October 2014 Mtg., Native Plant Project:

**Tues., October 28th, 2014: at 7:30pm**

The Native Plant Project will present:

“Rainwater Harvesting” by **Drew Bennie**.

We all know how much better our gardens look after a rain storm even though we have been treating them to plenty of TLC with city water. Drew will give us advice on collecting that precious rainwater for when our ground finally dries out. He will have several examples of different system types ranging from very simple to more complex and give us a list of resources. Besides maintaining his gorgeous yard, Drew is a Master Naturalist, a Master Gardener, and Board member of NPP.

The meeting is held at:

Valley Nature Center, 301 S. Border,
(in Gibson Park), Weslaco. 956-969-2475
Resurgence After Rains—compiled by C. Mild  
A Plethora of Pollinators! (see next page also)

The most easily-observed change after a recent rainy season has been an explosion of green: leaves, grass, vines, and, yes, the green caterpillar feasting on the right on Granjeno. It is probably the prepupal American Snout. The adult butterfly appears just below the larval photo.

I asked our readers to send photos of what they saw after the rains and received a gorgeous landslide of blooms (many of those appear on p 6), for which I am eternally grateful! This issue has many contributors!

On Oct. 13th in Harlingen, butterfly numbers and species diversity showed a large increase, with a continuing increase on the 14th. Overall pollinator numbers and diversity also showed a large upsurge.

Some plants have put forth fruit, but most are unripe at this point, with the exception of the Snake Eyes shrub, below left, photographed on the Glatz Preserve in Rio Hondo by Al Richardson. With few leaves in evidence, this shrub is loaded with succulent fruits. (PDST p 55.)

I have long loved Bernadette, *Isocarpa oppositifolia*, (PDST p 109, photo on right), having no idea what role it played in the overall scheme of things. Observing it in my backyard, I was overjoyed to find this tiny Ceraunus Blue butterfly nectaring. See the blue underside of this tiny butterfly’s wings at [leps.thenalls.net], one of my favorite resources. (Many butterfly photos in this issue were identified there.)

Who can resist enlarging insects to see them better?

Below left, an insect is gathering food on Fall Mistflower, *Crucita*, *Chromolaena odorata*, PDST p 91, a very popular nectar plant. This plant reseeds readily.

The insect below is visiting Frostweed, *Verbena microptera*, PDST 134-5. This plant forms colonies easily.
Here’s a small sample of butterflies attracted to **Crucita**, on Oct. 13-14 in Harlingen (C Mild photos).

Given ample space and moisture, Crucita seeds out to form large colonies. It persists in shade, but becomes quite large when moisture, sun and sufficient space are available. A good candidate to replace exotic, invasive grasses.*

Above and below: Bordered Patch, *Chlosyne lacinia*. Hostplants are Composites.


*Most of the photos on this page were taken on one plant, adjacent to a brick wall, growing in about 1 sq. ft. of soil.
Revegetating with Colony-Formers

Many people have complained to me about plants which seed out readily, forming colonies where conditions are best for their growth. “They come up all over the path!” “They’re crowding out this endangered species!” “They die back and look ugly!” “I want to plant something else here, and they keep coming back!”

Well, not many plants will restrict their growth in a way which pleases humans on every occasion. Colony-formers are especially valuable in places where revegetation is occurring. For the most part, in Deep South Texas, we’re trying to displace buffle or guinea grass with a species which provides greater benefit to wildlife.

Scarlet Sage, *Salvia coccinea*, PDST p 288, is known to attract hummingbirds and butterflies. It grows in a wide range of soil (including clay) and sun conditions (shade to full sun) and reseeds itself readily once colonies are established. It also grows well in pots.

Bert Wessling recently posted a video at [http://youtu.be/F92Wucpg7mE](http://youtu.be/F92Wucpg7mE) which he photographed in his backyard. It shows a Black-Backed Lesser Goldfinch busily harvesting seeds from Bert’s colony of Scarlet Sage. These small birds are known to nest in the valley. Who would anticipate that these small red blooms would provide food for such a range of animal life? And this plant is so easy to grow!

A colony of Scarlet Sage is downright gorgeous, something I just can’t say for buffle or guinea grass!

Mike Heep started us on the right path at Ramsey Park many years ago in one of the early revegetation plantings. He recommended *Carlowrightia parviflora*, for the very reason that it would spread to create colonies. (PDST p 48.)

Within a few years, we were able to dig seedlings from that initial planting and have established extensive colonies at various new locations in the park.

You’ve probably heard me on this soapbox before, because the result has been thrilling. On Oct. 13th at Ramsey Park, dozens of Crimson Patch butterflies were flitting about. Carlowrightia is the hostplant for this colorful but elusive butterfly. The quartet of photos on the right show the adult butterfly with open and closed wings, the larva chomping on Carlowrightia and a photo of the plant’s various features.

We’ve used various mallows, many wildflowers, and various native grasses to take the place of exotic species.

While the ground remains moist, the loose soil where you pull out guinea grass is a great place to transplant something else or to plant some seeds.

Start a colony of your very own!!
Using Local Resources

We’re extremely lucky to have a wealth of knowledge available to us, because people are willing to share their photos and information. Our own Native Plant Project website, [www.NativePlantProject.org], maintained by Bert Wessling, is one I often list for people interested in selecting native species for landscaping and revegetation.

I’ve already mentioned Berry and Laura Nall’s website [leps.thenalls.net], as one of my favorite resources of information on butterflies and moths. It’s fun to search around just to see what’s there!

While searching for images of butterflies and their larvae, I often “hit” on images posted by Jan Dauphin. She and husband David maintain an excellent website [http://www.thedauphins.net/] with a wide range of nature-related information specific to this area. Many of Jan’s images also appear on the website of the North American Butterfly Association, which has its center in Mission, TX [http://www.naba.org/].

When Ruth Hoyt sent me the photo below, asking for an ID for the plant and animal, I had a wide list of email addresses of people who are willing to lend their expertise. I depend on lots of people in the Sabal.

Ken King identified this plant as *Spermacoce glabra*, Smooth Buttonweed, PDST p 374. Rubiaceae.

He also identified the caterpillar as a “likely Tersa Sphinx moth caterpillar, *Xylophanes tersa*”. The adult moth photo below is from Google images.

This unusual moth was found by Charles Mild on Sept. 30, 2014 on our arroyo-backed property in Harlingen. The photo by taken at 5:59pm. The moth remained in place for at least 30 minutes, even when the branch was lifted. We had no ID, and putting about on Google images wasted a bunch of time. I sent the photo out, asking for help.

Berry Nall and David Dauphin responded quickly with the ID: Forbes’ Silkmoth, *Rothschildia forbesi*.

The four “green” spots on the wings are translucent, lending the Spanish common name “Cuatro Espejos,” translated as “four mirrors”. Further information on the web revealed that the LRGV of Texas is the northernmost range of this 10-12.5 cm wingspan moth. Flights occur from February-April and September-November.

Hostplants include a wide range of native and introduced plants including lime prickly ash (*Zanthoxylum fagara*), Mexican ash (*Fraxinus berlandieriana*), willow (*Salix*), peach (*Prunus persica*), citrus (*Citrus*), and acacia (*Acacia*). Mike Quinn’s photo indicates David’s Milkberry, PDST p 369, as a hostplant; it grows in our front and back yard!

Below: Forbes’ Silkmoth larva photo on *Chicocca alba*, obviously another hostplant, taken by Mike Quinn, at Sabal Palm Grove, Brownsville, posted on [naba.org].

---

Rothschildia forbesi adult moth. Christina Mild cellphone photo!


Native Petunia, PDST 52-53, with abundant insects, by Nancy Persinger.

Pink Desert Peony, *Acoutria wrightii*, PDST 82, with nectaring Clouded Skipper. This plant occurs on the lomas. Ramsey Park photo.

Hairy Tickle Tongue, *Zanthoxylum hirsutum*, PDST 378, in massive bloom. Hidalgo and Willacy counties. Leaves, when chewed, produce tingling in the mouth and have been used for toothache. Citrus family. Al Richardson photo. Encinitos Ranch.

Night-Blooming Cereus photo by Stan Sterba.


October’s Abundant Blooms
**SPONSORS (Native Plant Nurseries)**

**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
(956) 457-6834 <heepsnursery@gmail.com>
[www.heepsnursery.com]

**NABA Butterfly Park**
Old Military Hwy/3333 Butterfly Pk Dr.
Mission, TX 78572
office (956) 583-5400
Mariana Trevino Wright, Exec.Dir.
cell 956-648-7117
<marianna@nationalbutterflycenter.org>
[http://www.nationalbutterflycenter.org]

**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

**LANDSCAPERS USING NATIVES:**

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

Landscaping, Etc. Inc. 
Noel Villarreal
125 N. Tower Rd, Edinburg
956-874-4267
956-316-2599

**MOTHER NATURE'S CREATIONS**

Billy Joe Snider, Jr.
Sue Griffin
2822 Nueces, Harlingen, TX.

Come visit the VNC:
301 S. Border Ave.
Weslaco, TX 78596
(956) 969-2475
info@valleynaturecenter.org
www.valleynaturecenter.org

**Native Plants for Sale**

-5 acre Nature Park & Trails 
-Book & Gift Shop
-Native Plant Nursery
-Meeting Room
-Environmental Education and Exhibit Hall

**NRG Valley Nature Center**

-6 acre Nature Park & Trails -Book & Gift Shop
-Native Plant Nursery-Meeting Room-
-Environmental Education and Exhibit Hall

**NPP Board & General Meetings held at Valley Nature Center**
(see ABOVE)
(Fourth Tuesday each month)

**Board Meetings 6:30pm. — Speaker 7:30pm.**

Remaining Meeting Date for 2014:
November 25th

**Photo above right:**
Hostplants include St. Augustine grass!! (C Mild photo)
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:
Name______________________________
Address______________________________
City_________________ State __
Phone ___________________ Zip ___________
I'm choosing the “green option!”
Send my SABAL via .pdf file to:
Email address: _____________________________

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

NPP March meeting/speaker on:

Tues., October 28th, 2014:
at 7:30pm
The Native Plant Project will present:
“Rainwater Harvesting”
by Drew Bennie.
at:
Valley Nature Center,
301 S. Border, (in Gibson Park)
Weslaco. 956-969-2475

Deep South Texas has been blessed with rain in late September and early October. Drew will give us tips on how to capture and store such blessings.

This month’s SABAL topic: “Resurgence after Rain”

Fungi photo by Frank Wiseman. While fungi aren’t plants, we certainly depend on them as decomposers, and many animals depend upon them as food. After rainfall is the best time to find them.