February 2 – Zoom Meeting

Join the Collin County Chapter on Zoom for their February meeting on the 2nd at 6:30 for social time, 7:00 for the presentation. Our speaker, Karen Albracht, administers the Tenison Park Pollinator Garden, a functioning native plant-pollinator haven located in an East Dallas public park and maintained solely by volunteers.

You must register in advance. Here's the "Official" invite with link -
When: Feb 2, 2021 06:30 PM Central Time (US and Canada)
Register in advance for this meeting: https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZcschuhtGltG-XtCt9Fa9p9n2hMF4
After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting.

Website Updates Underway

We are currently working on updating our website. We have made some changes this past month and are on the lookout for more updates in the coming months.
If you know of a relevant upcoming event, activity, or other point of interest for NPSOT – Collin County members and those interested in native Texas plants, please contact our webmaster- Tim Castelli. We are especially looking for items that would be of interest to people just getting started with native plants. Thank you.
Spring is Around the Corner!

by Valerie Dalton
President, Collin County Chapter, Native Plant Society of Texas

“Our mission is promoting research, conservation, and utilization of native plants and habitats through education, outreach, and example.”

The sun is shining and lures me outside, into the chilly afternoon air whipped by stiff north winds. I shiver as I walk quickly, seeking signs of Spring stirring among our native plants. The Mexican Plum tree does not disappoint, displaying its buds, straining, ready to burst open.

It is a time of anticipation, awaiting the glory of Spring.

February 17, 2019 Forestiera pubescens (Elbow Bush, male, identified by Dana Wilson, North Texas Master Naturalist), Spring Creek Forest Preserve. Rightly known as “Spring Herald” or “Texas Forsythia”.

When writing about nature, a subject I love but one where my knowledge is thin, I spend a lot of time on the Internet and refer to a collection of books for answers. What happens when you search for “male elbow bush” on the Internet because you cannot remember dioecious and monoecious?

You find images of male elbow hardware. That was an entertaining moment! The good news is that when you try again you find another source where you learn when flowers open before the leaves emerge, it is termed precocious flowering. The University of Texas site includes images detailing the differences between the Forestiera pubescens male and female flowers and other handy attributes to aid in identification.

As I searched for a short quote about Spring for the image above, I hoped for one by a naturalist. After selecting “Can words describe the very fragrance of Spring?”, I wondered if the author, Neltje Blanchan, was indeed a naturalist? According to Wikipedia, “Neltje Blanchan De Graff Doubleday (October 23, 1865 – February 21, 1918) was a United States scientific historian and nature writer who published several books on wildflowers and birds under the pen name Neltje Blanchan. Her work is known for its synthesis of scientific interest with poetic phrasing.” In addition, she was one of the first to classify flowers by color to make it easier for the novice to identify a plant. If you found her phrasing poetic, Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation has provided a downloadable eText of WILD FLOWERS An Aid to Knowledge of Our Wild Flowers and Their Insect Visitors by Neltje Blanchan, published 1901.

It is filled with delights – here is a single paragraph to entice you to read more.

Collin County Chapter – Native Plant Society of Texas
“Ages before men cultivated gardens, they had tiny helpers they knew not of. Gardeners win all the glory of producing a Lawson pink or a new chrysanthemum; but only for a few seasons do they select, hybridize, according to their own rules of taste. They take up the work where insects left it off after countless centuries of toil. Thus it is to the night-flying moth, long of tongue, keen of scent, that we are indebted for the deep, white, fragrant Easter lily, for example, and not to the florist; albeit the moth is in his turn indebted to the lily for the length of his tongue and his keen nerves: neither could have advanced without the other. What long vistas through the ages of creation does not this interdependence of flowers and insects open!”

It has been said that native plants exhibit the following behavior: Year 1 – They sleep. Year 2 – They creep. Year 3 – They leap! In our yard, this may be the year the Packara obovata (Golden Groundsel) leaps, creating a microcosm of a shaded prairie edge like that I first witnessed at the Woodfin Farm. If you have ever experienced a field aglow in Golden Groundsel blooms you can understand why it reminds one of Spring.

As we contemplate and look forward to Nature’s rebirth this Spring, the offer to meet less formally, via Zoom, still stands. A meeting with a dual purpose remains an option. Purpose One would be to have a round table discussion on a chosen topic. You could call it brainstorming or dreaming of what we could accomplish. What are your thoughts on how our chapter can achieve its stated mission? As a new President, I need your input. Know that your thoughts will be valued, whether you are a chapter member of many years, a new member, or a first-time visitor. Submit your suggestions for discussion topics to Valerie. Purpose Two would be to give folks an opportunity to interact with others interested in native plants and get to know one another better. If you want to participate, just let me know via email. I imagine an informal meeting, with lots of laughter, thought provoking ideas and connecting with others. I have a Zoom Pro account and can set up meetings and email meeting invitations to anyone who is interested. If Zoom meetings are not for you, please send me an email. If you prefer to visit via a phone conversation, send an email with that request.

May you each experience the wonders of Spring in the upcoming weeks! I am looking forward to the first buds bursting into bloom and the rosettes sprouting into full growth.

WORD OF THE MONTH

As promised, a Word of the Month. Somehow the botanical books that grace my shelves have yet to educate me telepathically. Thankfully, it seems that last month’s word, agrostology, and the work of Mary Agnes Chase are still filed in memory. With that, the term “arvensis” demanded attention. A little research in this small book (p 89) produced the British definition: Arvensis – “of ploughed fields”
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My knowledge of plants of the species *arvensis* was confined to *Torilis arvensis* - which I knew to be an invasive species. Wikipedia lists its common name as **tall sock-destroyer**. If you have ever walked near the plant covered with seeds, you would totally agree with this appellation. *Torilis arvensis* is a species of flowering plant in the family Apiaceae. It is also known by the common names spreading hedge parsley and common hedge parsley. It is native to parts of Europe and it is known elsewhere, such as North America, as an introduced species and a common weed.

As the definition of arvensis means “of ploughed fields” you might expect that most plants in this species are not native and are considered invasive. Texas Invasives covers plants, animals, insects and pathogens. Here are two additional examples of nonnative invasive plants, species *arvensis* from the site.

Further exploration uncovered other genera of species *arvensis* such as *Sinapis arvensis* L. (charlock mustard) that have been introduced throughout the continental United States. It is left to the curious to determine the total number of introduced *arvensis* species. However, it appears the majority are introduced and likely invasive.

Indeed, a search of Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center database for Texas natives that might be arvensis species, uncovered just two – *Mentha arvensis* and *Rubus arvensis*. I was surprised to learn that “The fruit of *Mentha arvensis* is toxic and may be fatal if ingested in large quantities. It is especially dangerous to children.”

SEEDS AND SEEDLINGS TO SHARE

Finally, there are seeds and seedlings to share from Grayson and Collin Counties, ranging from *Andropogon Ternarius* (Split beard bluestem) to *Vernonia baldwinii* (Western Ironweed). Laura Kuwayama contributed a bag of *Eryngium leavenworthii* (Leavenworth’s eryngo). I cannot wait to add this one to our garden. **Contact Valerie** if you have seeds or plants to share with others or if you want to see the current list. Some seeds can be mailed via SASE; front porch pick up is available as well.
Golden Groundsel – Our Bright-eyed Early Riser

by Tim Castelli

For beginners to native Texas plants looking to fill almost any shady area with a well-behaved ground cover, a can’t-miss choice is **Golden Groundsel** (*Packera obovata* or *Packera aurea*). It is native to north-central and east Texas, and much of the eastern half of the US.

During the doldrums of February and March, the Golden Groundsel offers one of the first signs that spring is on its way. They can begin blooming as early as mid-February and last for over a month. Their bright golden yellow blooms brighten up the early spring, as their flower cluster rises dramatically above the leaves.

Additionally, it provides appealing evergreen foliage for a great year-round look. It is an excellent choice for shady and somewhat moist areas. It is very hardy, able to weather the extremes of north Texas.

With their runners or stolons, the Golden Groundsel can fill up a corner of the garden. Plus, their runners can be easily transplanted to start new colonies. As a bonus, they can also propagate by seed. After the flowers have seeded, removing the spent stem cleans them up, and they are a wonderful evergreen ground cover for the rest of the year. Other than cutting back stems after flowering,

very little maintenance is required. In addition, it has no serious insect or disease problems.

Golden Groundsel is 3 – 6 inches tall, when in bloom reaching 14 – 20 inches high. It is rosette-forming with ovate shaped leaves and serrated edges, 1 – 2 inches in length. For soil, it prefers well-drained and humus-rich. Additionally, it provides nectar or pollen for many insects and other arthropods.

Also known as **Roundleaf Ragwort**, it has great flexibility - suitable for a naturalized woodland, along borders, or a more formal shade garden. It makes a great neighbor to:

- **Eastern Red Columbine** (*Aquilegia canadensis*)
- **White Avens** (*Geum canadense*)
- **Texas Frogfruit** (*Phyla nodiflora*)
- **Lyreleaf Sage** (*Salvia lyrate*)

Lastly, one of many native plant mysteries is why it is not a more popular ground cover. So many non-native and invasive ground covers are used in Collin County that cannot compare to Golden Groundsel's traits. Non-natives lack its dramatic eye appeal, beautiful evergreen foliage, non-aggressive nature, and sustenance for native bees and other insects. Golden Groundsel is a must-have ground cover, offering a bounty of benefits.
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/