

The Sabal

April 2013

Volume 30, number 4

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Photos by Frank Wiseman and Christina Mild.

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Page number references for each plant species shown in the Sabal refer to:

"Plants of Deep South Texas," (PDST).

Editor:

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

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April 2013 Mtg., Native Plant Project:

Tues., April 23rd, 2013: at 7:30pm

"Drought in the Arroyo Colorado Brush"

by Christina Mild

Christina Mild will present a PowerPoint presentation on "Drought and the Arroyo Colorado Brush."

Mild owns property along the Arroyo Colorado in Harlingen, and has worked for many years in revegetation projects in the LRGV. Trained as a biologist, Mild has focused her energies for many years on studies of our native flora and fauna.

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

Photo right: Retama (p 234), blooming despite the drought.



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>



**Southmost Nature Conservancy Preserve in Brownsville:
April 6th NPP Fieldtrip Report:**

Nine members of the Native Plant Project visited an incredible piece of habitat along the Rio Grande. Preserve Manager Max Pons (photo inset below left) led our group on a tour of some of the most pristine Sabal Palm forest still in existence. Visits to the preserve are by appointment only. A PowerPoint fieldtrip report will be presented by Ken King at the May 28th meeting of NPP. (There were far too many details and wonderful photos to do justice to the trip in this newsletter report alone.) *Photos by Christina Mild.*



Fieldtrip participants pose in front of an enormous Anacahuita (Wild Olive, p 141).

Page number references for each plant species refer to "[Plants of Deep South Texas](#)," (PDST).





Do you have space for a Sabal Palm? Ginger Byram and Diann Ball-esteros pose in front of a young Sabal (p 27) at Southmost Preserve.



Due to the extended drought, few understory plants were in evidence. A few vines and blooming things were scattered here and there. Palm Grove Passion Vine, p. 346 (*Passiflora filipes*) was barely alive. Small colonies of Blue Mistflower, Crucita, p. 91 (*Chromolaena odorata*) were in bloom.





Above: Vegetation on the Mexican banks of the Rio Grande, as seen from Southmost Preserve, was fairly lush and diverse.



Several vine species were in evidence in the understory of the Palms. *Clematis drummondii* (Old Man's Beard, p 362) and *Cocculus diversifolius* (Variable Leaf Snailseed Vine, p 322) were the most abundant vines present.

Please Protect Your Palms!!

Many people deem it necessary to remove dead palm leaves from most species of palms.

In the case of Sabals and Washingtonias, it is especially important for many reasons to fly in the face of convention and leave the palm “skirts” in place, if possible.

Dead leaves in the palm skirts provide habitat for oriole nests, small lizards and many other nesting and resting birds, including owls and kiskadees. Our 2 local species of yellow bats (Northern and Southern) use palm skirts almost exclusively for roosts. In addition to providing habitat, dead leaves protect the vital trunk by deflecting relentless drying sun and wind.

One should not trust the first palm tree trimmer knocking at the door. It’s fairly rare to find palm trimmers aware of animal habitat issues or concerned about the future health or beauty of your valuable tree.





Above: **Palmer's Bloodleaf**, *Iresine palmeri*. (p. 66) Amaranthaceae. Probably due to drought, the leaves and stems of this vine were tinged and tinted with red. The fuzzy structures are mature fruit (thus this specimen is female). Found in the Brownsville and Olmito areas in Texas.

Below left: Coral Bean blooms. *Erythrina herbacea*. (p. 261) Despite the drought, these red blooms were relatively abundant. Few specimens had leaves; some had old dry, mostly-empty seedpods.

Below right: One of the gems of Southmost Preserve is this large-leaved *Colubrina greggi*. (p. 364) A few individuals of this species occur in remnant groves of Sabal Palm. The species also occurs in Mexico. The plants were definitely drought-stressed. *C. greggi* is closely-related to Hog Plum, Texas *Colubrina*.

In the small grove of Sabal Palms where these photos were taken, the top six inches of soil were essentially dust, a good indication of just how dry conditions are in mid-April 2013.



LRGV Native Plant Sources

Heep's Nursery (& Landscaping)

(Mike Heep)
1714 S. Palm Court Drive
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(956) 423-4513 * By appt. only

Valley Nature Center

301 S. Border Ave.
Weslaco, TX 78596
(956) 969-2475
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Dodder (*Cuscuta* sp) (p 202-203).



NPP Board & General Meetings held at Valley Nature Center (ABOVE)

(Fourth Tuesday each month)

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

Most meetings held at Valley Nature Ctr. (see above)

Upcoming Meeting Date: May 28, 2013:

“Fieldtrip to Southmost Preserve” by Ken King

FROM: NPP; POB 2742; San Juan, TX 78589

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

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NPP March meeting and speaker on:

April 23, 2013 at 7:30pm –

Christina Mild–

"Drought in the Arroyo Colorado Brush"

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

Photo on right: Palo Verde blooms (p 235)



Inside: Report on NPP Fieldtrip to Southmost Preserve in Brownsville, TX.