May Meeting of the Native Plant Project:

“LRGV Native Trees”  by Christina Mild

Tuesday, May 24th
at 7:30 P.M.

Valley Nature Center, 301 S. Border,
(in Gibson Park), Weslaco.

Now’s your opportunity to test your knowledge of our native trees, with live, leafy cuttings and a PowerPoint presentation.

Mrs. Mild has studied LRGV natives for more than a decade, rescuing specimens, transplanting, gathering and planting seed. Her talk will focus on the characteristics which make tree identification a bit easier.
Malvaceae
Recent Additions to Landscaping Choices.
by M. Heep, K. King, C. Mild and A. Richardson

Since the organization of the Native Plant Project in July 1984, a number of Mallow species have been carefully propagated and transplanted into many yards, nature preserves and other landscapes by individuals who have played an active role in NPP.

Several of our members have been scouting for “undiscovered” species and a few have found them. Jann Miller, for example, rediscovered *Abutilon hulseanum*, a mallow which had not been seen for many years. She found an entire colony, gained owner permission, and shared the location with many people who successfully transplanted the rarely-seen plant to new locations where it has survived and flourished.

The work of Dr. Al Richardson and Ken King, in preparing their recently-published new field-guide, has reaped extensive side benefits. One of these is the recent propagation of several other Mallow species not previously attempted. These two intrepid explorers have provided specimens to a number of nature parks, individuals, and native plant growers such as Mike Heep. In addition, Ken has developed his own large and diverse nursery of native plants.

Several of the most promising species for continued propagation are members of the Mallow family. They are the subject of this article. Mike Heep points out: “All of the mallows are great nectar plants. Great for any butterfly garden.”

For additional information about each of the Malvaceae in this article, as well as many other native mallows, please see pages 301-321 of:

Plants of Deep South Texas.
A Field Guide to the Woody and Flowering Species. Copyright 2011,
by Alfred Richardson and Ken King.

Upcoming Book Signings:

May 21 at the Edinburg Dustin Michael Sekula Memorial Library at 11:30 a.m.
May 29 at the Edinburg Museum of South Texas History at 2 p.m.

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*Abutilon hulseanum*—Jann’s Indian Mallow

5’ tall shrub.
Blooms from spring through fall, opening in afternoon.
Forms colonies where moisture is plentiful.
Host plant for Laviana White-skipper butterflies.
Rediscovered by Jann Miller in southern Willacy county.

King’s comments: “Combination of attractive large, densely hairy leaves and seed capsules with beautiful flowers and ease of care make Jann's Indian Mallow one of our best native ornamentals. Perfect for planting towards the back of a butterfly garden. It will grow above most of our more commonly planted species. Responds well to pruning if the growth needs to be restrained. Mike has introduced it into cultivation. Many of our species flowers are closed when we have time to enjoy our plantings after a day at work. *A. hulseanum* opens late and provides garden color in the afternoon.”

Photographed on April 25th, 2011. This specimen grew in Ramsey Park where seed was sown, in an area which was flooded some months after seed was introduced. Two rescue specimens have persisted for many years where transplanted into Ramsey Park, forming colonies after plentiful rain. Seed has been sown in many areas and many plants have sprouted to seed new areas.
**Anoda pentaschista**—**Field Anoda**

Slender erect shrub up to 24” tall. Blooms summer through fall. Distribution: Cameron and Hidalgo counties.

King’s comments: “I have it in pots. Does very well. Haven't noticed it for sale, but it would make a good candidate. Would be attractive if planted in a mass as it has a spindly growth habit. Branching can be encouraged with frequent pruning. It is abundant in heavy clay soils frequently near ditches and poorly drained areas. It is probably an annual. The leaf shape is interesting with basal lobes (hastate) and is easy to grow and transplant.”

Heep: “Anoda is a pretty plant. As Ken says, it needs pruning or it will get leggy. That's the case with almost all of the mal-lows.”

Photographed on Aug. 16, 2005 at 5 p.m. at original site where the plant was discovered by Ken King.

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**Herrisantia crispa**—**Bladder Mallow**


King’s comments: “I love this mallow and think the prostrate growth habit could be put to use at hiding the edges along curbsides when the flowering branches spill over the sides. Also an attractive container candidate when coupled with something taller planted toward the back. When stems start to lose foliage and flowering is sparse, plants can be rejuvenated with a harsh pruning. A new flush of foliage and flowers soon follows.”

The rescued specimen in this photo survived the August 2008 hurricane, growing in a sunny, well-drained spot along the upper mown trail.
**Kosteletskya virginica ? or depressa ?**
—Saltmarsh Mallow

Perennial herb up to 6’ tall.
Bloom has unique, downward-pointing style.
Blooms from summer through fall.

King: “Tentative ID. Needs confirmation. We found it growing in one small area in Cameron Co. The soil was a saline mud flat with Borrichia (Sea Oxeye Daisy) and fiddler crabs everywhere. Mike has been successful with propagating it and offers it through his nursery. It does not require salty soil, but does do well in wetland habitats. I grow it in pots submerged half their depth in my water lily ponds. The stems have stiff irritating hairs that are reminiscent of okra plants.”

Richardson notes: “We have been waiting for it to flower and produce seeds to see the characteristics. We have more work to do before we can make a definite decision.” The flower size is noticeably smaller than typical blooms on specimens in other locales. However, Al points out: “Flower size is no better than flower color in making taxonomic decisions.”

Heep: “Kosteletskya should be pruned wearing gloves. Annoy ing little spines. I ain't no sissy but they get stuck in fingers.”

**Sida cordifolia—Heart Leaf Fanpetals**

Erect growth habit to 5’.
Blooms from summer thru fall.
Found throughout deep south Texas.

King’s comments: “I have grown it and it does well. I know Mike grew it also. Usually found in more sandy soil and has thick fuzzy leaves. Very attractive and a good candidate for a native ornamental.”

Heep: “S. cordifolia is a nice little plant. Velvety whitish leaves. A butterfly enthusiast bought us out.”

**Sida rhombifolia—Indian Hemp**

Blooms throughout the year.
Found in Cameron and Willacy counties.

King notes that leaf undersides in this species are silvery, not shown in this photo. “We planted specimens at Frontera Audubon where they spread readily from seed. I do not know much about it. Not the most attractive mallow, but the leaves provide interest when the wind blows them to show their silvery undersides. Al and I found specimens growing around cattle ponds east of Sarita.”

Heep’s comments: “Robert Runyon listed the common name as Axocatzin.”
**Sphaeralcea angustifolia var. angustifolia**—Pink Narrowleaf Globe Mallow

Erect perennials to 5’.
Blooms throughout the year.
Found in Hidalgo and Starr counties.
Hostplant for TX Powdered Skipper and Common Streaky Skipper.

Pink narrowleaf globe mallow is an exciting recent discovery for Valley native plant enthusiasts and butterfly gardeners. A small colony was found in Starr Co.; it has since been destroyed. Specimens were collected as vouchers and live plants for evaluation as native ornamentals.

Unlike other globe mallows, it is perennial with an upright growth habit and has pink instead of orange flowers. It spreads aggressively from underground rhizomes and can cover a large area quickly. It would make a good candidate for planting between a sidewalk, or driveway, and house, where its growth can be contained. Pink globe mallow is heat and drought tolerant and can handle the reflected light and heat of walls and pavement.

Butterfly gardeners will be happy to know that pink globe mallow is used as a nectar source for many butterflies and other insects. *Sphaeralcea angustifolia* is easily propagated from division of plants arising from the abundant rhizomes. There has been no evidence of reproduction from seeds. The Starr Co. individuals collected were possibly all one clone, preventing cross pollination. Specimens should soon be available for distribution and sale.

**Wissadula amplissima**—Velvet Leaf Mallow

Blooms from spring through fall.
Found in Cameron and Hidalgo counties.

Has been growing in a small colony at Valley Nature Center for over a decade. Introduced via direct-sown seed into Christina Mild’s yard in Harlingen, it has spread without becoming a pest. Has a nicely-erect growth form and provides ample seed for birds.

Heep: “Nice shrub for partial sun. It will get 6’ or more and have big heart shaped leaves.”

Photo taken at Resaca de la Palma on Dec. 3rd, 2005.

**Wissadula periplocifolia**—White Velvet Leaf Mallow

Erect, sometimes woody, up to 40” tall.
Blooms in fall.
Globally widespread in tropical areas.

A pink ring at the center of the white flower sets this apart from our two other Wissadula species, which have yellow flowers.

King: “We have seen this very attractive species in one small locality in Cameron County. It grows well in cultivation and sets seed readily. Can become 4’ tall and has a wider spread than our other Wissadula species. Responds well to severe pruning with more dense growth and abundant flowers. Leaves are dark green and end in a tapered point. The pink ring in the center of the white flower provides a point of interest. Mike is growing all 3 Wissadula species.”
NPP Fieldtrip report, Harlingen Thicket, April 30th, 2011.

A small group of intrepid NPP explorers visited an old natural trail which runs parallel to the crushed granite main entry trail of Harlingen Thicket.

Much of the invasive Kalanchoe population (photo above left) was dry and shriveled from winter’s frost. Unfortunately, live Kalanchoe specimens were also noted.

Lotebush (blooms shown in photo below left) and Amargosa (photo above right) bore plentiful ripe fruit. Abundant bloombuds were noted on Leather Leaf. (center photo below). Green fruit was present on Chapote (photo below right).

A short visit to nearby C. B. Wood followed. The endangered Ayenia population there was dessicated and almost invisible. Invasive grass colonies continue to encroach on this area, a small pocket of Arroyo Colorado brush which is incredibly diverse.
The Bumblebee, Pollinators in Decline:

Although honeybees and their decline have been studied extensively, little data has been collected regarding bumblebee populations.

An excellent bumblebee resource is now available on the web:

[http://texasbumblebees.com/species/]

Shown here: Sonoran Bumblebee, *Bombus sonorus*, reported in South Texas.
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: ______________________

Please print:
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I'm choosing the “green option!”
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Native Plant Project, POB 2742, San Juan, TX 78589-7742
www.NativePlantProject.org

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by Christina Mild

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301 S Border,
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