
MISSISSIPPI NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

FEBRUARY 1990

FROM THE EDITOR:

As your new editor, I am just learning what it is like, so please be patient. After needing Sidney these past 2 years to get the Newsletter out, I now can appreciate the work involved. I speak for many of the members when I say thank you, Sidney, for your past efforts and hope you, your graduate students, and members of your staff continue to contribute to the Newsletter. We especially look forward to more of the beautiful artwork and taxonomic information that has graced these pages in the past.

Being a volunteer editor has its rewards. But like everything else, there is a limit to what one person can accomplish before "burn-out" sets in. I really appreciated the cards and letters and phone calls from members, and all who made my old job as Secretary/Treasurer a little easier. This issue would not have been possible without your continued support.

Keep those letters, articles, information on related events, and field trip suggestions coming. As your new editor, I'll need them. Send editorial correspondence to: Mississippi Native Plant Society, Attn: Editor, P.O. Box 2151, Starkville, MS 39759.

For new and inactive members: There are many opportunities for you to participate in MNPS activities -- from meetings to field trips, from local participation in roadside plant identification to roadside beautification, from listing your favorite Mississippi wildflower to contributing articles and artwork, and from contributing your dues to becoming a Life member. Welcome to MNPS! Hope to see you soon!

BOARD OF DIRECTORS 1990-91

Since there were no other nominations or suggestions since the last newsletter, the slate of officers for 1990-91 are as follows:

President: Sidney McDaniel 325-7570
Vice President: Chris Wells 798-6961
Secretary/Treasurer: Sherry Wiygul
Editor: Vic Rudis 324-0430
Past President: Felder Rushing 982-6542

A PROMISING FUTURE FOR THE PURPLE CONEFLOWER

Echinacea sp. or purple coneflowers have long been recognized for their medicinal properties. The Indians first recognized the beneficial use of the flower roots for treatment of afflictions. Among the ailments treated were: rabies, snakebite, inflammation, toothache, tonsillitis, stomach ache, and bowel pains. It was used as a general pain killer and a mild stimulant. Thirst was mitigated by chewing the root. The dried seed head was used as a comb. A tea was made with the purple coneflower for rheumatism, arthritis, mumps, and measles.

The white man did not perceive the wide restorative abilities of the purple coneflower for a long time due to the generally unfriendly attitude toward Indians in the 1800's. H. C. F. Meyer, a patent medicine salesman, rediscovered the usefulness of the purple coneflower in 1871. After that, Echinacea became one of a few native plants to be widely used as a medicine.

Meyer sent a specimen to a firm that specialized in American medicinal plants to exploit the mass marketing possibilities of a secret remedy called "Meyer's Blood Purifier." While the drug was undergoing tests, Meyer proceeded to make greatly exaggerated public claims about the beneficial effects of the medicine. Despite these claims, the drug was never wholeheartedly accepted by the American Medical Association. But some pharmacists used it, and the Echinacea was endorsed without much enthusiasm by the National Formulary from 1916-1950.

More recently, the purple coneflower was shown to have active curative components in research by German scientists. In 1971, an oil extracted from the roots was discovered to inhibit Walker carcinosarcoma 256 and P-388 lymphocytic leukemia. Italian researchers found that wounds healed faster due to echinacin B, a polysaccharide which increases hyaluronic acid. The acid acts as a binding and protective agent which aids wound healing. Another product from the purple coneflower made mouse cells 50-80 percent more resistant to influenza, herpes, and some mouth viruses. The most important discovery was the presence of polysaccharide molecules which can stimulate the immune system.

The purple coneflower has also been shown to be useful in fighting inflammation, and it can be helpful in fighting diseases in urology, gynecology, internal medicine, and dermatology. Also, a compound has been found to be very deadly to mosquitoes and house flies, and one substance can inhibit insect development.

Some evidence that early experimental samples of the purple coneflower were contaminated with other wild plants when harvested has thrown doubt on the reliability of the German research. Stricter quality controls for herb companies are being developed to prevent this type of incident.

The popularity of the purple coneflower has fluctuated ever since its rediscovery. When the plant was popular, harvesting pressure was enormous. In 1902, there was concern that the purple coneflower would become extinct, and commercial cultivation was given consideration. But

the demand diminished before either extinction or cultivation could occur. Interest is now rising, and so has the question of commercial cultivation.

Commercial production has not been fully explored. Yield of medically-active chemical compounds may vary among species as well. Much of the folklore and early medical research was based on E. angustifolia (a Midwestern species), although E. pallida and E. purpurea are known to contain some of the same compounds. E. purpurea is widely available as an ornamental. Three to four years of growing from the seed are needed to allow the roots to become large enough for harvest. The yield from cultivated E. purpurea roots in Trout Lake, Washington was reported to be 1,200 pounds per acre. [Adapted from Kelly Kindscher, 1989. Economic Botany 43(4):498-507] --- R. Lynn Easley

Editor's Note: At least three species of the purple coneflower are native to the Southeast: Echinacea laevigata, E. purpurea, and E. pallida. E. pallida and E. purpurea are native to Mississippi. The plant is a drought-tolerant, sun-loving perennial. In Starkville, E. purpurea thrives in poorly-drained clay soil in full sun without much effort. More rapid growth occurs in well-drained, moist soil. Flowers are present from June to July, and they are colored light pink to purple. Seed-heads provide winter garden interest and in dried arrangements. White-flowered and yellow-flowered cultivars (species?) are known to exist. To my knowledge, the purple coneflower is used only as an ornamental in Mississippi. The purple-colored flowering plant is available from many mail-order nurseries and seed companies.

QUICK! WHAT IS MISSISSIPPI'S STATE WILDFLOWER?

Gotcha! Mississippi has no officially-designated state wildflower. This may soon be corrected with your help.

A group of avid gardeners in the Jackson area have begun a grass-roots movement towards identifying potential candidates, followed by a public vote, and culminating in legislation as early as next year designating a particular plant (genus or species) as the Mississippi Wildflower. Here are some of the more important criteria for use as guidelines in selecting a state wildflower:

- (1) It should be one which can be grown in most areas of the state, so all Mississippians can enjoy it.
- (2) It should be widely recognizable, as it will be used as a logo for t-shirts, stationery, posters, etc.
- (3) It should be a plant which may be grown easily in the landscape garden, as well as in the wild.
- (4) Not critical, but it would be nice if the flower could be used in arrangements.

Members of MNPS have a "first shot" at providing names of potential candidates, and have a major part in the selection process. Please mail your suggestions as soon as possible to: Felder Rushing, 3824 Ridgewood Road, Jackson, MS 39211. Results will be tabulated and reported in the MNPS Newsletter. -- Felder Rushing

Editor's Note: To MNPS members with artistic skills, send your line drawings of "favorites" that fit the above criteria to MNPS, PO Box 2151, Starkville, MS 39759, with a copy to Felder. Already, members and Jackson-area gardeners have suggested ironweed (Vernonia sp.), Purple coneflower (Echinacea sp.), primrose (Oenothera sp.), maypop (Passiflora sp.), and Coreopsis sp.

ROADSIDE WILDFLOWER HAPPENINGS

STARKVILLE/MSU - The MNPS, together with the City of Starkville, Mississippi State University-Campus Landscape, and MSU's Department of Landscape Architecture, have expressed an interest in establishing a roadside wildflower display. Sam Hogue and Charlie Scoggins of MSU-Campus Landscape and Vic Rudis are also interested in prairie restoration and management for the Starkville/MSU area in the near future. We have agreed in principle to consider sites for a roadside wildflower display in a prominent location on public land. MNPS members with experience in these matters, and local MNPS members interested in getting involved in such developments are asked to contact Vic Rudis (324-0430). -- Vic Rudis

CARTHAGE - Along the same lines, but on a larger scale, the Mississippi Highway Department - Central District, has "given" MNPS a 7-mile stretch of Highway 25 (the new bypass around Carthage) to observe for potential use as a "wildflower trail." The roadside right-of-ways contain considerable habitat diversity -- from the Pearl River on the Jackson Prairie to the hilly areas of the North Central Plains -- including flatlands, ravines, hillsides, woods, meadows, creeks, and boggy ponds.

Central District Commissioner Wayne Burkes, members of his staff, and Felder Rushing drove the area twice to discuss wildflower management and maintenance. They agreed to hold off on mowing and spraying, other than a 30-foot safety zone along the shoulders. Once the native stands get firmly established, some of the tree, shrub, grass, and wildflower species may be "enhanced" with additional plantings. Stay tuned. -- Felder Rushing.

JACKSON - The Mississippi Highway Department - Central District has planted wildflower seeds in Jackson around Interstate 55. Last November, after clean-up and mowing several areas between Lakeland Drive and Pearl-St. exits, seeding techniques were tested.

A drill-seeder was used in one area, and broadcast spreaders in others, for comparison purposes. Several good, gentle rains helped the seeds germinate quickly. But they will have to wait to see how much damage December's hard freeze dealt to the seedlings. In anticipation of such a setback, however, all areas were seeded a little on the heavy side. -- Felder Rushing

JACKSON - Under the direction of Ken Young and John Snuggs, the Mississippi Highway Department (together with chemical company representatives from Monsanto and Dupont) has scheduled a workshop to discuss wildflower and highway vegetation maintenance with District Highway personnel, and Garden Club leaders on March 27 and 28.

The Highway Department has been progressive in thinking about roadside wilflowers as alternatives to bermuda and fescue for erosion control. They need our encouragement and support. Let them know you care

about ^{the} establishment of roadside wildflowers by calling or writing your local District. And be patient with insisting on "native species only," as they are just learning how to manage effectively. There still are people out there that insist on seeing broad expanses of well-manicured lawns and roadsides. [You have to crawl before you can stand. You have to stand before you can walk.] -- Vic Rudis

OLD BUSINESS

(This section was inadvertently omitted in the last newsletter.)

MEMBERS CORNER

John Allen Smith has prepared 3 new 1990 Calendars. Price is \$6.98 + 6% tax + \$1.50 shipping and handling. Subjects: (1) Southern Wildflowers, (2) Southern Scenes, and (3) Southern Inspirations. His company, HOMOCHITTO OUTDOORS, also sells wildflower seeds. For further details, contact John Allen Smith, c/o HOMOCHITTO OUTDOORS, P.O. Box 630, Meadville, MS 39653. Tel. No. 601-384-2165.

Gail Barton and Richard Lowery have compiled a new catalog of perennials, grasses, herbs, and wildflowers for sale by mail-order only. Cultural information is included. Catalog price is \$2.00. Contact: Flowerplace Plant Farm, P.O. Box 4865, Meridian, MS 39304. Tel. No. 601-482-5686

We welcome Barbara Z--Bridges as a new member. She runs Southern Perennials and Herbs, Rt. 3 Box 174G, Tylertown, MS 39667. Tel. No. 601-684-1769. Some of her plants were on display at the Jackson meeting September 23. While she sells wholesale only, her plants are sold through many Jackson area garden centers.

SEPTEMBER 23, 1989: THIRD ANNUAL MISSISSIPPI NATIVE PLANT CONFERENCE

Over 100 participants came to this Jackson area event, including many new members. Speakers included Ed Blake (Crosby Arboretum), Gail Barton (Meridian instructor and writer), and Robert Poore (landscape architect). Subjects included the philosophy/aesthetics of plants, landscapes designed to complement - rather than compete - with Mother Nature, tips on propagating native plants, and details of the planting design at Mynelle Gardens.

Despite the light rain, after the meeting about 30 of us witnessed the dedication of the MNPS-sponsored Native Plant and Wildflower Garden at Mynelle Gardens (4736 Clinton Blvd. Tel. No. 601-960-1894). Thanks to Felder Rushing for organizing this event, the Mayor's office representative, and others in attendance for their enthusiasm and support. A special thanks to Robert Poore for his award-winning design, John Edmondsun of Mynelle Gardens for the maintenance of this area, and the plant contributions from Flowerplace Plant Farm and Tom Dodd's Nursery (Semmes, AL). -- Vic Rudis

NOVEMBER 10-11, 1989 BIRMINGHAM NATIVE PLANT CONFERENCE

There were many interesting speakers, including David Northington (National Wildflower Research Center, Austin, TX), John Freeman (Auburn

Univ.), Warren Wagner (Univ. Michigan), John Fay (US Fish and Wildlife Service), and Frank Kershaw (Canadian Wildflower Society). Northington, Fay, and Kershaw talked about the native plant "movement," the need for conservation and preservation, and helpful activities to motivate others to grow/propagate/conserv native plants. Freeman and Wagner entertained us royally with colorful anecdotes and interesting aspects of the biogeography, botany, and ecology of several species they have gotten to know through botanical investigation. Wagner discussed ferns and fern allies. Their talks have been videotaped and will be shown at future indoor MNPS meetings. Contact Vic Rudis for rental information.

Several MNPS members talked about the MNPS Society's role in helping to sponsor a similar conference in New Orleans, Louisiana, in 1991. Watch for details!

NEW BUSINESS

This first issue of the year is traditionally the one we use to remind our readers of membership dues. If you don't remember when you last paid, it is time to do so. Mailing labels with a "star" or numbers 87, 88, or 89 indicate overdue membership fees. Send your dues to Mississippi Native Plant Society, Attn: Sherry Wiygul, Secretary/Treasurer, P.O. Box 2151, Starkville, MS 39759. Vic Rudis will continue to handle T-shirt and book sales, but we will use the same P.O. Box. Thanks in advance for your support. -- Sherry Wiygul, Secretary/Treasurer

The MNPS has pledged \$135.00 to the Town and Country Garden Club, under the direction of Imogene Triplett of Starkville. Funds will be used to purchase oak-leaf hydrangeas to be planted around the newly developed grounds of the Starkville Public Library parking lot.
-- Sidney McDaniel, President

As part of an outreach effort to attract new members and increase our educational role, the MNPS contributed an MNPS T-shirt and a one-year membership which was given away in a drawing held at the Starkville PTA meeting at the Overstreet Elementary School on February 14. Contact Vic Rudis if you know of a similar opportunity in your community.

Sales of WILDFLOWERS OF MISSISSIPPI by Steve L. Timme have been brisk. If you have not yet purchased a copy, member prices are \$32.00 (tax included), plus \$3.50 for shipping. We hope to have some on hand at some of the upcoming field trips and meetings. Quantity discounts available for 5 or more books. Order through: MNPS, Attn: Book order, P.O. Box 2151, Starkville, MS 39759.

T-shirts are still available in all adult and youth sizes with a gray background. We now have a few Large and Extra-Large with a pink background, and a few with a watermelon background, both of which look dynamite! T-shirts are now \$8.50 (tax included) + \$1.50 for shipping. Order through: MNPS, Attn: T-shirt order, P.O. Box 2151, Starkville, MS 39759.

CALENDAR OF UPCOMING EVENTS

FEBRUARY 22 - Starkville area, MSU Campus.

The MS Chapter of Landscape Architects will meet in the Architecture Building, Buttersworth Auditorium, 7:00 PM. Robert Poore will have a slide presentation on his award-winning native plant design for the MNPS-sponsored exhibit at Mynelle Gardens in Jackson. Felder Rushing will be on hand to provide additional commentary. Call MSU Landscape Architecture Dept. (325-3012) for further details. Join us!

MARCH 1-2 - Starkville area, MSU Campus.

The Student Chapter of the American Association of Landscape Architects is sponsoring a 2-day seminar on landscaping. The talks are designed for general audiences: garden club members, amateurs and pros, as well as students and teachers from around the state. The fee is \$15.00 for 1 day, \$20.00 for both days. (\$12.50 extra for a Thursday banquet and Floral Design Demonstration by Ralph Null and his students).

Talks are scheduled by Felder Rushing, Halla Jo Ellis, Jerry Jackson, Jim Perry, and John Davis, among others. Thursday includes a plant swap, tour of MSU campus landscape activities, and a banquet. Talks Thursday and Friday will include sessions on wildflowers, "Plant Mississippi," attracting birds, landscape management, and old-fashioned garden plants. Tours of landscaped areas around MSU are planned for Thursday afternoon.

★ Register by February 23 to assure room for you on the tour and dinner. Call 325-7897 or 325-3012 for details.

MARCH 15 - Gulf Coast area.

The Crosby Arboretum is holding an all-day seminar on native plant propagation, with Gail Barton, Robert Poore, and others. Noted plant propagator Bill Brumbeck from Garden in the Woods (New England Wildflower Society) will be the featured guest speaker. For those unfamiliar to the Arboretum, it is in Picayune, MS, off I-59 at Exit 4 and Highway 43. The seminar will be held at Pinecote, the Arboretum's Native Plant Center on Ridge Road. Contact Chris Wells 798-6961 for details.

MARCH 18 - Southwest Mississippi/Southeast Louisiana area.

The MS Sierra Club has organized a hiking trip to the Clark Creek Natural Area. It is a "must see" for southern outdoor enthusiasts. Bring your camera! Some of my best MS slides of cliffs, hollows, and waterfalls were taken here. Contact Sierra Club members Vonda Powell (Jackson 371-0919) or Kenny Echols (Braxton 825-5752) for trip details.

APRIL 15 - 22 EARTH WEEK. Remember to take care of the environment! There are several activities planned around the State. Check your local newspapers and universities for details.

APRIL 28 - Vicksburg/Jackson area.

MNPS-sponsored field trip. Meet at the gas station north of Interstate 20 (Exit 6 Bovina) at 8:30 AM. We will tour in and around Bluff Experimental Forest, a U.S. Forest Service land area that is leased from the Anderson-Tully Company. The forest includes a 47-acre natural area on loessal soil that has not been logged for over 80 years. John Toliver of the USDA Forest Service will provide a brief talk on the history of the area. Sidney McDaniel is our botanist for this trip. (NOTE: The area is not well-marked, so please be at the meeting place on time.)

A picnic area is available, so bring your lunch. After lunch, we will proceed 30 miles north to nature trails and greentree reservoirs on the Delta National Forest, beginning at the Blue Lake campground. If you miss us in the morning, catch us at Blue Lake (well-marked on Mississippi maps).

For overnite travelers, there is the Forest Service's Blue Lake Campground. Rolling Fork has "Chuck's," a diner/motel with 7 rooms (873-4021 for reservations). Yazoo City, Greenville, and Vicksburg have a wider selection of motels. Contact Vic Rudis 324-0430 for details.

MAY 12 - Gulf Coast area.

MNPS-sponsored field trip. Meet at the Pinecote Nature Center Pavilion, Crosby Arboretum. We'll tour a bog and several other areas in the vicinity. In the afternoon we will go to fellow-member Dot Burge's place. She writes that her place border's the Old River Swamp and Management area. Expect to see beech, magnolia, silky camelia, cowcubers, anise, and others in bloom.

Accommodations in Picayune include the Heritage Inn, off exit 4 (I-59), and the Majestic Inn, exit 6 (I-59). Contact Chris Wells 798-6961 for details.

MAY 26 - Jackson/Meridian area.

MNPS-sponsored field trip. Meet at the parking lot of Bo-Ro Restaurant, off Interstate-20 at the Newton/Highway 15 exit. We will see vegetation associated with mesic ravines, and possibly a remnant prairie. The tour will include parts of Newton, Jasper, and Lauderdale Counties. We probably will see the rare Oglethorpe oak (recently found to occur in Mississippi.) Contact Joe McGee (Hickory 646-5402) or Sidney McDaniel (Starkville 325-7570) for details.

MAY 26 - JACKSON AREA - WJDX - 62 AM RADIO

Steve Timme, author of WILDFLOWERS OF MISSISSIPPI will join Felder Rushing on his regular Saturday talk show from 8:00 to 10:00 AM. They will discuss Timme's experience with compiling information and photos for the book. Afterward, they will field caller questions about related topics.

PHOTOS OF THE GREENWOOD TRIP, FALL 1989

If you have never been on our field trips -- try it. You'll be glad you did. Fellowship, sightseeing, entertainment, and education -- all at minimal cost! For all of our field trips, dress for the conditions. Walking is not difficult. Bugs and poison ivy are usually not a serious problem on trails with proper attire. The weather may change the pace and direction of field walks, but does not cancel our scheduled trips.



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