



The Sabal

March 2020

Volume 37, number 3

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Plant species page #s in the Sabal refer to:
"Plants of Deep South Texas" (PDST).

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NPP meeting topic/speaker:

Tues., March 24th, at 7:30pm

"Spring Wildflowers"
presented by — Ken King

Ken has travelled to the tiny nooks and crannies of deep South Texas spotting blooming wildflowers. He is sure to delight and surprise with this PowerPoint presentation.

He is the co-author of "Plants of Deep South Texas," published in 2011. It has become the resource of choice on our regional native plants.

The meeting is at: Valley Nature Center,
301 S Border, (Gibson Park), Weslaco. 956-969-2475.



Photo: Marine Blue butterfly on **Velvet Lantana** (*Lantana velutina*, PDST 417). Velvet Lantana continues to bloom year-round if moisture is available. It is fairly disease resistant, does well in cultivation and is easily grown from seed. Photo by Dan Jones.

The Sabal is the newsletter of the Native Plant Project.

It conveys information on native plants, habitats and environment of the Lower Rio Grande Valley, Texas.

Previous **Sabal** issues are posted on our website [www.NativePlantProject.org].

Electronic versions of our **Handbooks** on recommended natives for landscaping are also posted there.

Change of address, missing issue, or membership: <bwessling@rgv.rr.com>

President - Ken King - <wk_king01@yahoo.com>

Blooming Plants of Early Spring (In the Miller/Nagy Garden) —Photos by Rachel Nagy

During this dry, early spring, few plants are in bloom. Those which bloom this early are vital in supplying pollen, nectar and seeds for our wildlife.

Rachel Nagy has generously provided a wealth of photos taken in her own garden and other places, from this early spring and last.

Drought-Resistant Species:

Especially important this year are candidates for “xeriscape” gardens. In places which are impossible or inconvenient to water, these will perform well once established. (Every species needs a bit of initial soil moisture to survive. In general, more water equals more blooms.)



Huisache bloom and newly-emerging leaves. *Acacia farnesiana*, PDST 240. Huisachillo produces similar blooms. Both species smell wonderful.



Blackbrush (*Acacia rigidula*, PDST 241) is sometimes called Poor Man’s Ebony, as it has similar leaves and is smaller in stature. Caterpillar-like blooms typically occur in spring.

White Prickly Poppy (*Argemone sanguinea*, PDST 345) often begins blooming during winter. Blooms are usually white, often developing a pink tint and sometimes, and in some locations, becoming blood red (i.e. sanguinea: blood-like). Doves are especially fond of the seeds.



To remove dried-out specimens, double-gloving with oven mitts is helpful. Established easily from wild-collected seed.

Spanish Dagger (*Yucca treculeana*, PDST 20) is lovely in spring, and may bloom after rain in other seasons. Mike Heep recommends cutting off the spiky leaf-tips to protect yourself from injury.

Buckley’s Yucca (*Yucca constricta*, PDST 20) occurs in sandy soils and on sandstone. It is shorter, with flexible linear leaves.

Mormon Tea (*Ephedra antisiphylitica*, PDST 14) is unusual and easily overlooked. This specimen is growing in a pot and has produced seed. Note the dark seeds within a fleshy red covering. They are produced singly, paired, triplets and in fours. A relative of Moctezuma Cypress, it is a Gymnosperm, which do not produce flowers.

Once thought to cure syphilis (it does not), it is related to Vine Joint Fir (*E. pedunculata*, PDST 14) which is less common and recognized by its vine-like habit.



C Mild Photos



Vines. It is unusual to see vines during a very dry spring. Many have been consumed by butterfly and moth larvae over fall and winter. Most die back over winter, and those which reemerge during spring may not bloom until months later. Two species which have sported recent blooms.

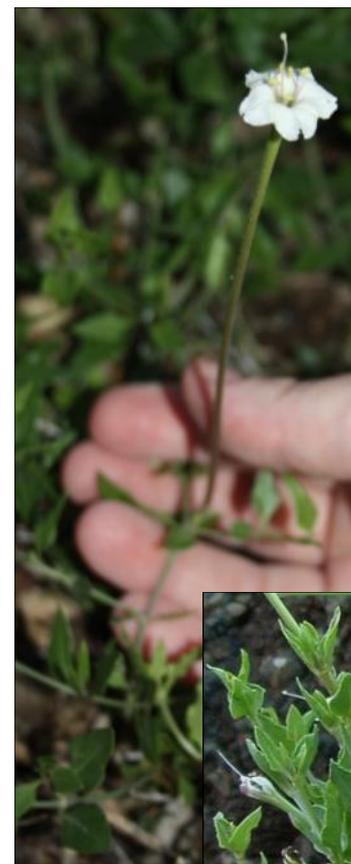


Pearl Milkweed Vine (*Matelea reticulata*, PDST 80) is a well-behaved vine which will continue growing where established without over-powering adjacent plants. Seed-pods are elongated into a point and covered with spiky protrusions.

Angel Trumpets (*Acleisanthes longiflora*, PDST 326) occurs in Hidalgo and Starr counties. Fragrant blooms open in the evening and close in the morning. Grows well in cultivation. Leaves are elongated triangles. During the day, flowers that bloomed the night before bend like melted candles. Those yet to bloom are rigidly erect as brownish-green tubes. In the cool of evening, new flowers open. Their white funnel tops attract night-flying moths which drink the nectar and pollinate



the flowers. Propagation is by seed and softwood cuttings. Southeastern California east to central New Mexico and western Texas, and south to Mexico. Rocky slopes in deserts or on plains. (Leaf inset photo from the web.)



Shrub with Fuzzy Leaves:

Tepozan (*Buddleja sessiliflora*, PDST 159). Foliage on this large, fast-growing shrub is fuzzy grey-green. It creates a nice contrast with background plants. Rachel says “The flowers definitely have a somewhat “funky” smell, not too bad/almost pleasant from a distance but a bit pungent up close.” Sometimes described as smelling like the inside of a dog’s ears. John Brush notes “lots of tachinid flies visiting.” Food for bird species known as Flycatchers. Butterfly Bush is a misnomer for this species.



Duraznillo or Peach Bush, (*Prunus texana*, PDST 368). You're unlikely to find this plant for sale. Few people have been able to propagate or grow it. It is found in sandy soils and endemic to Texas. Rachel says: "My mother's friend gifted this little plant to us and the going has been a little rough, but it's clearly making a comeback!" The leaves are glandular and leave a tacky substance on your fingers. There are a number of closely-related *Prunus* species in Texas. They are in the family Rosaceae and related to roses, peach, plum, almond and cherry. The seed is likely poisonous if cracked and eaten. Animals at Ramsey Park chewed off the leaves. Best planted in somebody's yard away from browsers!



Wildflowers.

Cut Leaf Stickleaf, (*Mentzelia incisa*, PDST 296). This species can bloom from spring through fall. It is found in Cameron and Hidalgo counties. This specimen is growing in a pot. Habit is sprawling or leaning. Height to 24". Several attributes are captured in this photo. Rachel points out: "You can see how the stamens of the flowers are clearly two different lengths. I like to use the truly impossible-to-remove leaves in leaf mandala art." Also visible are light-green, elongated seedpods (you may spot 15 or more of these in various developmental stages within the photo). Blooms open in early morning and close around noon.



Prostrate Fleabane (*Erigeron procumbens*, PDST 97). Grows in wet depressions between sand dunes as well as on roadsides, and on the edges of mudflats and salt marshes. Note the many, thread-like white ray flowers. Jann Miller finds that many smallish wildflowers will thrive in a pot without other species competing.





Wildflower Colonies. One may notice roadside colonies of these species.

Beebalm (*Monarda* sp., PDST 286-287.)

Leaves are aromatic. Magnified closeups show the beauty of these tiny clustered blooms, which attract pollinating bees. To discriminate which native species you encounter, refer to PDST Comments on Horsemint.

Below:

Dakota Vervain (*Verbena bipinnatifida*, PDST 413.) Blooms vary in shade from light to dark and pink to purple. Large colonies often occur.



Tiny Pink Blooms.

Sandbell (*Nama hispidum*, PDST 280). Magnified details show the hairiness of this small wildflower, which grows to 12" in height. Rachel relates "I found it near 281 and 186, kinda southwest of Linn in red sandy soil." A number of spring-blooming *Nama* species occur here. See PDST 280-281 to differentiate them.

Rose Sundrops (*Oenothera rosea*, PDST 340-1). These 1" blooms resemble our more common Buttercup (*O. speciosa*); they are closely related. This small, delicate wildflower opens when it's sunny and closes in evening. The editor received a potted specimen from Dr. Al Richardson, which soon spread to other pots and then to the yard. It is a cheerful addition, continuing to bloom through the summer.



LRGV Native Plant Sources

See also our
Sponsors on right

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(Betty Perez)

12 miles north of La Joya, TX

(956) 580-8915

<PerezRanchNatives@gmail.com>

These vendors may sell exotics:

National Butterfly Center

Old Military Hwy/3333 Butterfly Pk Dr
Mission, TX 78572

office 956-583-5400x754 Max Munoz

<max@nationalbutterflycenter.org>

[<http://www.nationalbutterflycenter.org>]

Rancho Lomitas Nursery

(Benito Trevino)

P.O. Box 442

Rio Grande City, TX 78582

(956) 486-2576 *By appt. only

Valley Garden Center

701 E. Bus. Hwy. 83

McAllen, TX 78501

(956) 682-9411

M&G Double D Native Plants & Seeds of South Texas. (Gail Dantzker)

956-342-5979; <gdld@att.net>

7500 N 21st St; McAllen, TX 78504

[mandgdoubled.com]

Grown at The Woods, Willacy Cty., TX.

Landscapers using Natives:

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and revegetation in south Texas.

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Come visit the VNC:

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White Prickly Poppy (*Argemone sanguinea*, PDST 345) often begins blooming during winter. Blooms are white, pink or blood red (i.e. sanguinea: blood-like).



NPP Board & General Meetings are held at
Valley Nature Center

(4th Tues. each month, except thru summer)

Brd Mtgs 6:30pm — Speaker 7:30pm

(upcoming meetings)

4/28, 5/26 ... 9/22, 10/27, 11/24/2020

(*No meetings during summer or in December.)

FROM: NPP; POB 2742; San Juan, TX 78589

The **Native Plant Project (NPP)** has no paid staff or facilities. NPP is supported entirely by memberships and contributions.

Anyone interested in native plants is invited to join. Members receive 8 issues of **The Sabal** newsletter per year in which they are informed of all project activities and meetings.

Meetings are held at:

Valley Nature Center, 301 S. Border, Weslaco, TX.

Native Plant Project Membership Application

Regular \$20/yr. Contributing \$45/yr

Life \$250 one time fee/person

Other donation: _____

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Membership Due Date

TO:

NPP meeting/speaker:

The Native Plant Project will present:

“Spring Wildflowers”
presented by — Ken King

Tues., March 24th, at 7:30pm

The meeting is held at **Valley Nature Center**, 301 S Border, (in Gibson Park), Weslaco.
956-969-2475

We hope to see you there!

Feel free to bring a native plant for I.D.

Native Plants are available for a donation!

White Prickly Poppy



In this issue: Spring Blooms: Drought-Resistant Species, Vines, Fuzzy Leaved Shrub, Peach Bush, Wildflowers in Pots, Wildflower Colonies, Tiny Pink Blooms.

Plant Species in this issue: *Acacia farnesiana*, *Acacia rigidula*, *Acleisanthes longiflora*, *Argemone sanguinea*, *Buddleja sessiliflora*, *Ephedra antisiphylitica*, *Erigeron procumbens*, *Lantana velutina*, *Matelea reticulata*, *Mentzelia incisa*, *Monarda* sp., *Nama hispidum*, *Oenothera rosea*, *Prunus texana*, *Verbena bipinnatifida*, *Yucca treculeana*.