NPSOT Notes

I didn’t get any new plant lists this week. BUT, not all the plants offered have been taken. So I’m including the old lists.

- Obedient plant - contact Carrie Dubberly carriedubberley@gmail.com
- Frostweed (Verbesina virginica) and obedient plant (Physostegia virginiana) - contact Sharla Stack sgstack@gmail.com
- Rattlesnake-master (Eryngium yuccifolium) - contact Rodney Thomas rook.thomas@yahoo.com
- Cut leaf Daisies aka Engelmann’s daisy (Engelmannia peristenia), Wild-hyacinth (Camassia scilloides), Golden Groundsel (Packera obovata) and Eastern gamagrass (Tripsacum dactyloides) - contact Bill Woodfin 214 236-3044
- Lanceleaf Coreopsis (Coreopsis lanceolate), Plains coreopsis (Coreopsis tinctorial), Narrow-leaf gayfeather (Liatris mucronate), Texas-star aka Texas yellow star (Lindheimera texana), Heath aster (Symphyotrichum ericoides), Wild bergamot (Monarda fistulosa), Mealy sage (Salvia farinacea), Yellow flax (Linum rigidum), Side-oats grama (Bouteloua curtipendula) and Standing-cypress (Ipomopsis rubra) - contact Lorelei Stierlen lorstierlen@gmail.com
- Pink evening primrose, annual claspimg coneflower, Canada Crazy Topped Onions, Gulf Coast Penstemon, Rattlesnake Master, Purple Skullcap and Zexmenia – contact Carol Clark carol@r-d-clark.com
- Yellow TX columbine, pinkish white flowering gaura and sweet autumn clematis – contact Debbie Doyle ddoyle@kittytoes.net
- Oenothera speciosa (aka Pink Evening Primrose or Pink Ladies) – contact Jean Suplick jean.suplick@gmail.com
- Gaura, Venus’ looking glass, and Melanie also bought a flat of green milkweed and is offering her extra plants for $2 each - contact Melanie Schuchart mschuchart@aol.com
- Lorelei still has copies of Doug Tallamy’s new book Nature’s Best Hope available. If you’d like to buy a copy ($23), contact Lorelei Stierlen lorstierlen@gmail.com.
When Plants are Overachievers

by Lorelei Stierlen

I’d had coral honeysuckle (*Lonicera sempervirens*) for years in Plano. It is a wonderful twiner that is loved by hummingbirds. Of course I had to plant several of them when I moved to Allen; the best spot was the back garden, so I added an arbor and added coral honeysuckle. I had bought one more plant, and I thought I’d give it a try on the north side of the house outside our bedroom window. I gave it one 5 ft tall trellis and hoped for the best. It didn’t do much that first year, but it was alive, and silly me, I thought it wouldn’t get much larger. Last spring, it took off and ate the trellis! I added two trellis side pieces in a vain attempt to give it more twining space. It ate those as well. This spring I gave in and added three 6 ft trellis pieces in front of it, and it is still going strong! This is Igor, my overachieving coral honeysuckle. I believe Igor wants to take over the entire wall!

What plants did you underestimate in your gardens?
Trapping Weevils and Saving Monarchs

Widely admired for its eye-catching wings and transcontinental migrations, the monarch butterfly, Danaus plexippus, depends on milkweed plants to survive. The monarch's eastern population migrates each year between the Midwest and the mountains of central Mexico. Concern about loss of milkweed habitat has prompted conservationists to recommend milkweed plantings in yards and gardens so that monarchs can keep making their long-distance trips.

Now, an unexpected finding by Charles Suh and colleagues at the Agricultural Research Service’s Areawide Pest Management Research Unit in College Station, Texas, could help save milkweed habitat and preserve one of North America’s most admired insects. They have found a formula for a lure that can trap a major milkweed pest.

The discovery stems from research originally designed to help the Texas Boll Weevil Eradication Foundation (TBWEF), which uses traps to monitor and detect boll weevil populations. Captures of weevils in traps are also used to help eradication-program managers decide whether to spray insecticides against boll weevils in particular fields.

But the traps haven’t always been reliable for detecting incipient weevil populations. At some field locations, for example, no weevils were captured in traps, but substantial weevil infestations were later found in nearby fields.

In 2009, TBWEF asked Suh to investigate. Though the boll weevil pheromone has a specific ratio of four component chemicals, commercial lures are formulated with a different ratio of the four pheromone components because the lures are easier and less expensive to manufacture that way. Suh and ARS colleague John Westbrook asked the manufacturer to produce a lure that replicated the ratio of the natural components, and they compared that lure with the standard-blend lure in field trials in Mexico and South Texas.

In a field study, they set up 80 pairs of traps along county roads and highways in Atascosa and Frio counties in Texas, with each pair spaced at least 50 meters apart and traps within each pair spaced about 25 meters apart. They baited one trap in each pair with a lure containing the standard blend and baited the other with the experimental blend. Traps were checked once a week from mid-May to mid-June and lures were replaced every other week.

In the first week, the researchers found that the traps were capturing a type of weevil distinctly different from the boll weevils they expected. The mysterious strangers were quickly identified as milkweed stem weevils, Rhyssomatus lineaticollis, a major pest of milkweed. They initially discounted the number of milkweed stem weevils being lured into the traps as irrelevant, but by the second week, it became obvious that more milkweed stem weevils were being captured than boll weevils and that the milkweed weevils were increasingly attracted to the experimental lure. The results showed that while the boll weevils were no more attracted to the experimental lures than to the standard lures, the milkweed weevils were more attracted. Overall, four times more milkweed weevils were captured in traps baited with experimental lures than in traps baited with standard lures.

The discovery, reported in Southwestern Entomologist, could be used to develop a trap-based system for detecting milkweed weevil and monitoring their dispersal and movements across landscapes, Suh says. Such a system could also help conserve a rare type of milkweed. The number of milkweed species attacked by the stem weevil includes Mead’s milkweed (Asclepias meadii), which is listed as a threatened species of plant (a risk level just below endangered) and is the focus of a federal recovery plan by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The research is part of Crop Protection and Quarantine, an ARS national program (#304) described at www.nps.ars.usda.gov.

Charles Suh is in the USDA-ARS Areawide Pest Management Research Unit, 2771 F&B Road, College Station, TX 77845; (969) 260-9588.

"Trapping Weevils and Saving Monarchs" was published in the October 2012 issue of Agricultural Research magazine.

by Dennis O’Brien,
Agricultural Research Service Information Staff.

Editor’s Note: This article comes from a newsletter I wrote 7 years ago.
Audrey Hepburn said: “To plant a garden is to believe in tomorrow.”

Today we are living through some strange times, and it is easy to lose our way in feelings of helplessness and hopelessness, and pessimism about tomorrow. There are problems so big loose in the world today, that we can feel powerless to affect anything.

I want to assure you that it’s not true! Things you can do in your own landscape with native plants can make a huge difference, because after all, small spaces can make a big difference to small creatures. Butterflies, native bees, beetles, and others are all suffering steep population declines. Those small creatures are the foundational pieces of a working ecosystem, which in turn, supports us all. Without small invertebrates, birds cannot feed their young, and the effects are felt all the way up the food chain. Without bees, beetles and butterflies to help pollinate crops, our own wellbeing is in danger.

The numbers for the overwintering population of Monarchs in Mexico are out for the 2019/2020 season, and they are not as good as we hoped they would be. Though the numbers seemed strong last summer, Texas had a wide band of drought stricken land as Monarchs passed through on their way south last fall. Many likely starved trying to cross that band. Travelling, I was struck by the number of butterflies and native bees crowded into tiny suburban and urban landscapes last fall--where the only available nectar flowers were blooming. When rains didn’t come and it wasn’t feasible to supply water to parched ranches and parks, those tiny urban oases, lovingly tended by their owners, were almost the only places small creatures like Monarch Butterflies could find a meal. We can’t control the rain and the heat, but if we can sustain many more tiny patches where people can nurture plants along, we can help not just the insects, but also the birds and other small animals that depend on seeds and insects to make their livings.
Collin County NPSOT Newsletter

In many parts of the state, intensive agriculture, logging, heavy grazing, development, and other land uses have eliminated many of the Milkweeds and wildflowers that Monarchs and other creatures used to use. We need to replace those resources as quickly as possible if we want to keep as many species as possible. Milkweed isn’t just for Monarchs. It’s a keystone species, important as a rich nectar plant and host plant for many other species.

Don’t wait for the government or some other group to step up and solve the problem. Government turns like a big ship, far too slowly for it to have a quick impact. In Texas, 95% of the land is privately owned anyway. Individual action is what is needed to avert further pollinator decline. Start today, at a size you can manage, on any piece of ground you have influence over, planting natives now to maintain hope for a brighter tomorrow.

Let your neighbors know what you are doing and how they can help. Connected habitat corridors are even more valuable than isolated patches of habitat. The more neighbors you can get to join in, the better! Many of our beautiful Texas natives are actually popular garden plants in Europe. If it’s not their style, then there’s no need to subscribe to a “wild look” for your neighbors to enjoy Texas natives in their landscapes.

At the bottom of this essay is a list of easy plants to grow for Monarchs and other pollinators. Ask your local nursery to stock these plants and to work on finding sources of nursery stock that have not been treated with long lasting insecticides like neonicotinoids. That’s important for pollinator success. Too many of the plants we buy for pollinators come pre-poisoned without our knowledge, making them toxic to the animals we are trying to encourage.

For Milkweeds, consider ordering a flat of plugs from Monarch Watch (monarchwatch.org). They will only send plants appropriate for your region, and the cost of growing the plants is partially underwritten by grants to ensure they are economical. If you can’t use a whole flat, think about splitting one with some friends.

Try some of the plants listed below in your own spaces, and be watchful for other plants in your regional that serve pollinators well.

- Buttonbush—*Cephalanthus occidentalis*
- Asters—*Symphyotrichum/Aster species*
- Goldenrod—*Solidago species*
- Blazing Star, Gayfeather --*Liatris species*
- Prairie Verbena—*Glandularia bipinnatifida*
- Frostweed—*Verbesina virginica*
- Texas Vervain—*Verbena halei*
- Sunflowers—*Helianthus species*
- Paintbrush—*Castilleja indivisa*
- Coneflowers—*Echinacea species*
- Zexmenia—*Wedelia hispida*
- Gregg’s Blue Mistflower—*Eupatorium/Conoclinium greggii*
- Skeletonleaf Goldeneye—*Viguiera stenoloba*
- Turk’s Cap—*Malvaviscus arboreus drummondii*
- Pitcher Sage—*Salvia azurea*
Mealy Blue Sage—Salvia farinacea
Texas Mountain Laurel (Dermatophyllum/Sophora secundiflorum/secundiflora)
Mexican Plum, Prunus mexicana
Horsemint, Beebalms—Monarda species
Prairie Clover—Dalea species
Gaura sp.
Texas Bluestars—Amsonia sp.

Best Milkweeds for Monarch Caterpillars Texas—MUST BE PESTICIDE FREE!
Green Milkweed—Asclepias viridis
Antelope Horns Milkweed—Asclepias asperula
Hierba de Zizotes Milkweed, Side Cluster Milkweed—Asclepias oenotheroides

There is a great pleasure in working in the soil, apart from the ownership of it. The man who has planted a garden feels that he has done something for the good of the world. – Unknown

Go forth, unleash beauty and hope, and be part of the solution.

Carol Clark, chair of NPSOT’s Bring Back the Monarchs to Texas Committee, 2020

Apple blossoms are a beautiful thing, especially when there is a swallowtail visiting.

Native Plant Society of Texas – Collin County Chapter
Thoughts for the Day

✓ Gardening requires lots of water... most of it in the form of perspiration. — Lou Erickson
✓ When weeding, the best way to make sure you are removing a weed and not a valuable plant is to pull on it. If it comes out of the ground easily, it is a valuable plant.

Answer to “What’s This?”

We found this Tarantula on my wife’s friend’s driveway. Her friend does this fun little Spidey-Dance and screams when she sees even a small spider, so we didn’t show her the Tarantula. But we did send her this Valentine’s greeting.

Collin County NPSOT General information

The Collin County chapter of the Native Plant Society of Texas meets the first Tuesday of January through October, in Laughlin Hall at the Heard Museum. Unless otherwise noted, doors open before 7:00pm and the program starts at 7:15pm.

The Native Plant Society of Texas is a non-profit organization with the goal to promote the conservation, research, and utilization of the native plants and plant habitats of Texas, through education, research, and example.

Thanks for your support.

email: collincountynpsot@gmail.com
website: http://www.npsot.org/CollinCounty/