All official events are still cancelled by the State Board

These are my two new helpers, Dixie (the dark one) and Taffy (the blonde). They came from the Mason county animal rescue about three weeks ago. They were part of a 12 dog rescue that included several pups from Dixie. They are beginning to learn some manners and always come when I whistle, that counts for a lot with me.

Dixie has taken her job as a varmint patrol officer very seriously and has killed one possum and two armadillos so far.

I was hoping that the critters would be frightened away by the smell of the dogs. But evidently not. They ‘treed’ a fox in my old stone shed, so I penned them up to let the fox escape. Thank
goodness they didn't catch it. I would be so upset it they killed a fox. Hopefully, the foxes are too smart and the jackrabbits are too fast for them.

Golden Ball Leadtree or Is It Golden Tree Leadball?
I Hate Those Compound Names
By Lonnie Childs

In our beloved Hill Country ecoregion, one microhabitat that has declined in recent times is our understory. Ravaged by deer, goats, and chainsaws, this vegetative zone has suffered, resulting in the decline of many important species of shrubs and small trees. Not only are these species significant ecological contributors, many are just plain interesting from a botanical perspective and provide color and diversity to our landscape.

So if you are growing weary of looking at oak wilt devastated Live Oaks or somewhat common looking Post Oaks, it's time to plant some understory vegetation and improve the view while benefiting the habitat.

What should you plant? There are many good native species available in the nursery trade,
but the one that I would offer up as one of my favorites is the strangely named Golden Ball Leadtree (*Leucana retusa*), also sometimes called Little Leadtree.

This small tree typically is found growing from just west of Gillespie County to the Davis Mountains and Big Bend and on into New Mexico and northern Mexico, although there are herbarium incidences of it in Blanco and Kendall counties. Since it grows both east and west of us, I would speculate that deer may have something to do with its absence in our county. Its normal habitat will be rocky limestone areas or dry canyons. I have personally seen it growing in the wild while kayaking along the South Llano River.

*Leucana*, meaning white in Latin, is a genus of 22 species commonly referred to as Leadtrees, although I have never discovered why they hold that moniker. Most do have white flowers as opposed to the golden variety that I am suggesting. Its Mexican cousin, *Leucaena leucocephala* or the White Leadtree, are considered economically valuable since they were traditionally used and even cultivated for firewood/charcoal, as a green manure crop, for food and medicinal purposes, and most importantly as fodder for livestock, both the leaves and seedpods. Unfortunately, you can imagine that the deer would appreciate them also. Some other species of Leadtrees can be invasive by forming thickets, but I have not found our Golden Ball to be such.

**Classification:** The *Leucana* genus resides in the Fabaceae family (formerly *Leguminosae*) also commonly known as the Legume or Pea family recognizable by their classic "bean-like" seed pod and explaining their nutritional value. Further, they are included in the subfamily *Mimoseae* which describes their similarity to Mimosa trees. *L. retusa* was first collected by the famous plant collector, Charles Wright, in May, 1849, as he trekked through west Texas walking 750 miles from San Antonio to El Paso and then back. Asa Gray, the eminent Harvard benefactor and professor, described and named the plant in 1852 passing on a collected specimen to Kew Gardens in England.

**Description:** Golden Ball Leadtree is a deciduous shrub or small tree displaying a plethora of showy balls of golden-yellow flowers throughout spring and summer. It is a small, multi-trunked tree or large shrub typically rising to 12-15 ft. tall but occasionally reaching 25 ft.
With alternate leaves, the foliage is airy and light-green resembling a Mimosa and serves as one of its most attractive features providing a unique contrast to our typical vegetation. The mature bark is flaky and cinnamon-colored adding to its interest. The sweet-smelling flowers occur in 1 in., yellow-orange globes and will appear after rain from summer through fall.

**Growing conditions:** Golden Ball Leadtrees prefer well-drained soil but can tolerate a variety of sub-strates including rocky limestone or igneous soils, caliche, or sandy loam. It can grow in full sun to part shade and is extremely drought tolerant, thus requiring little watering. It can be easily propagated from seed but is also readily available in the nursery trade. The tree’s major detriment is its low deer resistance, so it will need to be caged at least until it reaches full height.

If you want to dress up your understory and add to your botanical diversity, Golden Ball Leadtree is truly an excellent specimen tree that offers up the trifecta of attractive bark, beautiful foliage, and gorgeous flowers.

"Tiny Plants You Should Notice"

Silver Puff  Chaptalia texana

I bet few people have taken notice of this plant. If you have seen it, you probably just thought it was a dandelion. When I discovered it years ago here at our farm, it intrigued me enough to figure out what it was. Yes it is a composite family but is not a dandelion.
It is best identified by the leaves. On top just a normal green color, but if you turn a leaf over as in the photo, you will discover that it is covered with minute hairs that give it a silver or white appearance. Marshall Enquist describes it as "densely woolly".

The flowers do not open to display a petal arrangement. Instead they stay closed until the seeds are ripe and ready to disperse. Then, it does resemble a dandelion.

The main bloom time is spring but it may also bloom in fall as it was September 2016 when I first saw it blooming and identified it. The rosette of leaves hug the ground and the bloom/seed stalk is only a few inches tall. It prefers shady areas and mine are found under the dappled shade of live oaks & cedar elms. Distribution maps show we are near the northern edge of its range but it stretches from the coast to Big Bend. Whenever I find a plant that has such a limited range and we are part of it, I think that is pretty special.

So go out and find this plant. Look low and in the shade.

Kathy Saucier

Our Video Productions

We are getting the hang of this. Next stop, Sundance Film Festival. Or at least, your library for a potential paradise. Please forward the video links to all of your friends and especially any neighbors who might not be from the area and need some help with their landscapes.

Kathy Lyles’ Back Yard

Kathy Lyles' Yard Tour
Al Smith's Native Orchid Program

Al has updated the care for the *Cymbidium* orchid. Until we figure out how to slip a slide into the presentation, we'll add his further thoughts here.

“The *Cymbidium* orchid can get infested with white spots that are known as scale; a small insect that can kill the host plant. When the scale becomes noticeable you want to isolate the plant from your other orchids and start treatment to control the scale. I used rubbing alcohol on a cloth and rubbed it on the leaves where infested. This is not very satisfactory since the alcohol tends to dissolve the waxy layer on the leaves causing them to dry out. A better method is to use warm soapy water and wash the leaves carefully. Be sure to rinse the leaves thoroughly to remove any soap. Several treatments may be required.”

Bergman Ranch Tour

Interesting Info Links sent in by Our Members

Joyce Studer was right. I've explored this link a bit and it has lots of great information.
Click Here for WATER UNIVERSITY

Enter NPSOT State Photo contest with link below. Deadline Aug. 31
https://npsot.us5.list-manage.com/track/click?u=13b2183ee1283099953dc5c35&id=62f9a32956&e=47e89a65e4

Enter NPSOT State Video contest with link below. Deadline Aug. 31
https://npsot.us5.list-manage.com/track/click?u=13b2183ee1283099953dc5c35&id=e96b73ade2&e=47e89a65e4

Texas Master Naturalists offers free webinar classes. For all details see link below.
https://txmn.org/hillcountry/chapter-calendar/

Still On For Fall:

**Plant sale – Thursday, Oct. 1**
It will be held at Gilbriar Gazebo with COVID-19 precautions. As the date gets closer we will list the precautions in the email that has the Available Plant List. As
always, the plant list will be emailed a few days before your order deadline. It is possible that some things that are listed may no longer be available by the time your order is received. It is important than you get you order in quickly once you receive the list. So please be thinking now of what plants you will want.

**NLCP 1 class - Saturday Oct. 17**
Taught virtually by Mary Frushour, Kathy Saucier & Paula Stone

Check out the resources on our website https://npsot.org/wp/fredericksburg/
Thanks Denise Coulter for maintaining it and sending out these newsletters for me.

- Photos that accompany articles are supplied by article author unless otherwise noted.
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Paula Stone, Pres.
Fredericksburg Chapter
Native Plant Society of Texas