Editor’s Note: ... First! ... Some bad news.

April 7 NPSOT Meeting Cancelled

In view of the current restrictions in place for the control of the Corona Virus, our April 7, 2020 meeting has been cancelled. We will schedule Chase Brooke, Collin County Agricultural Agent to speak on “The Role of Agrilife” later in the year.

Upcoming NPSOT Meetings?
Note: All are subject to cancellation. We will decide by April 15. Watch for updates.

Our Annual Stiff Creek Wildflower Walk will be May 2, 2020, starting at 9 AM. We will again start at the Laplante’s home, 4545 CR 412, McKinney. Following the walk, we will have a Potluck Brunch. Bring a dish. Refrigeration is available for the dishes as well as heating prior to serving.

May 5, 2020 is our Annual Meadow Walk at The Heard. We will meet early – at 6 pm. A shorter walk will leave at 7 pm.

Heard Native Plant Sale Now Coming in OCTOBER

The Heard Museum Native Plant Sale has been postponed from April 4-7 to October 2-4. The Heard Museum Members Only Pre-Sale will be available to Heard Museum members from 4-7 p.m. on October 2. The Plant Sale will be open to the public, while supplies last, on October 3, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., and October 4 from 1-5 p.m.

Editor’s Note: The image above is intentionally out of focus. It’s not your eyes . . . . (This time, anyway! 😊)

More Nature Walks Cancelled

All Oak Point walks and Allen Senior Center walks have been suspended until further notice.

Editor’s Note: ... Finally! ... Some good news!

Native Plant ‘Virtual’ Swap

by Lorelei Stierlen

I hope everyone is staying safe and healthy, and that we’ll be able to resume our normal schedule soon.

I confess, the rescheduling of the native plant sales is disappointing - I always look forward to the amazing plants on offer. However, we all want to make sure that everyone stays healthy. So as an alternative, the NPSOT Collin County chapter’s board is going to try and make sure folks can still get their native plants this spring with a ‘virtual’ plant swap. Typically, during this time of year, many of us bring our extra volunteer plants to share with anyone who’d like them in their garden. We still have volunteer plants that need homes, and we know we can do this and not risk our health.

The amazing John Worley has agreed to publish a weekly newsletter for several weeks to give folks the opportunity to send in lists of the plants they have in excess which need good...
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homes! So, if you have excess volunteers in your garden, just send me, Lorelei, an email at lorstierlen@gmail.com with your list and preferred contact information. If you see something in the newsletters you want, you can then reach out to members and arrange to pick up some beautiful native plants (from their front porch for example). This way everyone can continue to maintain a safe social distance and get some great plants for free.

This week’s list of the plants we have available is:

- 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

Editor’s Note: Lorelei’s description of me as “amazing” is not true. That’s just something my mother made up when I was a child and she wanted to boost my confidence! 😊😊😊😊

Of Note in National Geographic Magazine

The March National Geographic magazine features both the Doug Tallamy book and Bluebonnets on the same page.

We have 21 copies of the Doug Tallamy book for $23 each. If you’re interested, contact us at collincountynpsot@gmail.com
Spring is always full of delightful surprises!

by Lorelei Stierlen

Hopefully many of you were able to get out and see the trout lilies in bloom around the county. Nature, and our love of it, is something we can thankfully still enjoy while adhering to social distancing and sequestering requirements. I don’t know about you, but I always love spring and the surprises it brings in my gardens. There’s something unique about many of the early spring bloomers; they’re dainty, and it seems that if you blink, you’ll have missed them. This year my spring beauty (claytonia virginica) bloomed for the first time.

As many of you know, I am often very enthusiastic about native plants. And when I discovered my spring beauty was starting to bloom please picture this scene:

- Expression of sheer joy
- Run inside to get plant book and confirm my much hoped for identification
- More joy at a positive ID
- Grab camera
- Photograph the plants for at least 5 minutes
- Call Carol Clark to share my joy

Yes, this is your chapter’s president, the one who shamelessly does a happy dance in her garden. I hope that you’re all having as many wonderful moments with our spring natives as am I.

Editor’s Note: My wife’s quilting circle of friends passed this image around and had so much fun commenting on it that I had to include this timely thought.
Everyone Loves Texas Mountain Laurel
by Carol Clark

When I first moved to Texas, back in 1996, Texas Mountain Laurel had a different formal name and was considered unreliably cold hardy in the Dallas area. The Heard Museum had a couple of specimens in sheltered locations that I watched grow and survive for several years before buying one of my own.

Things change. What was Sophora secundiflora is now Dermatophyllum secundiflorum, and Texas Mountain Laurel (not a true Laurel) has become one of the staples of native landscaping in the Dallas area. The Heard still has some in its front gardens, and mine has grown into a magnificent shrub.

It’s been a while since we had an especially harsh winter, and I might still try to cover mine if we were getting down into very cold winter temperatures, but we’re not.

I love the extravagant display of early spring blossoms it puts on, and if the sight of it is not enough to attract your attention, the heavy aroma of grape soda the flowers emit might just catch you by the nose instead. Mine is planted by the front corner of the house, and I can smell it when I open my car door at the curb. It welcomes me home, even in the dark.

I also love its dark, glossy, evergreen foliage, dressing up the drab brick corner of my house all year long. Pollinators flock to the heady aroma of its flowers, and almost everything seems to find them useful: beetles, Honeybees, native bees, butterflies, moths, Syrphid Flies, and more gather at this early spring source of sustenance.
Because this plant is in the pea family, its flowers have a “banner” and “keel”, with two petals sticking up as the banner, and two more folded together to form the keel. The bright orange stamens are tucked away inside the keel, and only the pollinators that know how to pry the keel open and expose the stamens can collect pollen from this plant.

Blue Orchard Bees, *Osmia ribifloris*, are some of the most reliable visitors to Texas Mountain Laurel, and it is fun to watch these gentle solitary metallic blue bees work their way through each blossom. They transfer the bright orange pollen to their underbellies for transport.

Other bees, like the weird-looking *Xylocopa tabaniformis*, the Horsefly-like Carpenter Bee, love the blossoms too. Common Eastern Carpenter Bees and Southern Carpenter Bees also make appearances. Honeybees are ubiquitous when the plant is blooming.
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Butterflies like the Monarch, Red Admiral, and Swallowtails gather nectar from the flowers, and because the flowers grow in clusters, the butterflies often stay in one place long enough for a quick picture.

We even had a pair of blue jays build a nest under the dense cover of our Texas Mountain Laurel last year. Bees, butterflies, heady aroma, lavish display, evergreen foliage, nesting cover? What’s not to love?
Blue - Eyed Grass

by John Worley

I’ve been fascinated by Blue-Eyed Grass for years. It’s a native perennial wildflower that highlights fields in the spring. Blue-Eyed Grass is not a true grass. It does resemble a grass – it is about 4 inches tall, has narrow leaves, and grows in small bunches. But it is actually a member of the Iris family. In fact, Blue-Eyed Grass is of the genus *Sisyrinchium*, under the group *Iridaceae* – the Iris family. The plants grow from a rhizome and form a small seed sac full of tiny black seeds as the flowers fade. The flowers are open in the morning but tend to close up in the afternoon. Once the flowers have faded and are gone, it’s back to looking like a grass.

I’ve moved many plant clusters into one of my gardens as a ground cover. In the past I had gathered the seeds and was excited at the possibility of a new crop of plants. Once, while I was talking to Roger Sanderson, he mentioned that he had intended to get gather Blue-Eyed Grass plants. Unfortunately, the flowers had faded by then and the thin leaves were almost indistinguishable from the other prairie grasses. Well, I gave him my seeds. Later, when he talked to NPSOT, he said he had grown almost all of them and sold the plants at the Texas Discovery Gardens Native Plant Sale. *(And then I felt like a proud papa!)*

I did a little on-line research. It says the birds like the seeds. Blue-Eyed Grass loves full sun and will grow in our clay, but they seem to me to prefer good drainage. They do self-seed, but they seem to be fairly well controlled. *(They haven’t gotten out of hand in my garden.)* My research says Blue-Eyed Grass comes in many color combinations, so I guess I need to keep my eyes open as I wander through the pasture this spring.

Thought for the Day

"A human being should be able to change a diaper, plan an invasion, butcher a hog, conn a ship, design a building, write a sonnet, balance accounts, build a wall, set a bone, comfort the dying, take orders, give orders, cooperate, act alone, solve equations, analyze a new problem, pitch manure, program a computer, cook a tasty meal, fight efficiently, die gallantly.

"Specialization is for insects."

Lazarus Long in *Time Enough For Love* by Robert A Heinlein
Chalk Hill Photos

by William Woodfin
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**NPSOT Raffle Quilt Tickets**

Each year NPSOT holds a quilt raffle to help fund the Ann Miller Gonzales Research Grant Fund and the Kate Hillhouse Scholarship Fund. This year’s quilt is a bright picnic quilt made mostly from 1930’s reproduction fabrics with four vintage Texas maps set in. It is machine quilted, and machine washable and dryable. It is 62” x 76”.

Tickets will be available from May through October at 1 ticket for $2, 3 for $5, 7 for $10, or 15 for $20. Contact us at collincountynpsot@gmail.com.

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.

John Worley

email: collincountynpsot@gmail.com
website: [http://www.npsot.org/CollinCounty/](http://www.npsot.org/CollinCounty/)