



The Sabal

January 2013

Volume 30, number 1

In this issue:

January speaker p 1 below
More Plants of the South Texas Sand Sheet pgs 2-6
With photos from Dr. Alfred Richardson and C. Mild.
Text by Dr. Richardson, Ken King & C. Mild.
LRGV Native Plant Sources, NPP Sponsors p 7
Membership Application (cover) p 8

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Jan. 2013 Meeting, Native Plant Project:

Tues., January 22, 2013 : at 7:30pm

"Native Morning Glories and their Affinities to Tropical Mexico"

by Dr. Andrew McDonald, Professor of Botany at UTPA, Edinburg. Dr. McDonald's interests include Plant Systematics, Biogeography, Ethnobotany and Conservation. He has conducted botanical studies in many parts of the world. Dr. McDonald's presentation will feature some of the most striking blooming plants in the RGV.

His Ph.D. dissertation was "Biosystematics of *Ipomoea* section *Tricolor* (Convolvulaceae)."

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



Ipomoea rupicola photographed by C. Mild, 9/26/2006 on the Javelina 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.

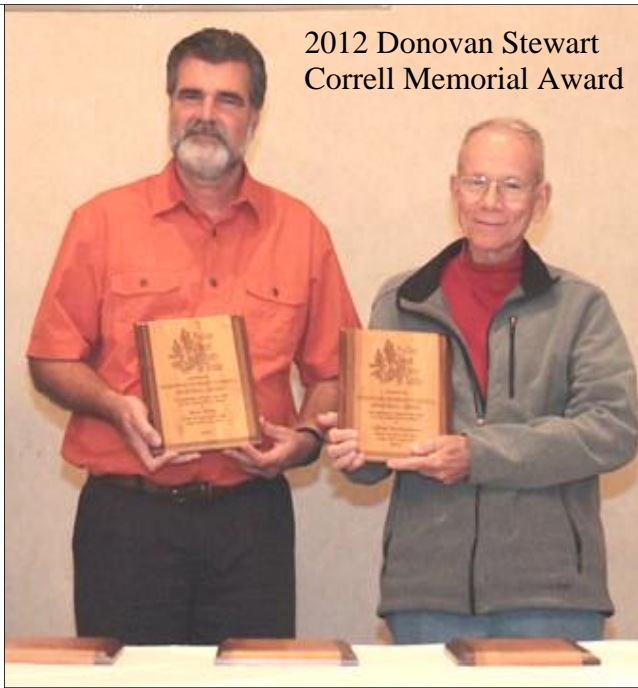
Previous **Sabal** issues are posted on our website [www.NativePlantProject.org].

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 - Chris Hathcock - (956)-369-1744; <chris_hathcock@fws.gov>

2012 Donovan Stewart
Correll Memorial Award



This seems the perfect time to point out our favorite authors, who have received an award from the Native Plant Society of Texas (NPSOT). Here are our friends, displaying the plaques they received in honor of the “2012 **Donovan Stewart Correll Memorial Award** for scientific writing in the field of the native flora of Texas,” Ken King (left) and Alfred Richardson (right), for our all-time favorite fieldguide: "*Plants of Deep South Texas.*"

More Plants of the South Texas Sand Sheet Introduction—

Ken and Al have not ceased their efforts to find new and interesting plants, and Al is compiling information on these previously unpublished local plants for a follow-up publication.

As we worked together to prepare the November Sabal on “Plants of the South Texas Sand Sheet,” we realized that a number of interesting plants they’ve found on the sandsheet would fill another newsletter (or more).

Using Al’s photos and text which the authors have compiled on each plant, we provide a glimpse at plants you may have never encountered or even seen a picture of. We hope that you’ll be pleased to see some rarely-glimpsed local natives.



Enlarged photo, held on Ken’s hand. (Photo taken on Encinitas ranch on 3-17-10 .) This is a particularly robust individual with many stems. The tiny flowers are at the ends of the stems, which are difficult to see. (The long “stem” in photo is actually a blade of grass.) This specimen was a record for our area, with the nearest population being just south of San Antonio.

Petite Plant

Family: Saxifragaceae

Scientific Name: *Lepuropetalon spathulatum*

Habit: Very small hairless annuals, usually growing in rounded patches about 5/8" broad but variable.

Leaves: Alternate, without petioles, the blades spatulate, up to 1/4" long.

Flowers: Radial, very small, but large in proportion to the plant, borne singly near the stem ends; sepals 5, 1/16" or slightly longer; petals 5, white tiny, smaller than the sepals.

Fruit: Capsules about 1/16" tall; seeds pitted.

Bloom Period: Winter, spring.

Distribution: Starr County.

Both *Lepuropetalon* and *Drosera* (see p. 3) grow together in a localized area of the Encinitas 40,000 acres ranch where 3 counties (Jim Hogg, Starr and Brooks) meet. There are extensive inland sand dunes and several microenvironments.



These were found among the extensive sand dunes. Water percolates through the porous sand and seeps out in a narrow band at the base of the dunes creating a microhabitat that provides constant moisture and little nutrients.

The sundews were growing near such a seep, where they received moisture over a longer period of time after the rains ended.

They require a moist habitat.

The carnivorous nature of the sundews provides the nitrogen needed that is absent in the wet sand, allowing sundews a competitive edge over other more aggressive and larger plant species.

There are similar habitats ranging farther south, which makes it likely that *Drosera brevifolia* also grows in Starr, and possibly in Hidalgo, counties. It would be very easy to overlook them due to their small size.

Dwarf Sundew

Family: Droseraceae

Scientific Name: *Drosera brevifolia*
[*D. annua*, *D. leucantha*]

Habit: Tiny annual insectivorous herbs.

Bloom Period: Spring, summer.

(See p.204 of *Plants of Deep South Texas*.)

In general these plants are tiny, from 1/4 to 3/8" in width. The photos seen here are greatly enlarged to show detail.

Sundews capture tiny insects with the sticky material which can be seen here on the ends of glandular hairs of the leaves. When the insect is captured, the hairs slowly bend toward the center of the leaf blade, where the insect is digested. (Photos from same general area as *Lepuropetalon* from previous page.)





Photographed on Hwy 1017, 1 miles West of Hwy 281 on 4/2/2011.

Small Papillosus, Yellow Flowered Alicoche

Family: Cactaceae

Scientific Name: *Echinocereus papillosus* var. *angusticeps*

Habit: Plants forming clumps. Stems spiny, erect or leaning, up to 8” long, up to 2” broad or more, with ribs divided into nodules (tubercles).

Fruit: Greenish, spiny.

Bloom Period: Spring.

Distribution: Cameron, Hidalgo, and Starr counties.

Variety *angusticeps* is endemic to Texas, limited to red sandy soils of northwestern Hidalgo County and northeastern Starr County.

(See p. 164 in *Plants of Deep South Texas*.)

Photo on bottom right was taken on 3/12/2011 at Ken King’s home, where the plant is in cultivation.



C.Mild photo taken at Boca Chica Beach on the NPP fieldtrip 11/30/2012.



Beach Prickly Pear
without and with blooms.

Low-Growing or Beach Prickly Pear

Family: Cactaceae

Scientific Name:

Opuntia macrorhiza

Habit: Stems flattened, jointed, erect at first but falling over with 3 or more joints. Spines yellow or tan, some sturdy and some (glochids) brittle and barbed.

Fruit: Red, about 3 1/2".

Bloom Period: Spring.

Distribution: Cameron, Hidalgo, Willacy and Starr counties.

This species occurs in sandy soils near the coast and also inland. The reddish center of the flower distinguishes this species from the more common Texas prickly pear, *O. engelmannii* var. *lindheimeri*. illustrated on bottom right.

(See p. 171 in *Plants of Deep South Texas*.)



Common Prickly Pear
for comparison
of bloom and spines.



Pigmyleaf

Family: Caryophyllaceae

Scientific Name: *Loeflingia squarrosa*

Habit: Small fleshy rounded plants, usually with glandular hairs, not more than 6" tall.

Leaves: Crowded, narrow, about 1/4" long.

Flowers: Cleistogamous (self-fertilizing without opening); sepals 5, similar to the leaves but a little shorter; petals minute, 3 to 5 or none.

Fruit: Capsules 3-angled, about 1/8" tall.

Bloom Period: Spring.

Distribution: Hidalgo County.

Comments: Pigmyleaf has not previously been reported for our area. It grows in sandy soils. The plants remind one of a juniper seedling.

Photographed on Hunke Ranch, 4-26-10. Enlarged.



Coastal Plain Heliotrope

Family: Boraginaceae

Scientific Name: *Heliotropium racemosum*

Habit: Sprawling, hairy herbs.

Flowers: Corollas are almost 5/8" broad, which makes these photos almost life-size. Typical coils of the Heliotropes aren't always visible in this species.

Bloom Period: Spring, summer, fall.

This is a Texas endemic which prefers sandy soils. The flowers are much larger than our other heliotropes. (See p. 146 in *Plants of Deep South Texas*.)

Photographed in Hidalgo county north of Hwy 490 on 5-26-2012.



Note hairy leaves and bloom size.

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
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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 Speakers and Topics:

February 26, 2013 – Chris Hathcock –
“The Natural Zones of the Lower Rio Grande Valley,”
***Specific Geological Regions of the RGV
and the Plants Thriving There.***

Other Meeting Dates: March 26, April 23, May 28, 2013

Please note date changes; errors printed in last issue.

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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TO:



NPP fieldtrip participants at Boca Chica beach, 11/30/2012.

**NPP January meeting
and speaker on:**

January 22, 2013 at 7:30pm –

Dr. Andrew McDonald –

**"Native Morning Glories and their
Affinities to Tropical Mexico"**



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