



# The Sabal

May 2011

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### In this issue:

May speaker below.  
**New Malvaceae Species for Propagation pp 2-5**  
**Harlingen Thicket Fieldtrip Report p 6**  
**Bumblebee Decline p 7**  
LRGV Native Plant Sources p 7  
Board Meeting Highlights p 7  
Sponsors p 7  
Membership Application (cover) p 8

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articles and/or photos  
are welcomed.

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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.



**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](http://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](mailto:bwessling@rgv.rr.com)>

President - Chris Hathcock - (956)-369-1744; <[Chris\\_Hathcock@yahoo.com](mailto:Chris_Hathcock@yahoo.com)>

## 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.

### ***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 mallows.”

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



*Herrisantia crispera*—**Bladder Mallow**

Perennial herb with creeping stems.  
Blooms throughout the year.  
Seeds in inflated, ridged papery compartments.  
Distributed throughout deep south Texas.

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.



*Kosteletskyia 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: "Kosteltskyia should be pruned wearing gloves. Annoying 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 globemallow 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.



## **LRGV Native Plant Sources**

### **Heep's Nursery (& Landscaping)**

(Mike Heep)  
1714 S. Palm Court Drive  
Harlingen, TX 78552  
(956) 423-4513 \* By appt. only

### **Valley Nature Center**

301 S. Border Ave.  
Weslaco, TX 78596  
(956) 969-2475  
<info@valleynaturecenter.org>  
[www.valleynaturecenter.org]

### **Perez Ranch Nursery**

(Susan Thompson & Betty Perez)  
12 miles north of La Joya, TX  
(956) 580-8915  
<PerezRanchNatives@gmail.com>

### **Mother Nature's Creations**

(Billy & Sue Snider)  
2822 Nueces; Harlingen, TX 78550  
Nursery open by appointment:  
(956) 428-4897

NABA Butterfly Park  
Old Military Hwy & Butterfly Pk Dr  
Mission, TX 78552  
(956) 583-9009

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

### **Landscaper using Natives:**

Williams Wildscapes, Inc.  
(Allen Williams)  
750 W Sam Houston  
Pharr, TX 78577  
(956) 460-9864  
[www.williamswildscapes.com]

## *Sponsors*

### Heep's LRGV Native Plant Nursery

Owned and operated by Mike and Claire Heep  
We grow plants suited to landscaping  
and revegetation in south Texas.  
1714 S. Palm Court Drive Harlingen, TX 78552  
By appointment. Phone: (956) 457-6834  
**[www.heepsnursery.com]**

### **MOTHER NATURE'S CREATIONS**

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Billy Snider, Jr.

Sue Griffin



email <sue\_griffin@sbcglobal.net >

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### *Valley Nature Center*

-6 ac Nature Park & Trails -Book & Gift Shop-  
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## **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/](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: \_\_\_\_\_

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**“LRGV  
Native Trees”**

*by Christina Mild*

Valley Nature Center,  
301 S Border,  
Weslaco, TX  
(956)969-2475

**Tues.,  
May 24th  
at 7:30 p.m.**

