



The Sabal

February 2010

Volume 27, number 2

In this issue:

February speaker below.
Spring Wildflower Quiz, p 2-3
Remembering James Matz, p 4
Grasses, "Sprangletop" by Mike Heep. p 5-6
Useful Wild Plants Vol. 3, p 7
Board Meeting Minutes p 7
Membership Application (cover) p 8

Native Plant Project (NPP) Board of Directors

President: Eleanor Mosimann
Vice Pres.: Chris Hathcock
Secretary: Susan Thompson
Treasurer: Bert Wessling

Diann Ballesteros
Sue Griffin
Martin Hagne
Mike Heep
Ken King
Sande Martin
Kathy Sheldon
Sue Sill
Benito Trevino
Ann Treece Vacek
Maryann Wingert

Editor:

Christina Mild
<mild.christina@gmail.com>
Submissions of relevant
articles and/or photos
are welcomed.

Editorial Advisory Board:

Diann Ballesteros
Mike Heep
Eleanor Mosimann
Betty Perez
Dr. Alfred Richardson



February Meeting of the Native Plant Project:

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

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

"Large-scale Revegetation in the LRGV"
by Bob Barry

Bob Barry is Revegetation and Farming
Officer for the South Texas Refuge Complex
of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Mr. Barry holds a B.S. degree in Avian
Sciences from Univ. of California at Davis
(1984) and an M.S. degree in Wildlife Man-
agement from Louisiana State University
(1991). He has held wildlife-biologist posi-
tions with the Corps of Engineers (Vicksburg,
MS), the U.S. Air Force (Glendale, AZ), and
DeSoto National Wildlife Refuge (Missouri
Valley, IA). In his current position, he man-
ages a program that plants 120,000 seedlings
throughout the LRGV each year.

Come learn about one of the largest ef-
forts to restore our native woodlands.



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>

Spring Wildflower Watch—By *Christina Mild*

2010 may be a good year for wildflowers in the LRGV, as rain has been rather plentiful. Here's a quiz to see if you can recognize some local wildflower seedlings.

Pictorial answers are on page 3, with blooming specimens appearing at the same relative position on the page.

Leaf coloration will vary due to ambient lighting and leaf shape often changes as the seedling grows.

Wildflower diversity is probably greatest in the sandy

soils of the LRGV. Some species are uniquely encountered in caliche.

Spring is a good time to drive around, climb out for closer roadside inspection, and enjoy the miraculous blooms which surround us. Keep a stick handy and your ears open. Rattlesnakes come out on sunny spring days!

Native American Seed is an excellent source for wildflower seed, planting information and seedling I.D.

Call for their free catalogue: 800-728-4043 or visit their website: [www.seedsources.com].



Can you recognize a wildflower before it blooms?



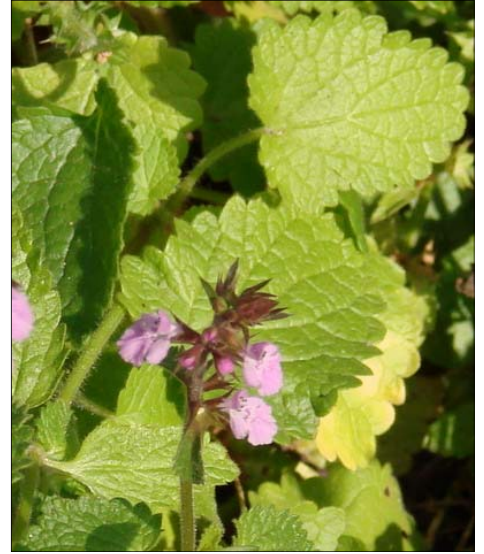
Rock Daisy. *Perityle microglossa*.
Manzanilla Bronca. Compositae.



American Germander. *Teucrium canadense*.
Mint Family. Forms extensive colonies.



Pink Mint. *Stachys drummondii*. Mint family. Disappears in dry weather.



Wild Tobacco. *Nicotiana repanda*.
Evening blooms attract moths.



Prickly Poppy, *Argemone sanguinea*.
Papaveraceae. Seeds eaten by birds.



Florestina tripteris. Compositae.
Blooming spring thru fall.



Bladderpod. *Lesquerella sp.* Cruciferae.
Sweet-smelling blooms. Seeds in hairy "bladder."



Nama sp. Hydrophyllaceae.
Softly hairy leaves, very small blooms.



Some
Early-Spring
Wildflowers
Which Tolerate
Clay Soils

**Remembering Civic Leader,
Avid Conservationist
James Matz**

*Age 72, passed away
on January 2, 2010.*

Born and raised in Harlingen, James Matz served two terms on the Harlingen City Commission, was a two-term Cameron County Commissioner and served on numerous civic committees.

He founded Harlingen Proud (1989) and Valley Proud Environmental Council (1990) serving as Chairman until his death. Among numerous awards James received was the President's National Service Award, presented to him by President Clinton in the White House Rose Garden in 1995.

James' passion for service extended to leadership on a multitude of local, regional and state boards, including Rotary International. His work focused on issues such as homelessness, water planning, conservation, and good government.

James was well known for sharing and promoting his love of birds, native trees and their preservation. Wife Georgiana called Matz a "wonderful" father who taught his children to "take care of themselves and to take care of planet earth, which was on loan to them".

Matz spearheaded revegetation of Ramsey Nature Park in Harlingen, now the Arroyo Colorado unit of the World Birding Center. He received grants from



several government agencies and donations and volunteer assistance from local businesses and organizations.

Matz also worked with native plants on land he owned, first using them for landscaping his yard in Harlingen's Treasure Hills. He enlisted the help of Mike Heep in preserving and identifying the diverse species within the mature Arroyo Colorado brush in his backyard. Landscaping his newly constructed home in Harlingen Country Club with natives, Matz invited numerous tour groups to view how natives could be used in formal landscapes. The largest effort to protect and enhance habitat was Matz' purchase of 10 acres bordering the Arroyo Colorado in Rio Hondo. He quickly undertook revegetation of the front five acres, removing them from agricultural use.

Another five acres of that property are perhaps the least-disturbed acreage along the Arroyo Colorado. Matz and wife, Georgiana, have welcomed tour groups on that property as well. The diversity found on that five acres is astounding.

Georgiana Matz has recently asked for help from native plant lovers in maintaining trails on the Rio Hondo property. Advice is needed in protecting the most sensitive species, while removing stray limbs and weeds which block pathways.

If you are interested in helping with this project, please contact Christina Mild at <mild.christina@gmail.com>. Any visit to this magical piece of Arroyo brush will be treasured.

Above: Fern on the Arroyo's highest banks.

Left: *Ayenia limitaris*. Rare. Large colony of several hundred individuals are found on the Matz property. Heart-shaped leaves resemble a Mallow, but *Ayenia* is in the Cacao family, Sterculiaceae.



Grasses. "Sprangletops" — by Mike Heep

There are three Sprangletop species occurring in wet soils and shallow water in our area:

Mexican Sprangletop (*Leptochloa uninervia*),
Tropic Sprangletop (*L. virgata*) and
Nealley Sprangletop (*L. nealleyi*).

Sprangle means "going in all directions".

These three Sprangletop species are found in low areas which "pond" water after rains, in drainage ditches, ditches that receive irrigation water from fields, and in the wet soils on the banks of resacas and ponds.



Correll & Johnston describe the ranges of Mexican and Tropic as "widespread in warmer parts of the New World". Nealley occurs from Tamaulipas to Louisiana.

(Mexican Sprangletop Left: entire plant. Below: Maturing seed-head. Ramsey Nature Park, Harlingen, TX, Feb. 2010.)

Mexican is widespread and common in the Valley. I've even seen it growing where a septic tank had overflowed.

Tropic is very similar to Mexican, but is less common. I know it from the banks of the Resaca De Los Cuates in Bayview, the tree yard of Southern Landscapes in McAllen, and a roadside ditch north of Edinburg. Both Mexican & Tropic can grow in some pretty nasty water. I think that the ditches along farm fields probably contain a lot of nitrogen and maybe also phosphorous, which likely results in some pretty vigorous populations of microbes.

I was always reluctant to step in that nasty water for close examination or to collect them. But, the only way to tell Mexican from Tropic is by using a hand lens and looking at the florets. The lemmas of Tropic have a short awn. Those of Mexican often have only a very short point (they are mucronate).



(continued on pg. 6)

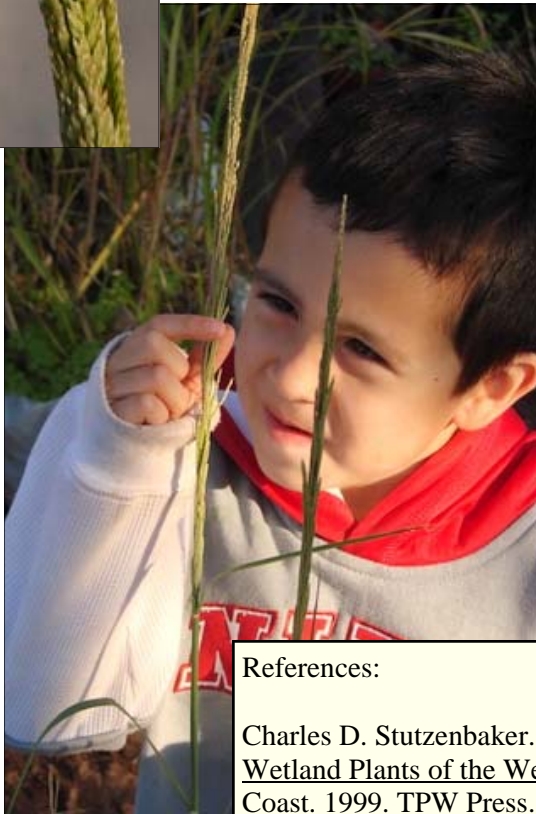
(Grasses. "Sprangletops" continued from pg. 5)

Nealley Sprangletop is quite distinct from the other two. The panicle is very contracted as opposed to the open panicles of Mexican and Tropic. It also gets much taller, up to head high. The others rarely get waist high, more commonly about knee high. Nealley seems to withstand almost permanent shallow water. Mexican and Tropic commonly occur where the water levels may drop and there is only mud or moist soil for part of the year.

(Nealley Sprangletop photographed at Heep Native Plant Nursery, Harlingen, TX, Feb. 6, 2010. Thanks to photographic assistant, Matthew Heep, height 46")

Stutzenbaker wrote that Sprangletops are good food for puddle ducks: Teal, Mallards, Mottled Ducks, and Pintails. This may explain how they can show up wherever there is water. Maybe the birds are bringing the seeds.

Sprangletops are easy to grow. The seeds will come up readily in moist soil. Since we brought them to the nursery they've been volunteering all over.



References:

Charles D. Stutzenbaker. Aquatic & Wetland Plants of the Western Gulf Coast. 1999. TPW Press.

Correll & Johnston. Manual of the Vascular Plants of Texas. 1979. UT Press.

Pérez Ranch Nursery

Plants native to the Lower Rio Grande Valley

On the Pérez Ranch -
11 miles north of LaJoya

Betty Pérez & Susan Thompson
(956) 580-8915

S
P
O
N
S
O
R
S

MOTHER NATURE'S CREATIONS

- ◆ Native Landscapes
- ◆ Water Features, Ponds,
- ◆ Pond Supplies & Rock
- ◆ Specimen-size Native Plants
- ◆ Consulting or Full Installation
- ◆ Office: 956-428-4897
- ◆ Mobile 956-471-6051

Billy Snider, Jr.
Sue Griffin



email <sue_griffin@sbcglobal.net >

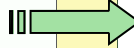
Heep's LRGV Native Plant Nursery

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]

NPP Board & General Meetings, 2010:

Mar. 23, 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.



Native Plant Rescue:

Valley Nature Center will rescue native plants slated for
destruction by construction or development, or natives no
longer wanted by home owners. Call 956-969-2475.

Come visit the
VNC

301 S. Border Ave.
Weslaco, TX 78596

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



Native Plants
for Sale

Watch Birds
& Butterflies

Valley Nature Center

*A Secret Garden
in the Heart of the
Rio Grande Valley*

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

Highlights of the Minutes of the Board Meeting - Jan. 26, 2010

On January 26th, at the annual
general meeting of the Native Plant
Project, five members were
re-elected to the board of directors.
The members, whose new term will
expire in January 2013, are Diann
Ballesteros, Sue Griffin, Ken King,
Bert Wessling, and Maryann
Wingert. The board of directors
re-elected Chris Hathcock as
Vice President and also elected him
as President Elect.

At the upcoming meeting on
February 23rd, the Native Plant
Project will honor Dr. Gene Lester
for his many contributions to the
organization. Dr. Lester is leaving
the Valley for a new job in
Washington, D.C.

The Useful Wild Plants Project

Encyclopedia Series: Volumes 1, 2, and 3 of the Useful Wild Plants of Texas cover native plants of the Southeastern and Southwestern United States, the Southern Plains, and Northern Mexico.

Volume 3 is newly available. Published thus far are the first three in a series of fifteen volumes that systematically chronicle the economically useful wild plants of the region centered in Texas and radiating through the southern half of the United States and northern Mexico. The complete series will include descriptions, photographs, distribution maps, and use information on over 4,000 species of native and naturalized plants of this region.

Vol. 3 covers genera (species and varieties) from Canna (canna) through Celtis (hackberry). Non-member price: \$140.00.

Limited Time Offer: UWP members may purchase one copy of Vol. 3 for the special price of \$112. This offer expires March 1, 2010. Individual annual membership (\$25) includes Newsletters.

Address:
Useful Wild Plants, Inc.,
2612 Sweeny Lane,
Austin, Texas 78723

Website: [http://www.
usefulwildplants.org]



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

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 78589-2742

www.NativePlantProject.org

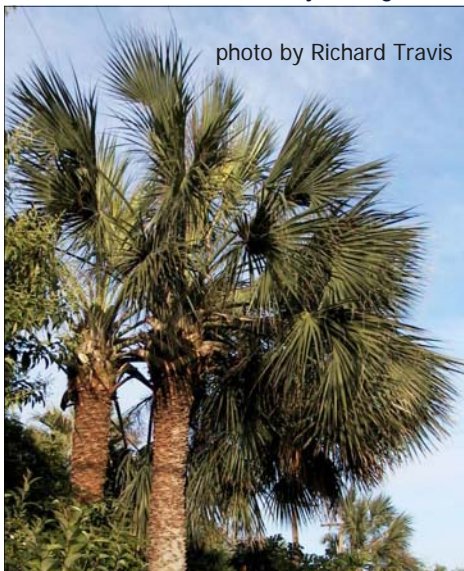


photo by Richard Travis

Feb. 23rd at 7:30 p.m.

"Large-scale Revegetation in the LRGV"

presented by Bob Barry

Valley Nature Center, 301 S Border, Weslaco, TX



Save a tree!

Receive *The SABAL*
as an email attachment.

.pdf SABAL editions
will arrive earlier than mail.

To change from
mailed SABAL subscription
to .pdf email attachment,
send email with subject:

SABAL email delivery

to: mild.christina@gmail.com

TO: