September 2013 Mtg., Native Plant Project:

**Tues., Sept. 24th, 2013: at 7:30pm**

"Learn your Trees: Stories and Art from the Native Trees of South Texas" by Carol Goolsby

A collection of tree anecdotes, nature art, and botany bits that can help one identify the native trees of South Texas.

Carol Goolsby has worked as an environmental educator for 20 years. She uses her passion for art, writing, and photography to help educate others about the importance of preserving the Valley's native plants. She is currently the Education Director at Quinta Mazatlan in McAllen.

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

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Bloom clusters of *Esenbeckia berlandieri*, a rare native tree (PDST p376). Photo by C. Mild, taken at Ramsey Park, 5/30/13.

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**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 - (956)-968-8890 - <wk_king01@yahoo.com>
Native Herbaceous Plants in Everyday Places—by C. Mild

Wild plants tend to grow in specific places, where their unique growing requirements allow them to compete effectively with other species.

The guy who mows the turf-grass we inherited with this new house is always suggesting improvements to “the lawn.” He’s offered several times to lay down “turf” in narrow passageways between the house and nearby wooden fence. I patiently show him vestiges of turf grass still growing in spots along that area. “There isn’t enough sun here for that grass to do well,” I attempt to explain.

Where he sees failure, I see wondrous diversity, surviving despite man’s efforts to impose a monoculture. There are a few things I pull out as being too weedy, like sow thistle and burr clover. But I see (Asian) Ponyfoot as a marvelous groundcover, which is lovely in the most shady areas of “the lawn.”

The underpinning of this issue is a 3-page compilation by Dr. John Fucik, one of the NPP’s original founders. Fucik provided this as a handout to accompany a talk for the NPSOT chapter based in Corpus Christi. He highlights thirty native groundcovers and the butterflies associated with them. A quick look at Dr. Fucik’s compilation solidifies the notion that diverse butterfly populations will appear if native groundcovers are allowed to establish and prosper.

If a yard service manages your lawn, they may well apply wide-leaf herbicide with the fertilizer. They may even propose using fungicides, if spotty patches appear. (I’d like my fungal mycelia left alone, to be honest!)

I’m finding amazing diversity in even the smallest areas where I’ve beaten back the grass to plant shrubs and trees. You may be amazed at what you’ll discover around town, even in the tiniest of spots, perhaps in places where someone has tried in vain, at great expense even, to establish turf-grass.

I’ve magnified the photos of these tiny plants, which highlights their beauty; but recognition may be a challenge! (Who looks at them this closely?)

For more information on native herbaceous plants in the landscape, please see:

Handbooks published by NPP (available in print and on our website): “Cacti, Ground Covers and Vines,” “Butterfly Gardening,” and “Native Pond and Wetland Plants” of the LRGV, Texas.
Counter-clockwise from upper Right:
Widow’s Tears Commelina erecta PDST p30.
Sand Mat Chamaesyce sp. PDST p208-213.
Common Yellow Purslane Portulaca oleracea PDST p358 (note open seed capsule), edible.
Straggler Daisy, Prostrate Lawn Weed, PDSTp90, Calyptocarpus vialis. May be a pest in cultivated beds, but this plant will spread in shady lawn areas where turf grass struggles to survive.
## SOME NATIVE SOUTH TEXAS GROUND COVERS AND ASSOCIATED BUTTERFLIES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Common Name</th>
<th>Latin Name</th>
<th>Flower Color</th>
<th>Butterfly Associates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Tube tongue</td>
<td>Justicia pilosella</td>
<td>PDST p 50</td>
<td>Lavender; Dymas, tiny; Elada checkerspots; painted crescent; bordered, Endies, Rosita patches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Wild(Mexican) petunia</td>
<td>Ruellia spp.</td>
<td>PDST p 52-53</td>
<td>Purple; Fatima, Malachite (Cv. &quot;Katy&quot; is more ground-coverish)</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Cenicilla</td>
<td>Sesuvium portulacastrum</td>
<td>PDST p56</td>
<td>Pink; Pygmy blue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Sea purslane</td>
<td>Sesuvium maritimum</td>
<td>PDST p55</td>
<td>Pink to white; “</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Silverhead</td>
<td>Blutaparon vermiculare</td>
<td>PDST p62</td>
<td>Whitish; Southern scalloped sooty wing, Mexican sooty wing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Dollarweed, sombrerillo</td>
<td>Hydrocotyle bonariensis</td>
<td>PDST p70</td>
<td>Greenish white; Anise, black swallowtails</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Lazy daisy</td>
<td>Aphanostephus ramosissimus</td>
<td>PDST p 86</td>
<td>White with yellow center; Paleon hairstreak, lessor fritillaries; bordered patch; Elada, silvery checkerspots and Queen butterfly adults may nectar and larvae feed on members of Asteraceae</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Prostrate fleabane</td>
<td>Erigeron procumbens</td>
<td>PDST p97</td>
<td>White with yellow center</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Straggler daisy</td>
<td>Calyptocarpus violis</td>
<td>PDST p 90</td>
<td>Yellow</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>Tiny Tim</td>
<td>Thymophylla tenuioba</td>
<td>PDST p131</td>
<td>Yellow</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Golden wave</td>
<td>Coreopsis tinctoria</td>
<td>PDST p 94</td>
<td>Yellow with brown center</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Asian ponyfoot</td>
<td>Dichondra micrantha</td>
<td>PDST p191</td>
<td>Whitish but inconspicuous; Mexican fritillary; purplish black skipper; mimic</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>Beach morning glory</td>
<td>Ipomoea imperati</td>
<td>PDST p196</td>
<td>White; Morning glory pellicia</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Photo from naba.org*
<table>
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<tr>
<th>EUPHORBIAEAE (Spurge Family)</th>
<th>FABACEAE (Bean, formerly Legume, Family)</th>
<th>ONAGRACEAE (Primrose Family)</th>
<th>OXALIDACEAE (Wood-sorrel Family)</th>
<th>POACEAE (Grass Family)</th>
<th>PORTULACEAE (Purslane Family)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Heart leaf sandmat</td>
<td>Chamaescyz cordifolium PDSTp209 White, tiny</td>
<td>ONAGA ebulus (Amphopora del campo)</td>
<td>Oxalis stricta PDST p344 Yellow</td>
<td>Distichlis spicata N/A</td>
<td>Portulaca pilosa PDST p359 Red</td>
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<td>Bracted zonnia</td>
<td>Zamiaceae panopli PDST p273 Yellow</td>
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<td>Oxalis stricta PDST p344 Yellow</td>
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</table>

NOTES:
- Several spp. of sulphurs & whites
- Mostly sulphurs and whites, (Bur clover is actually naturalized, well-adapted Eurasian introduction)
- Dogface sulphur, closely related Cassius, host many sulphur spp.
- Painted lady, Cassius, Realfort’s blues, false funereal
- Jamaican sulfur, Azia hairstreak, Zarucu dusky wing
- Alfalfa butterfly, dogface
- Likely nectar/pollen source for several spp.
- (A most colorful spring wildflower)
- Photo from naba.org. Salt marsh skipper.
- Not established
- Salt marsh skipper
- Multiple spp.
- Broadly defined, many native grasses can cover the ground and could serve well in a native planting. In addition, many native grasses, sedges and reeds serve as food sources for a wide variety of adult and larvae skipper butterflies.
- POACEAE (Grass Family)

**Red Gold**
- Rio Grande phlox

**Purple**
- Phlox drummondii PDST p352

**Multiple spp.**

**Mimic**
- Chisme
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>RUBIACEAE (Madder Family)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Tropical Mexican clover</td>
<td><em>Richardia brasiliensis</em></td>
<td>PDST p373</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Not known</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Water hyssop</td>
<td><em>Bacopa monnieri</em></td>
<td>PDST p384</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>White peacock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Wooly stemodia</td>
<td><em>Stemodia lanata</em></td>
<td>PDST p389</td>
<td>Violet</td>
<td>Genoveva</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SCROPHULARIACEAE (Figwort Family)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>Dakota vervain</td>
<td><em>Glandularia bipinnatifida</em></td>
<td>PDST p413</td>
<td>Purple</td>
<td>Buckeyes, e.g. red admiral, red spotted purple, viceroy, American painted lady &amp; many brush footed B.F.s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Frog fruit</td>
<td><em>Phyla nodiflora</em></td>
<td>PDST p418</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Phaon and Vesta crescents</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**COMMENT:** This plant list is not exclusive. Other S. Texas natives may well serve as groundcovers. While these 30 are particularly well suited to the Coastal Bend and Barrier Islands, some are adapted to very exacting environments, e.g., the *Sesuviums*. The butterflies listed are also not an exclusive selection and most graze a wide variety of plant spp.. More than 300 butterfly species visit or inhabit the S. Texas and Rio Grande Valley brush and adjacent areas. This is more species than are found in all of the Eastern United States.

**REFS:** Lehman, R., Ruth O’Brien, and Tammy White. 2009. “Plants of the Texas Coastal Bend”. Texas A&M University Press, College Station, TX.

LEFT: **Fiddleleaf, Jamaican Weed, Nama jamaicense.** PDST p280.

RIGHT: **Wavy Leaf Nama, Nama undulatum.** PDST p281. Pale pink flowers spring and summer.
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  
(Betty Perez & Susan Thompson)  
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  
Billy Snider, Jr.  
Sue Griffin

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VNC  
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(956) 969-2475  
info@valleynaturecenter.org  
[www.valleynaturecenter.org]

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Rio Grande Valley  
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-Environmental Education and Exhibit Hall-
This is one of the native herbaceous species which appears in lawns and disturbed areas. *Wheel Mallow* (*Modiola caroliniana*), PDST p314. Blooms primarily in spring. (See article with photos, pages 2-3, and more photos on page 6.)

This month’s SABAL topic: “Native Herbaceous Plants in Everyday Places.”