-20-88) I have compiled a few statistics:

192 addresses:

4 complimentary (out-of-state wildflower societies)

30 members out-of-state (17 LA, 4 TX, 2 AL, one each for TN, AR, MO, WA, UT, FL, IL)

MS County representation:

40 Hinds

20 Oktibbeha

11 Pearl River

10 Leflore

7 each in Madison, Warren

6 each in Harrison, Rankin, Lauderdale, and Bolivar

5 Forrest

4 each in Hancock, Itawamba

3 Washington

2 each in Adams, Attala, Tishomingo, Scott, Jackson, Jones, Lowndes

1 each in Coahoma, Carroll, Lafayette, Union, Lee, Newton, Amite, Franklin and Webster.

I am in the process of applying MNPS for status as an "official" non-profit organization (to reduce costs of mailing and to increase incentives for contributions). I will let you know the progress of this in the next newsletter. Please send all correspondence concerning dues, membership applications, and other MNPS business not tied to the newsletter to:

Mississippi Native Plant Society

P. O. Box 2151

Starkville, MS 39759

If you have been sending dues to Travis Salley (former secretary-treasurer), there may be some delay in processing correspondence as he is forwarding mail to me.

The mailing label for this newsletter lists the last year for which dues have been paid. Please renew for 1988 if you have not already done so. Memberships that have lapsed for more than one year will no longer receive this newsletter.

Respectfully yours,

Vic Rudis, Secretary-Treasurer

home 601-324-0430

work 601-324-1611

OF PIPEVINES AND WILD GINGERS

The Aristolochiaceae, with unusual flowers (either by shape or location) and often fragrant roots, is one of the most interesting families of plants in Mississippi. There are about 8 genera and 400 species in the family, mostly in warm temperate to tropical regions of the world. We have in Mississippi 3 genera and 5 or 6 species. My first encounter with the group was with wild ginger (Asarum canadense L.) on the family farm probably when I was around 10 or 12. I was intrigued by the spicy, aromatic roots and was led to investigate more about plants. Our species in the family are given below.

Aristolochia serpentaria L. Snakeroot (see back cover) Inconspicuous herb sporadic in rich woodlands through much of the state. The purple to brown flowers are mostly hidden by fallen leaves. More robust forms on longleaf pine ridges in South Mississippi with narrower leaves may represent a separate species.

Aristolochia tomentosa Sims Pipevine (see front cover) High-climbing woody vine on sandy stream banks probably throughout the state except the Delta. The large rounded leaves, yellow and purple pipe-shaped flowers, and sausage-like capsules with numerous flattened seeds in rows are diagnostic. Worthy of cultivation.

Asarum canadense L. Wild-ginger (see back cover) Herb with dull, heart-shaped deciduous leaves, maroon flowers, and aromatic roots found mostly near or on limestone outcrops or basic soils. Locally abundant

northward, less frequent southward to Jasper County. Can be successfully grown in the woodland garden.

Hexastylis arifolia (Michx.) Small Heart-leaf, wild-ginger (see back cover). Herb with shiny heart-shaped to arrow-head shaped evergreen leaves usually mottled with white between the veins. The jug-like purplish flowers are borne at the base and are often hidden by fallen leaves. Roots are highly aromatic. Heart-leaf occurs in Mississippi in rich woods north to about Oktibbeha County. The related and similar H. shuttleworthii (B. & B.) Small has smaller rounded leaves mottled along the veins. It is known from bogs and swamps in northeastern Mississippi.

FIELD TRIPS

The following are the field trips planned for this year to date. All will start in the morning and end around noon or early afternoon. Bring water/drinks and a lunch. Dress appropriately for the situation and in particular wear suitable shoes. Information given includes time and place to meet and the probable guide(s) for the trip. Suggestions for future/further field trips are welcome.

April 9 - Picayune 9 AM [joint trip with Crosby Arboretum] Crosby Arboretum office, 1801 Goodyear Boulevard. Chris Wells.

April 30 - Simpson Co. 9 AM Near intersection of highways 43 & 28 in Pinola. Will McDearman & Robert Stewart

May 14 - Grenada Co. 8:30 AM At McDonalds east of interstate highway. Wayne Morris

[May 28 Alabama Wildflower Society is having a two-day trip to Dauphin Island]

June 11 - Davis Lake north of Houston 8:30 AM Near north end of lake dam. Sidney McDaniel

July-August (tentative)
Tombigbee National Forest near Starkville.

Seminar in Jackson.

September-October
Lauderdale-Newton cos.

Spring 1989
Tishomingo State Park

NATIVE AND NATURALIZED PLANTS OF MISSISSIPPI

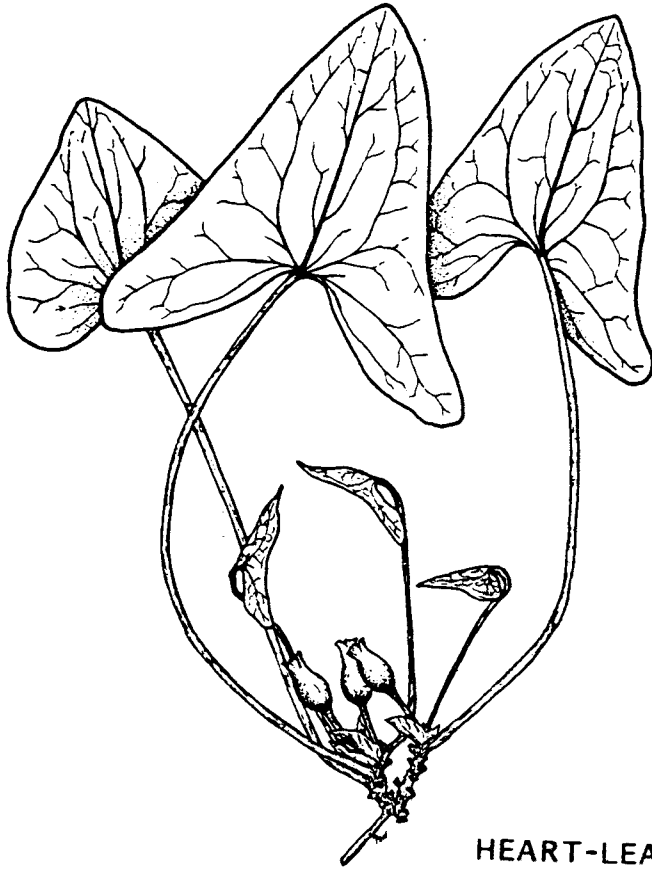
Two-winged silverbell tree

(Halesia dipera)

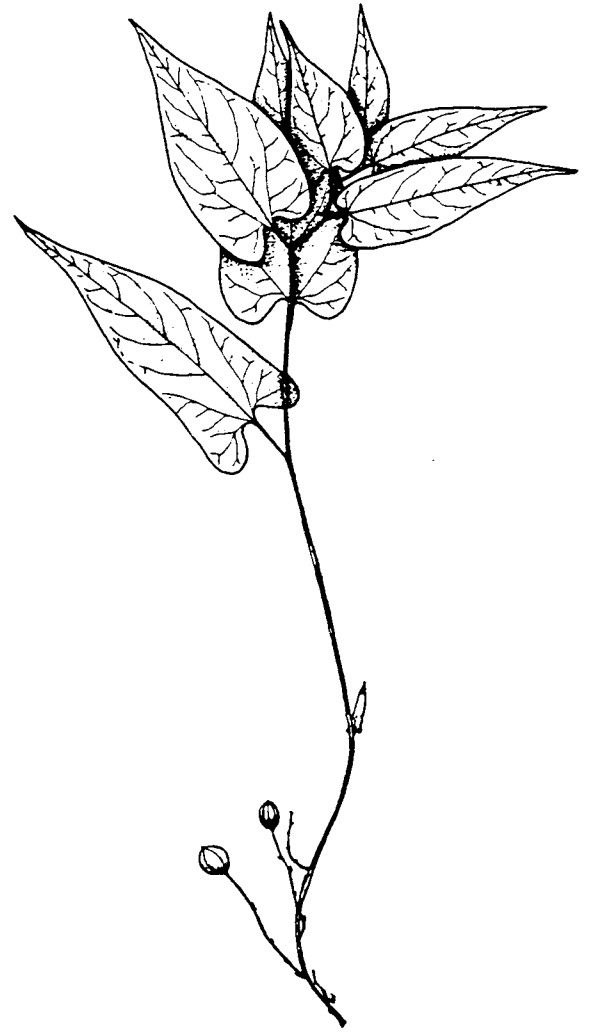


If you are looking for a dogwood-sized flowering tree that will do well in this region, silverbell may meet your needs. It grows fairly rapidly but seldom exceeds thirty feet, making it a perfect choice for small yards or as an understory tree in more spacious surroundings. Silverbells are often multi-trunked and have a spreading, irregular growth habit. The tree's name derives from its small bell-shaped flowers, lasting about one week in mid-spring. Fruit follows in the form of winged pods, maturing in late summer and early autumn.

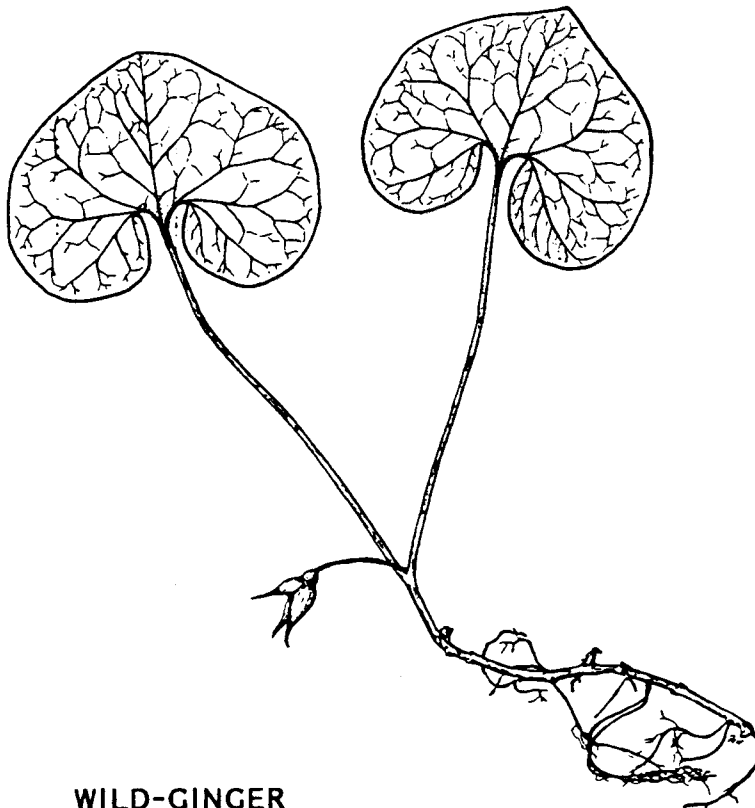
The immature fruit is favored by squirrels. Give it a moist well-drained acid (pH 5.0-6.0) soil and it should flourish. Silverbells are easily propagated by seed, by air-layering or by root cuttings in the spring or autumn. If you choose to propagate by seed, patience is necessary as germination takes two or three years. Stratification (exposure to cold) is needed for germination, so either place seed in the refrigerator for a couple months before planting or easier yet, plant seed directly outdoors in a place where you won't forget to water occasionally, and winter will take care of the stratification for you. If you are less patient, your local nursery may carry this tree or its close relative, the mountain or four-winged silverbell (Halesia carolina). Try Salter Tree Farm (Rt. 2, Box 1332, Madison, FL 32340) for H. dipera. If you are interested in H. carolina, try Salter's Tree Farm, or Woodlanders (1128 Colleton Ave., Aiken, SC 29801). Sherrie Wiygul



HEART-LEAF
Hexastylis arifolia



SNAKEROOT
Aristolochia serpentaria



WILD-GINGER
Asarum canadense