

Mississippi Native Plants

The Newsletter of the Mississippi Native Plant Society

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An Annual for Late Summer Color

Joseph M. McGehee

One of our native wildflowers that I most look forward to every fall is the sticktight sunflower which, though superficially resembling a sunflower, isn't a *Helianthus* at all but a *Bidens* (*Bidens aristosa*). In Newton County (and probably across most of central Mississippi) *B. aristosa* can be counted on to burst into full bloom in early September.

And what a show it provides! Luminous drifts of these bright yellow composites are often commonplace along back roads just beyond the right-of-ways where they have escaped bush hogs, herbicides and other manicuring efforts. Sometimes sticktights (also known as beggar ticks) blanket recently cut over woodlands, obscuring, temporarily at least, the ravages of chain saws and log trucks. Sometimes swatches of sticktights bloom simultaneously along side of the royal purple flowered ironweed (*Vernonia gigantea*), and the pale, Wedgwood blue mistflower (*Eupatorium coelestinum*) providing a breathtaking Van Gogh or Cezanne-like combination.

I also grow sticktight in our yard or, rather, they grow themselves. Years ago on a dry Halloween day, before any heavy autumn rains had fallen, I collected a few seeds from plants growing along a dusty black road and scattered them along our back fence. We've had sticktights ever since. The seedlings first appear in late winter or early spring with things are still quite cool and, as soon as the weather really warms, rapidly grow into feathery, if somewhat non-descript plants three to four feet tall and three to five feet wide. Some might, and in fact do, consider them rank in habit.

Oh, the comments and criticisms my sticktights and I receive during the hot summer months. And while *B. aristosa* resembles *Cannabis sativa* even less than it resembles any *Helianthus*, 'Are you growing marijuana?' is a question I have come to expect.

But I know that come September these plain Janes will put on a knock-your-socks-off display. And it's not just the golden, two to three inch daisy-type flowers which appear by the hundreds per plant. The plants become alive with insects being visited by several species of butterflies and literally humming with bumblebees. Everyday in September is an inspiration with the sticktight in full bloom to gaze at. In the evenings, like so many wildflowers, the blooms close up, as though to reserve energy for its next display.

Then, around October first, the show is over almost as suddenly as it began. The yellow petals wither and disappear and the plants quickly set seed. By the end of the month the achenes or 'sticktights' are mature and ready to shatter in the first strong wind or downpour. Hikers will sometimes find a few of the two-pronged seeds adhering to their clothing after walks at this time of the year.

Before the seeds shatter I always try to collect a few to scatter in a new spot. They are perfect for establishing along fences, old barns and other out-buildings, and ditches where it is difficult to get many things to grow. Sticktights grow too wide and tall for planting along pathways that receive much use, for they tend to break easily if bumped.

Anyone with the space who is looking for an easy to grow native annual might well consider *Bidens aristosa* to provide a brilliant, cheery splash of bright yellow every September.

Joseph M. McGehee lives in Hickory, MS.



From the President Bob Brzuszek

We are in the midst of a quiet revolution. Perhaps you have noticed it, I know that I have. Like the sound of a shadow falling across the edge of an ancient forest, a silent yet unmistakable roar is rumbling through the Mississippi landscape. It is the sound of progress.

I am walking amongst the broken sticks and fallen heroes of a small patch of woods that was recently clear-cut. Located adjacent to where I work, I have often paid visits to these pine woods and called upon it as a friend. Here I have seen bushy tails of red fox disappear into the thick underbrush, barn owls gazing intensely upon my arrival, and watched a young fawn grow and become a mother of her own.

Perhaps the main reason that I slogged through these wet woods was to hear the piercing cry of a red-tailed hawk. She would announce my return to the woods each time, welcoming me with her penetrating shrill voice. I have watched her soar summer thermals with unearthly grace and ease, circling, ever circling. I once saw her plunge to the earth's floor in a frozen moment of time, only to emerge with a black racer snake in her grasping talons.

Today she has returned. Her next tree was bulldozed down, and she sits on the telephone wires next to the stump. Her head turned towards the north, she gives one final cry, and she was gone.

The land was purchased and cut by a realtor

who hopes to turn it into a commercial site. Where I live in southeast Mississippi, this is happening with in increasing propensity. As the population of New Orleans expands eastward, Pearl River County has become one of the fastest growing communities in the state. This growth is being unchecked by any zoning regulations or tree ordinances. As a consequence, it stands to lose much of it's natural beauty to development.

I have seen communities grow at a rapid pace and still retain their natural character and vital ecologies. This has resulted in a community where people are proud of their homes and cities.

A prime example is the successful Woodlands community in south Texas. Primarily residential, project designers preserved drainage and stream corridors for flood control and wildlife havens. Tree ordinances were written and enforced and protected the shady forest canopy. As a result, available lots were sold out even before the roads and utilities for the development were constructed!

The only way to preserve the beauty of Mississippi's Piney Woods from uncaring developers, realtors, home builders, and contractors is to regulate their actions. Counties need to be pressured by taxpayers into developing long-range community plans and ordinances. To keep the vision of the land that your grandfathers once knew, attend your local council meetings, or write to your city council, mayors or board of supervisors, and let them know you care. It takes many voices to elicit a change, before it is too late.



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Seasonal Favorites MNPS Members

★ Considerable thought was given to my answer, knowing my choice changes daily! Cardinal flower (*Lobelia cardinalis*) is always a favorite because given a moist environment this native can survive in sun or shade. Beginning late summer/early fall the color brightens even the shadiest spot. The red flower color reminds me of the lipstick that my grandmother use to wear. Hummingbirds can spot it from afar as well as people. An added plus is that it reseeds and will form a sight to behold. Watch for it this fall or just follow the trail left by the hummingbirds.
Karen Partlow / Meridian, MS

★ The flowering dogwood (*Cornus florida*) is one of my favorites this time of year. It has such nice bright red fruit. Although there are not many to see here in the Delta, the display on the dogwoods in Tishamingo State Park is really beautiful.
Bruce Roark / Greenville, MS

Fall Spotlight: Cardinal Flower (*Lobelia cardinalis*)

To some wildflower enthusiasts, no native red flower is as beautiful or as brilliant as *Lobelia cardinalis*, the cardinal flower. A dweller in wet or moist soil, in open places along streams, meadows and woodland edges where shade is not too dense its range extends throughout the most of MS with the exception of the Delta and the coastal areas.

This flower was brought to Great Britain in 1629 from Virginia and named 'Lobelia' in commemoration of Mathias L'Obel, a Flemish botanist. The common name 'cardinal' refers to its red color, of which Queen Henrietta Marie of England is said to have "laughed excessively" as it reminded her of a "cardinal's scarlet stocking."

Cardinal flower usually grows three to four feet tall but may attain greater heights in frost free areas. Plants are erect, perennial and herbaceous, with alternate, lanceolate leaves about five inches long which often take on a bronze cast. The flowering stems have 1 1/2 inch long tubular, irregular, two-lipped clear red flowers in terminal racemes that open from May to December. Pollination is by hummingbirds and insects.

The fruit is a many-seeded dry capsule which develops a brown color and splits apart when mature. The seed are small, approximately 725,000 seed per ounce and may be sown on the surface of a well-worked garden loam soil without covering as soon as they're ripe. Two to three weeks are required for germination at a temperature of 65° to 75° F and the soil should be kept moist but not wet.

Seedlings will form a basal rosette with clustering offshoots and generally remain that way during the first year. Flowering may occur the first, but usually the second year and every year thereafter. The plants are considered to be short-lived perennials so it is advisable to start new plants from seeds, from cuttings taken in summer, or from divisions of the offshoots in spring.

The root system is shallow, and is frequently winter-killed unless lightly mulched. Care should be taken not to cover the rosettes, however, or they won't survive the winter. Moist, humus-rich acid soils are preferred. When the soil is kept moist, the plants will tolerate full sunlight, but they thrive in part shade with average to damp soil.

Cardinal flowers may not be as plentiful in the wild as they once were so every precaution should be taken to preserve them.

Note: This article is an abridged version of the original written by Evan Paul Roberts which appeared in the Native Plant Society of Texas NEWS Vol XII, Num 5, 1994.

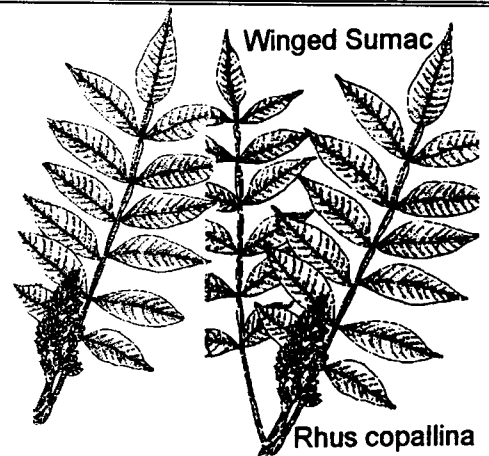


Family Portrait:

Anacardiaceae - The Cashew Family

Lynn Libous-Bailey

General Characteristics: Members of the sumac family are usually deciduous trees, shrubs, or woody vines. Many have resinous bark, stems, leaves, or fruits which produce irritating phenolic compounds. These often causes contact dermatitis in sensitive individuals or allergic reactions when volatilized during burning or bruising of the plant. Some members produce poisonous fruits. If you're thinking that poison ivy (*Toxicodendron radicans*) might be a member of this family you're right.



Leaves: The leaves are alternate and may be simple but are most often pinnately compound or trifoliate. Leaflets are entire (smooth edged), serrate (toothed), or occasionally lobed. Many deciduous members have fall coloration ranging from brilliant red/oranges to clear yellows or tawny reds.

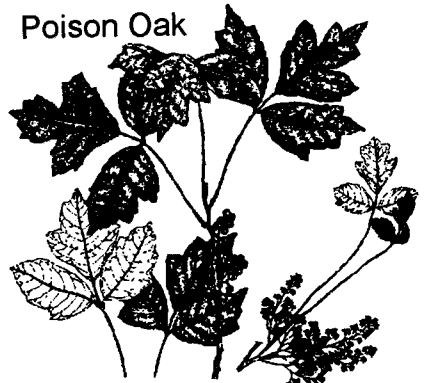
Flowers: Borne in terminal or axillary clusters in early summer after the leaves have fully developed. Individual flowers are small and inconspicuous, having 3-5 petals that are usually white, cream, or yellow/green. Flowers are often imperfect (separate male and female flowers) and plants dioecious (separate male and female plants) or polygamous (perfect and imperfect flowers on the same plant).



Fruits: Various types of drupes. Poisonous southeastern members have fleshy white or ivory colored drupes (poison ivy, poison oak, and poison sumac). Most non-poisonous members such as aromatic sumac, staghorn sumac, and smoke tree (*Cotinus obovatus*) have dry fleshed crimson colored drupes, often covered with a dense coating of hairs. Other members, like mangos, have fleshy thick yellow drupes.

Members native to Mississippi:

Aromatic sumac (*Rhus aromatica*)
Winged sumac (*Rhus copallina*)
Smooth sumac (*Rhus glabra*)
Staghorn sumac (*Rhus typhina*)
Poison sumac (*Rhus vernix*)
Poison ivy (*Toxicodendron radicans*)
Poison oak (*T. toxicarium*)



Some members of economic importance include:

Cashew (*Anacardium* sp.)
Mango (*Mangifera indica*)
Pistachio (*Pistacia* sp.)

The flesh of the mango is edible, however the skin may cause irritation to some people. Many people experience an allergic reaction when eating raw cashews, although the irritating oil is rendered harmless by heat.

Are you aware that...

The following plants are rare and uncommon in our state (S3 rank by the Natural Heritage Program) having only 21-100 documented natural occurrences.

Barbara's Button (*Marshallia trinerva*)
Mouse-eared Coreopsis (*Coreopsis auriculata*)
Florida Flame Azalea (*Rhododendron austrinum*)



Calender of Events

OCTOBER 26 8:00 AM TO 5:00 PM
NLU HERBARIUM PLANT SALE
MONROE, LA

Native plants for sale at the NLU
greenhouses. Contact Dr. R. Dale Thomas
at 318-342-1812 (D) or 318-343-1518 (E).

What does a rabbit like to eat?

I'm not sure, but I'll 'aster'. Lynn Libous-Bailey

I spent some time visiting my family in upstate New York during July. It was there that I discovered the culinary preference of a certain rabbit. I often read about deer proof plants in the garden but don't recall reading much about rabbits, except in conjunction with vegetable gardens.

The flower bed that borders part of the southwest property line of my parents yard had been planted with numerous natives including bee-balm (*Monarda didyma*), purple coneflower (*Echinacea purpurea*), grey headed coneflower (*Ratibida palmata*), tall blackeyed susan (*Rudbeckia heliopsidis*), phlox (*Phlox paniculata*), and sundrops (*Oenothera* sp.) to name but a few. Early each morning and again near dusk a rabbit would make its way from behind the neighbors garage and end up in that flower bed.

It would gingerly hop among the plants with its nose in constant motion, reminding me of a chef in a farmers market who picks up each piece of fruit and inhales its aroma hoping find the one with perfect ripeness. Every day, for the two weeks that I was there, the rabbits choice was always the same. Asters.

It would find the clumps of late purple aster (*Aster patens*), the stiff aster (*Aster linarifolius*) and the smooth leaf aster (*Aster laevis*) that were placed in the border and indulge itself with several tender tips of each plant.

The aromatic asters (*Aster oblongifolius*) and the New England asters (*Aster nova-angliae*) that were in the same planting were never eaten. Perhaps they are to a rabbit what broccoli is to former President Bush!

Coming to terms with...

Lynn Libous-Bailey

With the onset of fall the time to begin planting **bulbs** in anticipation of spring bloom is upon us. Or is it really time to begin planting **corms**? That all depends upon what you want to see bloom next year.

Often misused the term **bulb** technically refers to a globose mass of fleshy leaves (scales) which serves to protect the bud during the dormant phase of the plant. The underground buds may be covered by scales which are loose, such as lilies (*Lilium* sp.), or they may be tight like those of onions (*Allium* sp.).

A **corm**, on the other hand, is a solid structure formed by the enlargement of the stem base. It may be covered by paper-thin scale-like leaves like the well known example crocus (*Crocus* sp.). The bud, which may be easily visible or often nearly invisible is located on the surface of a corm rather than within.

BULB PRODUCING NATIVE
PLANTS INCLUDE:

Trout lily - *Erythronium albidum*
Quamash - *Camassia quamash*
Swamp Lily - *Crinum americanum*
Atamasco lily - *Zephyranthes atamasco*
Celestial Lily - *Nemastylis geminiflora*



CORM PRODUCING NATIVE
PLANTS INCLUDE:

Blazing Star - *Liatris* sp.
Yellow star grass - *Hypoxis hirsuta*,
Spring Beauty - *Claytonia virginiana*
Jack in the pulpit - *Arisaema triphyllum*
Grass-Pink Orchid - *Calopogon pulchellus*



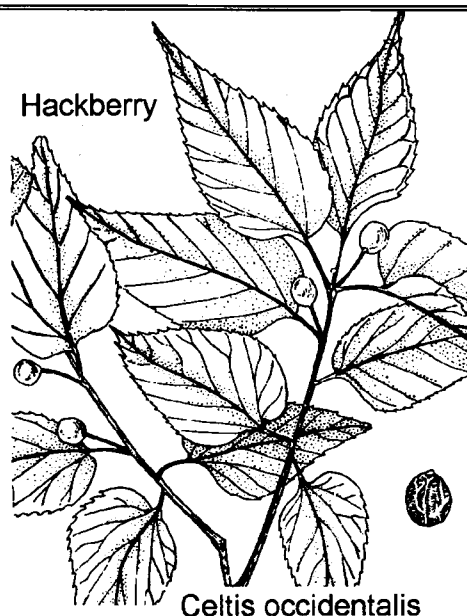
What's on the Menu?

Lynn Libous-Bailey

Butterflies flying about in the same area that birds are pecking at the ground. Not an unusual sight, but are you aware that the Mourning Cloak, American Snout, Tawny Emperor, and Hackberry Butterflies have something in common with the turkey, quail, pheasant and grouse? Besides coexisting in the same habitat they all use the native hackberry (*Celtis occidentalis*) as a food source.

Found throughout the state the hackberry is naturally associated with rich moist woodland edges along perimeters of open fields and saplings are often a common sight along fence rows. It tends towards being shallow rooted and reaches an average height of 40-60 feet. Its soft butter yellow fall color provides a soft hue to the woods edge and the gray-brown bark with its many corky warts and ridges provides winter interest and unlimited places for insects to over winter.

Titmice, nuthatches, wrens and other insect eating birds can often be seen 'working the bark' during the winter months for protein the insects provide. The quail and turkey are drawn to the fallen fruits which are drupes having soft sweet flesh surrounding the pit that provides a tasty and nutritious supplement to their diet of grain seed during the winter months.



The young new leaves unfurling in the spring and those that are produced through out the growing season are what the butterflies are interested in. For the Mourning Cloak and in particular the American Snout, Tawny Emperor and Hackberry Butterfly the leaves of the hackberries provide an almost exclusive source of food for larval (caterpillar) during development.

The Hackberry and Tawny Emperor butterflies both remain close to the hackberry tree through out their adult life. Often they can be seen perched on its trunk or leaves, sometimes gliding to near by fence posts to follow the warm rays of sun through out the day.



Hackberry Butterfly

Do you recognize...

An August - October blooming member of the snapdragon family this is an upright annual that brightens damp meadows, moist fields, and many ditches with flowers of various shades of rose, pink, or purple. Found throughout most of the the state, although infrequently in the coastal, southwestern, and Delta areas, and the leaves are linear and narrow along the flower stalks.



Mississippi Native Plants

The Newsletter of the Mississippi Native Plant Society

Mississippi Native Plants is the official publication of the Mississippi Native Plant Society and is published quarterly.

Winter (Issue 1)	December/January/February
Spring (Issue 2)	March/April/May
Summer (Issue 3)	June/July/ August
Fall (Issue 4)	September/October/November

Deadlines for the **Winter issue** are as follows:
Articles---**Oct 15** Calendar of Events---**Oct 30**

Deadlines for the **Spring issue** are as follows:
Articles---**Jan 15** Calendar of Events---**Jan 30**

Hard copies and/or articles in Word Perfect or Word, submitted to the Editor are solicited and welcomed

The Gulf Coast Native Plant Conference:**Single words - Many implications**

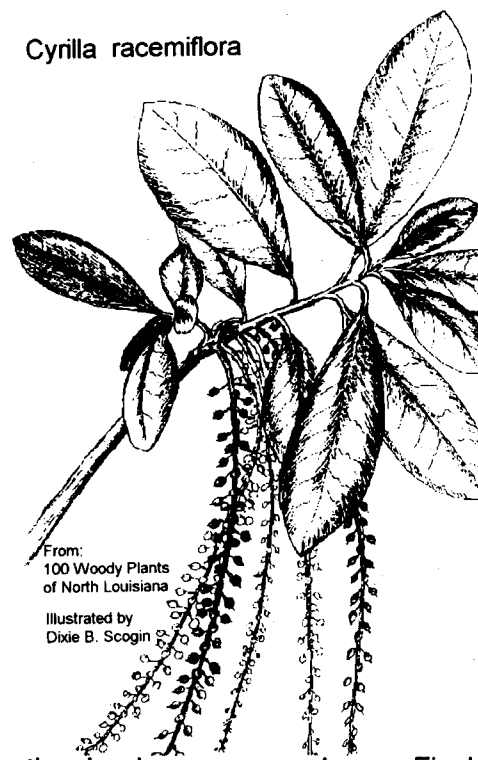
Lynn Libous-Bailey

Cyrilla. If I came away with nothing else from the conference it is the knowledge that there is a small native tree that thrives in damp areas, has attractive fall color and produces what many consider to be attractive racemes of flowers. This tree, commonly called Titi or Cyrilla, or more botanically correct *Cyrilla racemiflora*, was mentioned in at least seven presentations as one of the most underused trees in southern landscapes.

Who? John Mayronne presented this question to those of us who are faced with making decisions about the landscape around us. **Who** are you? Your choices about the type of garden and plants you choose to grow should be reflective of who you are rather than who others are.

Where? It was the insightful talk of Bill Finch that presented attendees with this question. Are we missing the point if we have plants in our gardens are native to the Piney Woods of southern Mississippi and we live in the Delta where none of those plants occur naturally? Should our gardens be about **where** we are and about preserving the native flora of the area? When you discover the native landscape around you, Finch pointed out, your garden can become reflective of that area. When you look at your garden can you tell **where** you are?

Cyrilla racemiflora



Mississippi Native Plant Society
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All members receive Mississippi Native
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**Do You Recognize...**

Gerardia
Agalinus tenuifolia

A few parting thoughts

'Landscapes which consistently attract the widest diversity of songbirds possess thick, lush vegetation (wide beds with lots of shrubs and trees for insect food and cover), clean dependable sources of water and a large inventory of fruit/seed producing plants. To attract nesting birds plant native hawthorns (*Crataegus* spp.), dense native roses and other thorny plants. The thorns provide safety from owls, cats, snakes and other bird predators. From 'Garden Paths: A Newsletter From Flowerplace Plant Farm' P.O. Box 4865, Meridian MS 39304.

'When we admire a flower we are celebrating the splendor of life and the millions of years of earth processes that are required to form it. Children have a natural fascination for the out-of-doors. There is a need to identify with and become a part of the lives of the plants and animals which share their environment. As they grow up their early experiences are vital in keeping a line of communication open with nature.'

From 'The Spiritual Gardener: A newsjournal celebrating the spirit of Mother Earth' 73249 Military Rd. Covington LA 70433

REMINDER:

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