January 5 –Zoom Meeting
Regular meetings resume on January 5.

Our Newsletter Cited in NPSOT Contest

The NPSOT website includes an article on the recent State Conference, posted on October 29, 2020 by Bill Hopkins, stating:

Virtual ceremony honors contest winners, outstanding members

The chapter newsletter contest was judged by Heidi Gigler, Ricky Linex, and Lonnie Childs. The judges selected the Trinity Forks Native Plant Press, edited by Mike Mizell, as the best newsletter. You can view current and past issues at https://npsot.org/wp/trinityforks/newsletters/. The judges also listed the Collin County Chapter newsletter as runner-up and cited the Highland Lakes Chapter for best layout, Cross Timbers Chapter for best content and Clear Lake Chapter for technology use.

Year End Gift Giving

A main source of our income is from the sale of seed packets. Unfortunately, the 2020 pandemic cancelled almost all of the opportunities for us to sell the seed packets.

We do receive a small portion of your annual state dues, but we must rely on the generosity of our members and friends to help support the quality programming we are striving to provide.

Please remember the Native Plant Society of Texas’ Collin County chapter in your annual year end giving. Your donation enables us to provide quality speakers and field trips for you, and to help train the next generation of native plant enthusiasts. (Contributions of this type, above and beyond yearly dues, for which you receive no tangible goods or services, are 100% tax deductible.)

Make checks out to: Collin County NPSOT, and mail to our treasurer, Lorelei Stierlen, here:
NPSOT c/o Lorelei Stierlen
735 Livingston Dr.
Allen 75002
Collin County NPSOT Newsletter

*Seeds for Holiday Gifts for 2020*  
by Carol Clark

Need quick holiday gifts? Need to fill in some gaps in your own landscape? We have seeds packs! Our fundraising efforts came to a grinding halt this spring with the spread of COVID-19 and restrictions on live gatherings. We were ready for a busy spring with seeds all packaged for several large events that never happened! So, we have quite a few seeds ready to go for holiday giving this year.

We have three basic sizes and prices: gift bags, milkweed mesh packs, and envelopes.

**Gift bags:** Our own *Monarch Menu Kit* includes 4 species of Monarch friendly plants, one package each of Green Milkweed, Antelope Horns Milkweed, Prairie Gayfeather, and Frostweed. Packed inside each bag is an assortment of literature to help the recipient create a thriving Monarch garden. Bags are white paper, so can easily be personalized with your own message or artwork. **Each gift bag is only $10,** with a much higher retail value.

**Mesh bags:** Each attractive see-through mesh bag contains two envelopes of milkweed seeds—Green Milkweed, and Antelope Horns Milkweed. Inside are sprouting instructions and suggestions on where to learn more about Monarchs and milkweeds. As an added bonus, the drawstring bags can be used to secure developing seedpods without spilling ripened seed. **The price for the milkweed mesh bags is $5,** and the retail value is approximately $13.

**Envelopes:** Each envelope contains a generous quantity of a single species and is stapled to a business card sized photograph of the flower in bloom. Frostweed, Green Milkweed, Basketflower, Tall Blazing Star, Narrow Leafed Coneflower, Prairie Gaillardia and Rattlesnake Master are all available. **$2 per envelope.**

To order any seeds, call Carol at 972 390-2882, or email at carol@r-d-clark.com, and we can arrange pickup or delivery. All proceeds go directly to our own Collin County chapter of the Native Plant Society of Texas.
Ilex vomitoria
Euphorbia cyathophora
Polystichum acrostichoides
Phoradendron leucarpum

These “Holiday” plants and many more are part of our large palette of native Texas flora.

The Executive Board of the Native Plant Society of Texas wishes you a joyous and safe Holiday Season. Thank you for being a member of our Society and for your continued support of our mission.

The Holidays are a time for Sharing and Caring.
Share your love of Texas native plants with those you CARE about by giving a gift membership to NPSOT.

A membership in the Native Plant Society of Texas helps
Preserve and protect our native habitats
Fund scholarships for the study of native plants
Promote native gardens though programs such as Bring Back the Monarchs to Texas

Give a Gift Membership
Donate to NPSOT
Learn More about NPSOT Programs

NPSOT is a 501(c)3 organization. Donations to NPSOT are tax deductible.
Thank You to the Visionaries and Mentors of Collin County NPSOT — from your New Chapter President, Valerie Dalton

This would be my formal portrait from our son’s December 2019 wedding. It’s rare that you’ll find me this ‘glitzy’. On the computer, you’ll usually see my faceless profile image of a pipevine swallowtail nectaring on Asclepias texana in our back yard.

I am so excited to become part of the leadership of Collin County NPSOT! Since I’ve only been around the Collin County chapter for a couple of years, I know little of its history. I don’t even know when the chapter was created. I love people and I love plants and in the past couple of years I became convinced that people wouldn’t survive for long without plants, in particular native plants. Thank you, Doug Tallamy, Carol Clark and Lorelei Stierlen! Bill Woodfin and Lorelei Stierlen, knowing my passion for native plants, asked me to run for the position of president of the chapter. I agreed and was elected President during the October meeting. As I am retiring from BPTMN board position of secretary at the end of 2020, I hope to focus on getting acquainted with others in NPSOT, both within our chapter and around the state.

The first order of business is to thank the visionaries and mentors of Collin County NPSOT. Thanks are due to those who have worked so hard since the chapter’s inception to keep the wheels going around. This is what little I do know about Collin County NPSOT: Betsy Farris was President in the early years and Bill Woodfin and Carol Clark each served as President for 6 years. Lorelei Stierlen stepped into that position two years ago so Carol could step down. John Worley has provided newsletters, program support and much more from behind the scenes with his official title of Publicity/Secretary. I know Rodney and Robin Thomas from Blackland Prairie Master Naturalists, but I didn’t know until recently that Rodney is Vice President of the Collin County NPSOT chapter. Carrie Dubberly taught NLCP classes and has probably been involved in many other ways. I know a few others – Tony Manasseri, Gailon Brehm, Amy Monroy, and Mike Roome. I’ve seen John Lingenfelder’s name in Zoom meetings, but I don’t believe we’ve met. Looking at the chapter website I see he is a Director of the chapter along with Tony and that Renee Wrenwood is the Botanical Writer. I have a lot to learn about NPSOT and a lot of folks to meet – I had no idea the chapter had a Botanical Writer or that the organization included Director positions. As a Master Naturalist student in 2018, I learned so much from Fran Woodfin and relish every opportunity to visit the Woodfin property and learn more about its history and its native plant treasures. I finally have an opportunity to become more involved with native plants through the Collin County Chapter of NPSOT and I am excited by the prospect.
Collin County NPSOT Newsletter

Let’s end 2020 and begin the new year by offering a heartfelt thanks to all those who have labored through the years to sustain Collin County NPSOT, remembering that these are volunteer hours. As I said, I can only thank those I know so please extend a thank you to those I miss. Betsy Farris will have served 15 years as Treasurer and she served as President! Everyone should make a point of extending gratitude to her for her unfailing support. I found this photographic evidence of Betsy’s long-term commitment to NPSOT in the box of chapter ‘stuff’ I collected from Lorelei last week.

Thank you, Lorelei for relieving Betsy of her duties as Treasurer, beginning in January 2021. Melanie Schuchart deserves much thanks for continuing to support our chapter website. I understand she wants to retire from that position, and I promise I will work towards finding a replacement web person. Everyone recognizes John Worley’s commitment as seen in his tireless support via the newsletters, computer support during in person meetings and his photography. Carol Clark continues to be the face of Collin County NPSOT through her many public outreach activities for Monarch Watch, Texas Native Bees, her blog Carol’s World and NPSOT. Fran and Bill Woodfin have supported NPSOT in countless ways. I am sure there are many others who deserve applause for their numerous volunteer hours. Much gratitude to all!

The Long and Winding Road – How Valerie Dalton Came to be President of Collin County NPSOT

Many of you may wonder just who is Valerie Dalton, this person who is now your NPSOT Chapter President. You could be a long-standing member and still we might not have met since I’ve only been coming to chapter meetings for the past couple of years. Shortly after moving back to Texas in 2014, I connected with the Collin County NPSOT chapter and discovered native plant sales at The Heard. At that point, I knew that native plants were easier to grow and used less water. At a NPSOT meeting, I met Sally Evans and Carol Clark. Sally visited with me and told me about the Master Naturalist program. No sooner than I was beginning to be excited about learning more, my mom’s health redirected my focus. For several years while dealing with the declining health of mother, I poured my energies into building garden beds at our suburban home in McKinney which was
landscaped primarily with turf grass when we moved in. Every year I filled my vehicle with native plants from the Heard sale and then worked to find a spot for each one. Frequently I discovered after planting my native treasure, that my choice of location was probably not the best. A good example is this gorgeous American Beauty berry bush that I purchased at the 2015 Heard sale in a one-gallon pot and planted in a newly created bed along the west wall of our home where it outgrew the space. In fact, it encroaches on the flagstone patio and grill that occupies the space in front of it. The guidance from NPSOT Landscaping Classes back then, would have been beneficial.

Yet, the mockingbirds love the berries and I believe the absence of berries by early November is an indication of their gratitude.


Stepping back a few years, I’d like to offer a bit more about how I became a passionate supporter of native plants in what seems to be such a short time. I am a native Texan and a retired mechanical engineer. I grew up in Denison in Grayson County, just north of here. You may have heard of “Shifting Baselines” where, without knowledge of the past, your measure of the present doesn’t account for changes of which you are unaware. For example, I played with Texas horned lizards, fireflies and what we called doodle bugs (ant lions) as a child in the 1950s and feel a loss when I realize that these are creatures are now rare and few of my friends have ever seen one, much less played with one almost on a daily basis. They have a shifted baseline for horned lizards. What I didn’t realize until recently is that I suffered from a shifted baseline regarding native plants and prairies. My native plants as a child were limited to horse apple, cottonwood and sycamore trees, grass burrs, bull nettles and goat head stickers. I had never heard the term “native”. Our neighborhoods were surrounded by mowed yards of whatever grew without irrigation or fertilization which often included grass burrs. Mowing was done with a push mower and weed eaters and blowers had not been invented yet. There were vegetable gardens, passalong plants including Japanese honeysuckle, day lilies, irises, and jonquils. Somehow, I never experienced the glory of *Penstemon cobe*, Fringed puccoon, American basket flower, little blue stem or side oats gram.

I left Denison after high school and began to dip my toes into gardening, acquiring a few passalong plants such as roses and althea bushes from my grandmother and occasionally...
purchasing something that I thought was ‘pretty’ at the plant nursery. So began my adult gardening experience. I accepted the American model of a monoculture lawn with a few foundation shrubs. My gardening knowledge over the next 50 years slowly expanded. During that time, my gardening philosophy began to experience paradigm shifts. My early gardening was often frustrating as first one plant then another died. In the 1990’s Redenta’s Nursery in Arlington introduced me to perennials, cottage gardens and Sally Wasowski’s first book, “Landscaping with Native Plants”. I was intrigued by the concept of native plants, but I never really studied the book, using it more as a pictorial reference than anything else. Of course, the internet wasn’t around back then. Natives replaced other plants like azaleas and dwarf pittosporum in my gardens because they required less water and chemicals or were more suited to the wild swings in our climate. I began to understand that not all plants were meant to survive in Texas, but I had yet to realize there were some that survived too well. My interest in native plants expanded when my family moved to St. Louis in 2006. I shopped at the annual Wild Ones native plant sales and took the long drive to the Missouri Wildflowers Nursery, hoping to find deer resistant plants. Coping with bush honeysuckles that covered much of the 4 acres surrounding our home led to an understanding of the invasive nature of many introduced species and I began to get an inkling of the damage that nonnative species can inflict.

In 2018, with knowledge of Texas ecoregions from Master Naturalists and Doug Tallamy’s book, “Bringing Nature Home”, I had another paradigm shift regarding gardening and nature. From Tallamy, I learned about the critical role native plants play in biodiversity. During BPTMN training, I experienced the ever-changing prairies, through visits to remnant like the Woodfin property, which in April 2018, introduced me to the glory of prairie plants. I discovered fringed puccoon, Amsonia, Baptisia, Packera obvata, Marshallia caespitosa (Barbara’s buttons) and Penstemon cobea. I learned about the Big Four grasses, wild hyacinths, orchids and so much more.
I felt like a kid in a candy store! Yet I had not assimilated the emotional impact of these experiences. Then I read Matt White’s book, “Prairie Time,” which allowed me to finally name the angst that had lived deep in my soul for years. It was prairie that I longed for - landscape that swayed in the breezes sweeping across our land, reflecting the ebb and flow of life with the seasons. I had always been joyless at the sight of shaped evergreen shrubs poised motionless over acres of mowed lawns, replicated as far as the eye could see. I literally sobbed with the realization that I had stumbled through so much of my life in ignorance. My aunt and I often talk of her childhood spent on the eastern edge of Hagerman when it was a small town, before Lake Texoma was built and Hagerman National Wildlife Refuge was created. My aunt remembers that her uncle drove a horse pulling a blade to mow a swath around the farmhouse that separated them from the prairie. She remembers collecting wildflowers for her grandmother when she visited. Granted, I don’t want to give up all my modern conveniences, but I sure would like to see more of those native plants and the many creatures that have disappeared from our lives. In the past twenty years or so, I’ve come to see the fallacy of the American lawn and suburban landscapes.

Now I share native plants and seeds with others as part of my ‘bucket list,’ while creating a space on our suburban lot that supports plant diversity and providing compatible habitat for our prairie’s creatures. In my latest paradigm shift, I have moved from egocentric to ecocentric gardening, hoping to restore balance in the web of life on a suburban lot. I have made it my mission in life to share native plants with as many people as possible. Turf grass is an ever-decreasing percentage of our landscape as over 100 native species have been added. I am frequently amazed at the tiny creatures that appear, seemingly out of nowhere. The prairie beds at our home reflect much of the randomness of nature, changing every day, providing compatible habitat for our prairie’s creatures. I’ve been fortunate to have tolerant neighbors as I push the envelope on suburban landscapes. I also have multiple sources for prairie plants that reach well beyond what is commercially available. Some of my favorite plants I discovered this year are modest but steady performers. A couple of examples I have added to our front bed this year - Philadelphia fleabane (left) and Bradburia Pilosa (center). Most people will never notice, but I can guarantee that the smallest creatures do! Humans have noticed the Cirsium texanum (Texas thistle) and wondered why I would intentionally plant it. Here’s one reason – a skipper on a Texas thistle, June 7, 2020 (right).
Collin County NPSOT Newsletter

December 2020

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 7:00 pm and the program starts at 7:15 pm.

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/

What I’ve learned most recently is that the wheels of our universe rely on the smallest cogs in order to continue to turn. I am committed to doing what I can to insure the survival of those small, exquisite but integral parts. I invite you to join me in the journey!

Please feel free to contact me via phone or email:
valerie_dalton@msn.com
Home: 972-542-5346
Mobile 636-751-0979

I would love to hear about your native plant experiences and why you belong to Collin County NPSOT. Can someone tell me when the chapter was officially established? How many plant rescues have you worked? Did you join because you like the people? Are you a birder who appreciates the connection between plants and birds? Are you concerned for the biodiversity of our planet? Do you have a favorite native plant? Do you enjoy the opportunity to learn about nature? Please share your NPSOT experiences with me.