



The Sabal

March 2010

Volume 27, number 3

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Submissions of relevant articles and/or photos are welcomed.

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March Meeting of the Native Plant Project:

Tuesday, March 23rd at 7:30 P.M.

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

"Wildflowers of South Texas"

by Ken King



Ken King is a co-author (with Dr. Alfred Richardson) of the new book, Plants of Deep South Texas, which is due out in May. He is also an educator, long-time Board member of NPP, and one of the foremost naturalists in the Valley.



ABOVE: Ken King with Texas Indigo Snake on Dec. 5th NPP/RGVCTMN fieldtrip to Perez ranch.

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 - Eleanor Mosimann - (956)-748-2564; <mosimann@sbcglobal.net>

Do You Know Your Natives???

Contributed by: USDA-NRCS Kika de la Garza Plant Materials Center

Hookers Plantain



Hookers plantain (*Plantago hookeriana* Fisch & Mey) is a cool season annual with a slender taproot. The leaves are linear to narrowly oblanceolate, with margins that are entire or with small scattered teeth. The leaves are up to 12 inches long and 0.8 inches wide, but usually much smaller and are smooth to woolly. The inflorescences are erect or ascending, and may be shorter than or exceed the leaves in height. The petals are up to 0.15 inches long and whitish with a brown spot at base of each or brown stripes the entire length of each. Each flower produces two seeds, dull-brown, finely pitted, and about 0.11 inches long and 0.05 wide.

Redseed plantain (*Plantago rhodosperma* Dene.) is also a cool season annual with a slender taproot. Leaves are oblanceolate, up to 14 inches long, and 2 inches wide, but usually much smaller. The leaves are grayish-green, hairy, with margins that are entire to coarsely toothed. The inflorescences are one to several and hairy. The spikes are up to 8 inches long and 0.4 inches thick. Each flower produces two seeds that are bright red to reddish black in color. The seeds are 0.08-0.12 inches long, more than half as wide, nearly flat on both sides, and have a thin pale margin.



Redseed Plantain



Plantains are also known by the common name tallow weed. They produce seed eaten by bobwhite quail and mourning doves. The leaves are consumed by livestock, white-tailed deer, bobwhite quail, Rio Grande wild turkey, and Texas tortoise. Hooker's plantain is typically found on sand, sandy loam, and coarse textured soils. Redseed plantain is found throughout south Texas on clay, loam and other fine textured soils.

In 2009, both species were released as a cooperative effort between *South Texas Natives*, the USDA-NRCS Plant Materials Program, and the Texas AgriLife Research Station at Beeville. STN-561 Germplasm Hookers plantain was collected in Medina County, Texas and STN-496 Germplasm redseed plantain was collected in Bexar County, Texas. The two releases will be combined and sold as Divot tallow weed blend. Divot tallow weed blend should generally be planted as part of a native seed mixture or as a food plot species for wildlife. In irrigated food plot settings, solid stands will produce an average of 2,000 lbs. of forage per acre. Seed should be available from both Pogue Agri Partners and Turner Seed Company in the spring of 2011. The Divot Blend should be well adapted to most locations in south Texas.

It establishes very quickly with adequate soil moisture and good growing conditions. Seeding should occur in mid-late fall or early winter (Oct-Dec) in South Texas. Tallow weeds commonly form a winter rosette following emergence, and primary forage production occurs from early February through May. Seed stalks typically emerge from March-May and plants may produce seed through June under favorable moisture conditions. Once established, Divot tallow weed blend readily re-seeds itself with moderate soil disturbance prior to the growing season, or significant rainfall.

Info Sources: *Manual of the Vascular Plants of Texas* - Correll and Johnston; *Plants of the Texas Coastal Bend* - Lehman, O'Brien, & White; *Field Guide to the Broad-Leaved Herbaceous Plants of South Texas* - Everitt, Drawe, & Lonard; and research performed at the PMC and by *South Texas Natives*. Photos by Forrest Smith of *South Texas Natives*.

A Sample of South Texas Wildflowers with Blue/Purple Blooms.

Wildflowers should be widely abundant this year in the LRGV, as we've received unusually large amounts of spring rainfall. Some species are normally found in sandy soils; others tolerate clay or areas of standing water. Most species shown below are very small and only observed on foot. If you're driving about to see wildflowers, remember to climb out and walk around. Listen for any sign of hissing or rattling snakes! *Special Thanks to Ann Treece Vacek for wildflower photos & I.D.*



LEFT: Wild S. TX Iris, *Alophia drummondii* may occur in clay or in sand. Blooms primarily from March to May. Endemic.

RIGHT: Purple Ground-Cherry, *Quincula lobata*. Perennial ground-cover. May bloom year-round in the LRGV. Widespread thru half of Texas in various habitats.



2 Legumes: ABOVE: *Tephrosia lindheimeri*. Sandy soils, blooms Apr-Sept. BELOW: *Dalea emarginata*. Aromatic. Often abundant in sandy soils.



Very delicate blooms.
ABOVE: *Gilia incisa*. Spring blooming. On gravelly or sandy slopes in the SW half of Texas.
BELOW: *Lobelia berlandieri*. Spring-summer blooms in sandy, rocky or clay soils in moist areas.



Blue Curls. ABOVE: *Phacelia congesta*. Fiddleneck. Blooms Mar.-June throughout much of Texas. Sandy, rocky, gravel soils. BELOW: *Phacelia patuliflora*. Sandy soils of woodlands and alluvial terraces.



BOOK REVIEWS:

“Wildflowers of Texas Field Guide”

2009

Adventure Publications, Inc.

by Nora & Rick Bowers
& Stan Tekiela

RIGHT:

Photographed excerpt: pages 78-79.
Modiola caroliniana,
Carolina Bristle Mallow, a local wildflower.



CAROLINA BRISTLE MALLOW *Modiola caroliniana*

Family: Mallow (Malvaceae)

Height: 12-30" (30-76 cm)

Flower: cup-shaped, pink-to-orange red flower, 3/8" (1 cm) wide, has 5 broad fan-shaped petals with darker red lines at bases; yellow, green and red center; held by green sepals and backed by shorter leaf-like bracts

Leaf: variable broad leaves (can be kidney-shaped, round or triangular), 2-3" (5-7.5 cm) long; edges toothed or shallowly or deeply divided into 3-7 lobes; on long stalks; sprawling, hairy, many-branched stems

Fruit: round green capsule, turning tan, 1/2" (1 cm) wide, with segments resembling spokes of a wagon wheel

Bloom: spring, early summer

Cycle/Origin: annual, perennial, biennial; native

Habitat: dry, moist or salty soils, grasslands, disturbed areas, ditches, lawns, along roads, lakes and streams

Range: southeastern, south central, extreme southern and far western Texas

Notes: This creeping wildflower has many branches from the base that root at the nodes wherever they touch the ground. The leaves are poisonous to livestock and avoided by deer and other wildlife. Can be a good ground cover, as it is tolerant of dry conditions and poor soils. Native to the United States only in Texas and the warmer eastern states, but has escaped cultivation and naturalized in the West.



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by Ken King & Christina Mild

Choosing 200 wildflower species to represent the entire state of Texas is a daunting task, as there are more than 5000 plant species in the state. So the authors have apparently taken each region of Texas and chosen a few of the more common species.

In comparison with other popular wildflower books which attempt to cover the state, this new fieldguide is less comprehensive in scope. Geyata Ajilvsgi (“Wildflowers of Texas” 2002) covers 482 species. Even older books such as Campbell and Lynn Loughmiller’s 1994 edition (“Texas Wildflowers”) covers 300 species with 381 photos.

In terms of reference works specific to this area, we have two excellent fieldguides. Alfred Richardson’s “Wildflowers and Other Plants of Texas Beaches and Islands” contains about 275 local species. Everitt, Drawe and Lonard cover 185 species in “Field Guide to the Broad-Leaved Herbaceous Plants of South Texas.” One might more easily identify local wildflowers in these local guides.

Bowers and Tekiela’s new guide has some major advantages, especially the excellent quality, full-page photos. By devoting an entire page to description, the authors are able to include details about Height, Flower, Leaf, Bloom, Cycle/Origin, Habitat and Range.

Plants of similar bloom color are grouped together. Species occur in no particular order. Closely-related species with the same bloom color may be widely separated: *Ruellia nudiflora* and *Ruellia occidentalis* are separated by ten pages. An Iris, a Passionflower and two Asters lie between them.

The Notes section is especially interesting and detailed, including such things as origin and meaning of botanic and common names, use by wildlife, cultivation notes and trade availability, medicinal use and edibility and other data.

Botanic names reflect recent changes in nomenclature.

Each of the species covered is beautifully and expertly represented.

by Diann Ballesteros

- **What I like:**
- Small size: 4 1/2" by 6". Can carry it in your pocket.
- Large close-up color photo of flower and leaves.
- Each flower covers two pages—one with picture, the other with information.
- Small picture icons at the bottom of the page with botanical terms for leaf type, leaf arrangement, flower type, etc. Icon pictures can be used even without completely understanding botanical term. (3 to 6 icons per flower)
- Both range and habitat information are given.
- Informative notes at bottom of the page are packed with interesting facts about the wildflower: other common names, color variations, historical uses, etc.
- Some water or pond plants are mentioned.
- **What I do not like:**
- Only 200 flowers are covered. Many small, less well-known flowers are not in the book. Book covers all of Texas, so Valley specialties are probably not mentioned. Only the most common of flowers are included.
- Index is a checklist of common names with page numbers. (This is how all their field guides are indexed.) No scientific names in the index.
- Many common names are not the same ones used by Valley naturalists.
- Species names are often different from Valley varieties. Genus may be the same, but species is different. The authors occasionally mention that in a given genus there may be 18 to 30 different species. This would be difficult to cover in any book.

A good book if you are traveling through Texas during wildflower season or as an addition to your collection of wildflower books.

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NPP Board & General Meetings, 2010:

Apr. 27, May 25, Sept. 28, Oct 26, Nov 23
(Tuesdays) Board Meetings at 6:30pm. Speaker at 7:30pm
Most meetings held at Valley Nature Ctr.

Correction to Feb. SABAL: from Bob Barry, Farming, Revegetation, Water Rights. Lower Rio Grande Valley NWR: "There is one inaccuracy...we grow an average of 120,000 seedlings at our native plant nursery but we plant 250,000+. This year we will plant over 300,000."

Highlights of the Board Meeting - Feb 23, 2009

The board of directors accepted Mary Ann Wingert's retirement from the board. Carol Goolsby was elected to fill the remainder of Mary Ann's term which ends in January 2013. Carol's main interest is in public outreach and education.

NPP will sell plants and handbooks at the Rio Grande Valley Home and Garden Show to be held at the McAllen Convention Center, April 9-11.

**Announcing a
Fieldtrip to view
South Texas wildflowers**
with expert volunteers to aid in identification.
Saturday, March 27th at 9 a.m.

For more information email or call
Christina Mild at 428-6633,
<mild.christina@gmail.com>
or Diann Ballesteros at 428-2781.



*Another joint venture of Native Plant Project &
RGV Texas Master Naturalists*

**Please meet at 9 a.m. at the Texas Tourist
Information Ctr. (N side) near the junction of
Exp 83 & 77 in Harlingen**

or

**Join us at: the old WalMart parking lot
next to McDonald's in Raymondville
at 9:45 a.m.**

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 \$15/yr. Contributing \$35/yr
Life \$250 one time fee/person
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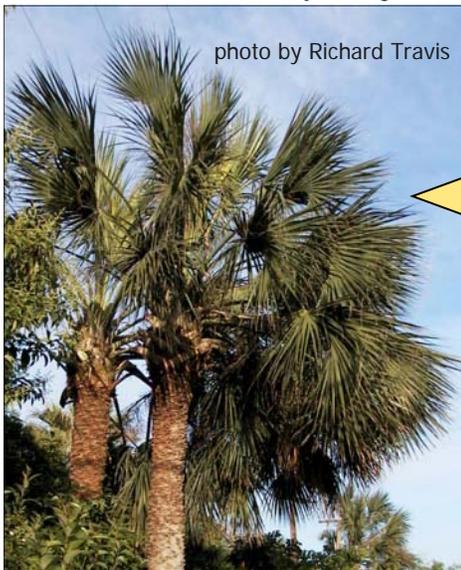


photo by Richard Travis



Tues., Mar. 23rd at 7:30 p.m.

"Wildflowers of South Texas"

presented by Ken King



Valley Nature Center, 301 S Border, Weslaco, TX



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Wildflower
Fieldtrip
Mar 27th
See pg. 5

TO: