

# The Sabal

April 2025  
Volume 41, number 4

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**NPP Awards Applications are Due on: April 30, 2025!** *see website*

Plant species page #s in the Sabal refer to:

**"Plants of Deep South Texas"** by A. Richardson & K. King (PDST).

**Plants of Deep South Texas** is out of print. It is available as an ebook for Kindle.

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Submission of relevant articles and/or  
photos are welcomed.

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**NPP meeting topic/speaker: Tues., April 22nd, at 7 pm**

*"Mesoxaea texana on the South Texas Sand Sheet "*  
*presented by — Camille Rich*

There is a rare native bee flying over the skies of the South Texas Sand Sheet (STSS)! It is *Mesoxaea texana*, a member of the Andrenidae family. *Mesoxaea texana* was discovered at El Mesteño Ranch in Puerto Rico, Texas (owned and stewarded by Ms. Camille M. Rich) in May of 2021. El Mesteño Ranch is a small piece of endangered Tamaulipan thorn scrub located in northwestern Hidalgo County, TX.

Ms. Rich has made watching *Mesoxaea texana* her top priority and passion project. Her passion project has included, and continues to include, protecting, stewarding, and monitoring the habitat for this bee. She also documents the life and times of this big, fuzzy, rare, native, ground-nesting bee via a phenology journal. Phenology journal entries include dates(s) and time(s) the bee is observed, preferred native plants for nectaring and pollen collection, climatological data for times the bee is observed. Behavioral observations of this bee's interactions with its own species and other pollinators in its territory are also recorded. Adding to the body of her research, Ms. Rich enjoys taking photographs and videos of this bee in order to record, catalogue, corroborate, and validate her observations of this STSS native bee stand-out.

Ms. Rich's presentation will provide guests with a brief overview of the origin story of the *Mesoxaea texana*'s recent discovery on the STSS in 2021. She will share characteristics to help guests identify it in the field. By the end of this presentation, Ms. Rich is hopeful that guests will come away with a basic idea of what to look for when out scouting for *Mesoxaea texana* in the wonderful pollinator habitats that stretch all along the Rio Grande Valley from Brownsville, Texas, to Falcon, Texas.

She also hopes to give guests ideas about how to incorporate native bee habitat into their current space.

There will be seeds from one of the *Mesoxaea texana*'s host plants available, handmade *Mesoxaea texana* bookmarks, and a fun word search focusing on several aspects of a day in the life of this rare, native, ground-nesting bee available, free of charge. Supplies are limited. Ms. Rich will have some favorite native bee and native plant resource books available for you to look at and review.

In closing, a recent, exciting update to share: *Mesoxaea texana* was discovered at a second STSS location! The second, documented sighting of the *Mesoxaea texana* occurred at Ms. Rich's "Sand Sheet Sister" Cat Traylor's family ranch, CEEYAL, in San Isidro, Texas. This second sighting is proof positive that as more individuals are aware of this bee, know what it looks like, and the plants it has been documented on, the odds of finding more of the *Mesoxaea texana* in the biodiverse rich Rio Grande Valley increase exponentially.

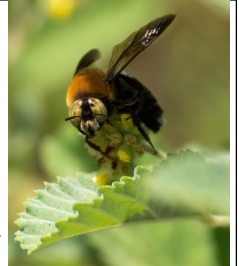
Please join us and learn more about the STSS native bee specialty species, the *Mesoxaea texana*. *Thanks a million!*

Text & Photos by Camille Rich. Upper: Male *M. texana* (green jewel-toned eyes). Lower: Female *M. texana* (shiny black eyes).

The meeting is at:

**Valley Nature Center**, 301 S Border, (Gibson Park), Weslaco. 956-969-2475

**The Sabal** is the member newsletter of the Native Plant Project. It conveys information on native plants, habitats and environment of the Lower Rio Grande Valley, Texas.



Facebook post by Joey Santore (*Crime Pays But Botany Doesn't*):  
 Matt (Kaufman) and I went out to harvest some *Prunus texana* seed (lousy year for them and what few there are aren't ready yet) and ended up finding a rare plant... *Pomaria austrotexana*, in the Caesalpinioideae subfamily of the pea Family, Fabaceae. (PDST 235)

The leaves and fruits were covered in glands that smelled like almonds mixed with cough syrup, and the flowers have a very distinctive shape that implies pollination by some kind of large bee, maybe a *Xylocopa* or something similar. Cool how the stamens are cupped in the keel petal (the bottom petal).

This thing forms dense colonies which can be quite extensive. Grows on sand with a ton of other cool stuff including *Hermannia texana*, *Dalea emarginata*, *Lantana achyranthifolia*, *Scutellaria drummondii*, and *Chamaecrista flexuosa* var. *texana*.



Photos by  
 Joey Santore.

***Crime Pays  
 But Botany  
 Doesn't***



From *Plants of Deep South Texas*, p 235:

*Pomaria austrotexana*,  
 South Texas Rushpea.

... bad-smelling shrubs from 6-24" tall.

Old stems reddish.

Young stems ribbed, hairy, with scattered glandular hairs.

Leaves: Alternate, twice compound, hairy and glandular.

Flowers: Inflorescences at the stem ends, with up to 15 flowers. ... with red spots on one petal. (lovely red stripes on other petals in Joey Santore's photos)

Bloom period: spring, summer.

Distribution: Hidalgo and Starr counties. Fairly rare, restricted to the deep sandy areas of South Texas and adjacent Mexico.

Red glandular dots on the leaves and legumes are a major characteristic of this rushpea.

Crushed leaves stain the hands yellow and leave a scent resembling peanut butter.



*Editor's apology: While struggling to see well and avoiding light (following cataract surgeries), I've been hosting cold germs lovingly shared by my five-year-old grandson. Thus, a shortened version of the usual Sabal. Thanks to the many avid native plant explorer/photographers who have continued to post photos, IDs, notes and comments on our beloved Facebook page for native plant lovers! They have been most gracious to share them!*

*Sponsors (of Native Plant Nurseries)*

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**Perez Ranch Nursery**  
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12 miles north of La Joya, TX  
 (956) 587-2149  
 <PerezRanchNatives@gmail.com>

Photo by Zach Labus.

Wright's Yellow Show. PDST 141.

Joey Santore's detailed information: : Aka *Amoreuxia wrightii*, now *Cochlospermum wrightii*. Family : Bixaceae.

Inset photo of immature seedpod by Cat Traylor.  
 (The green covering will become transparent, revealing rather large rounded seeds inside.)

Cat's comments: "Grows wild out in Starr County and usually only noticed when it's blooming. Has a yam-like tuber to keep it going through the drought. Puts out golf ball sized seed pods. I bagged some pods last October but when I went back to check on them, the plants were eaten to the ground and no sign of the bright red organza bags I'd used! No doubt eaten by javelina."



**City Nature Challenge 2025:**  
**Lower Rio Grande Valley**

April 25 - 28 (Make observations)  
 April 29 - May 4 (Identify those observations)

Only observations made between April 25 and April 28, and then uploaded to **iNaturalist** no later than May 4, will count towards the project.

Full details of how it works here:  
<https://www.citynaturechallenge.org/>

Texas Parks & Wildlife has a useful website for FAQs and How-Tos as well: [https://tpwd.texas.gov/huntwild/wild/wildlife\\_diversity/texas\\_nature\\_trackers/naturechallenge/#top](https://tpwd.texas.gov/huntwild/wild/wildlife_diversity/texas_nature_trackers/naturechallenge/#top)

If you are unable to go out and photograph, you can be very helpful by helping to identify plants and critters which you can accurately identify. Check it out!

***Sending words across a border:***

Eduardo JL Ortiz has become a frequent contributor to the *Native Plants of the Rio Grande Facebook page*. Here is one of his recent shared posts:

Un Contador y sus Plantas nativas

Hey how are you everyone!  
 Yesterday, Sunday, March 30, I participated once again as an ecological interpreter with our Conoce lo Nativo project, sharing as always my topic Praderos del Matorral in Quinta Paraiso, Matamoros, Tamaulipas.  
 I held a raffle of 4 native trees produced by your server Un Contador y sus Plantas nativas Eduardo with my personal project of Native Plant Production POVIMAVER (FOR A GREENER LIFE)  
 Tepeguaje (*Leucaena pulverulenta*)  
 Ébano (*Ebenopsis ebano*)  
 Hierba de Potro (*Erythrostemon mexicanus*)  
 Huizache (*Vachellia farnesiana*)

Many thanks for your support in these projects and my congratulations to the winners who took home a native tree that will surely be a grain of sand to continue restoring our region and helping our local Biodiversity.

**NPP Board & General Meetings**  
**are held at Valley Nature Center**  
 (4th Tues. each month, except December & thru summer)

**Brd Mtgs 6 pm — Speaker 7 pm**

**Upcoming meetings:**

**2025: May 27: Ken King: Native Cacti**  
 Summer break, no June, July or Aug mtg.  
 Sept 23, Oct 28, Nov 25. No December mtg.

**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**

**NEW:** Student \$5/yr. (high school or college)

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

Life \$250 one time fee/person

"Awards" fund donation: \_\_\_\_\_

Please print:

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_

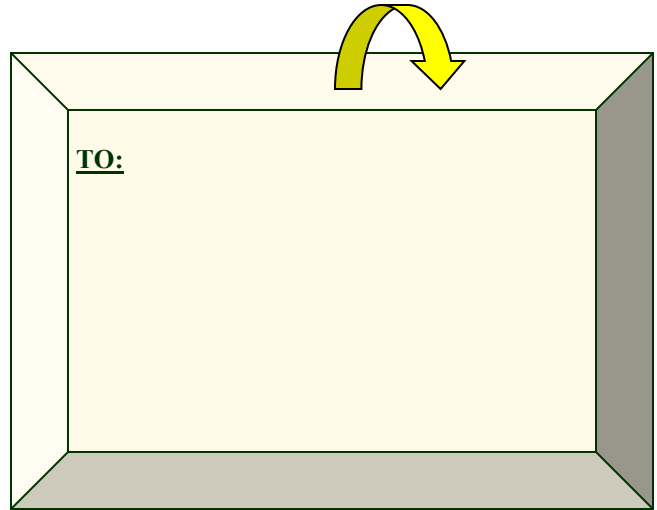
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I'm choosing the "green option!"

**Send my SABAL via .pdf file to:**

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Please mail this form with dues check payable to:  
Native Plant Project, POB 2742, San Juan, TX 78589-7742



Photos posted on Facebook by Catarina Miranda: April 13<sup>th</sup>.

***Matelea sagittifolia*, Arrow Leaf Milkvine.** PDST 81.

Locations: Martin Refuge in Peñitas, Falcon Ranch west of Roma.

Catarina relates: "Friday was my first time seeing this plant and it was so exciting! I stumbled upon it while taking leaf samples of nitrogen fixing trees. Then I saw it 2 more times the next day! I love the milkweed subfamily."

**NPP meeting/speaker:**

*"Mesoxaea texana* on the South Texas Sand Sheet  
"

*presented by* — Camille Rich

**Tues., April 22nd, at 7 pm**

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

Feel free to bring a native plant for I.D.  
Native Plants are available for a donation.

**Plant Species Featured in this issue:**

*Amoreuxia wrightii*, *Chamaecrista flexuosa* var. *texana*, *Cochlospermum wrightii*,  
*Dalea emarginata*, *Ebenopsis ebano*, *Erythrostemon mexicanus*, *Hermannia*  
*texana*, *Lantana achyranthifolia*, *Leucaena pulverulenta*, *Matelea sagittifolia*,  
*Pomaria austrotexana*, *Scutellaria drummondii*, *Vachellia farnesiana*