



# The Sabal

January 2019

Volume 36, number 1

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Plant species page #s in the Sabal refer to:  
 “[Plants of Deep South Texas](#)” (PDST).

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### NPP meeting topic/speaker:

**“McAllen Nature Center: An Urban Oasis”**  
 —by Ernest Herrera and Raziel Flores

**Tues., January 22nd, at 7:30pm**

Ernest Herrera and Raziel Flores, two of our accomplished young naturalists, will present: “McAllen Nature Center: An Urban Oasis”. Their revegetation work at the nature center has truly turned the city park into an urban oasis. Ernest and Raziel are Biology graduates from UTRGV who have a passion for our native plants and wildlife. Both are quite handsome and capture gorgeous photographs. This program will be a feast for the eyes in more ways than one.

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



**Photo above:** Look for larvae of the Mexican Silverspot on Passionflower Vines. Photo by Mike A Rickard. This butterfly has oviposited recently in several locations.

**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](http://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](mailto:bwessling@rgv.rr.com)>

President - Ken King - <[wk\\_king01@yahoo.com](mailto:wk_king01@yahoo.com)>

## Recent, As-Yet-Unpublished, Discoveries

— compiled by Ken King & Christina Mild. Accompanying photographs are by Dr. Alfred Richardson (unless otherwise specified)

As most readers are aware, Ken and Al are constantly on the prowl for sightings of hitherto -unseen plant species. Most of these are known to botanists, but only recently sighted in deep south Texas. In many cases, they've been on the lookout for them, aware from historical records that the plant might appear locally once again.

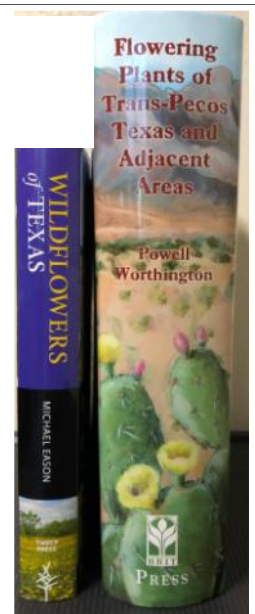
Much of the information included for each species featured in this issue has been taken from recent publications featured in the November 2018 Sabal. Page number references for each are included here.

Michael Eason's "Wildflowers of Texas"

[[http://www.timberpress.com/books/wildflowers\\_texas/eason/9781604696462](http://www.timberpress.com/books/wildflowers_texas/eason/9781604696462)]

Powell (A. Michael) and Richard D. Worthington's "Flowering Plants of Trans-Pecos Texas and Adjacent Areas"

[<https://shop.brit.org/products/trans-pecos>]



### *Chaptalia texana*, Texas Chaptalia, Silverpuff.

Asteraceae.

(Eason p97. Powell p158.)

This uncommon, dandelion-like perennial has been spotted by Ken and Al in October and December. It was photographed in the wild near Ricardo, north of Rivera, TX.

Al has been cultivating it since 2013 and Ken has many seedlings popping up right now.

Ken notes that there is no apparent intermediate blooming stage between the tightly-closed flowering head and the open "silverpuff" of fluff-bearing seeds.

The plant has no visible stem, a basal rosette of leaves which can be lobed or toothed, with hairy undersides and smooth upper epidermis.

Roots are thick, fibrous and numerous.

It is often found on limestone or in thin and rocky soils.

Historic records exist from Loma Alta, near Brownsville in Cameron County.





***Delphinium carolinianum* var. *vimineum*.**

**Plains Larkspur.**

Ranunculaceae.

(Eason p453. Powell p781.) Photographed on Valverde/Fankhauser Ranch.

Found in deep sands at San Isidro in Starr County.

Erect perennial herb from fascicled roots. (fascicled = a cluster arising from the same node.)

Usually one stem per root.

Stems generally elongate several weeks after leaves (delicate, palmately divided) are formed.

Several plant parts are covered with fine hairs and fuzz.

Usually forms a many-flowered terminal raceme.

The long floral spurs are nectar-filled.

Blooming occurs in spring and summer.

Fruits are aggregated follicles, curved-cylindric, with a beak 1-3mm long. Seeds are dark brown to black, crescent-shaped to obpyramidal, with prominent wavy, transverse ridges.

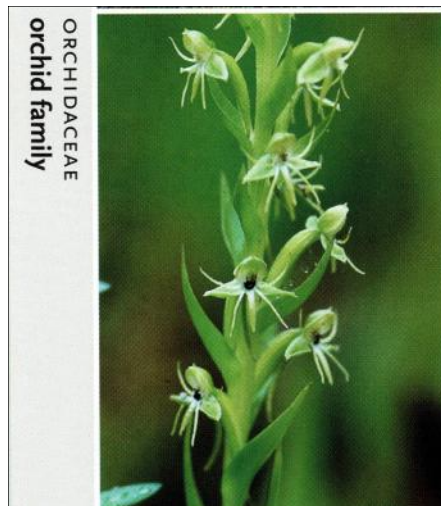
Roots are not easily separated from the stems when digging, pulling or handling of the plants.

Presumably, all species of *Delphinium* are toxic.



**Something to look for: Photo scanned from Eason p152.**

Ken advises looking for this elegant orchid (12-24" tall) in and around resacas or ponds, where it floats in mats with other vegetation. It will probably require canoe transport to collect photographs.



ORCHIDACEAE  
orchid family

***Habenaria repens*** ORCHIDACEAE

Green spider orchid, bog orchid, water spider bog orchid

Marshes, ponds, bogs, wet meadows, slow-moving streams. Summer, fall. Locally common.

An erect to decumbent, terrestrial or aquatic perennial to 3 feet tall, typically much shorter. Leaves alternate, sheathed, grasslike, lanceolate to linear, to 10 inches long and 1¾ inches wide, margins entire. Flowers in dense racemes of 50± per raceme, with 3 light green, ovate sepals to about 1/3 inch long. Petals greenish, divided, lip 3-lobed with middle lobe wider and shorter than outer two. Small flowers look like tiny green spiders. Found throughout eastern fourth of Texas; additional populations in Cameron County and east of San Antonio.

Charles Stutzenbaker provides extensive information about this native orchid: p288-289, in [Aquatic and Wetland Plants of the Western Gulf Coast](#).

**INTRODUCED** locally for erosion control.

*Desmanthus illinoensis*,  
**Illinois Desmanthus, Bundleflower.**

Fabaceae.  
(Powell p533.)

This 1-3'-tall perennial shrub was photographed in the highway median in Brownsville. Whitish blooms occur from May to June and are typical of Mimosoideae. Opportunistic blooming may also occur in rainy seasons. Tightly-clustered seedpods help to distinguish the species. The tightly-whorled green seedpods are uniquely interesting. Found on clay or caliche soils in open areas, often near water. Considered a nutritious browse for livestock.

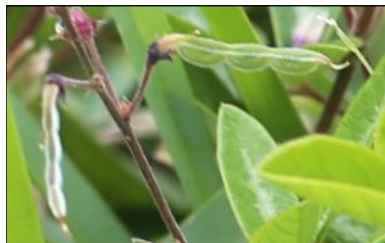


**INTRODUCED: Coastal Distribution.** Probably introduced here with turf grass from sources north of us.

*Desmodium incanum*,  
**kaimi clover, tick trefoil, zarzabacoa comun.**

Fabaceae.  
(Eason p341.)

This pink-blooming legume has shown up on South Padre Island lots and Brownsville roadsides. Native to the Caribbean, it has been introduced to Texas and Florida. The fuzzy segmented seedpods (loment) break up to release individual segments onto animal fur and clothing. While it may be pretty and nitrogen-fixing, it could easily become a pest in gardens and natural settings. The three silver-veined leaflets make the plant fairly easy to identify. Because it grows amongst turf grass, it will probably be spread quickly by lawnmowers.





***Rhinotropis lindheimeri* (previous name: *Polygala lindheimeri*),  
Shrubby Milkwort, Lindheimer's Milkwort**  
Polygalaceae.  
(Eason p388. Powell p755-756.)

This species is similar to *Polygala glandulosa*, PDST 353 (photo below).  
While *P. glandulosa* is sprawling, this species has an upright growth habit.  
Height is about 8".

Leaves and stems are covered with hairs (incurved or spreading).  
Flowering specimens were photographed at Santa  
Margarita Ranch in March, May, and August.  
Caterpillar activity was in evidence.

Common throughout western Edwards Plateau,  
south to Starr County, west into Big Bend region  
and north into the Panhandle.

Probably overlooked due to small size.

Powell provides an excellent and detailed account.



*Polygala glandulosa*, PDST 353.



***Menodora longiflora***

**Showy Menodora**

Oleaceae.

(Eason p268. Powell p685.)

Similar to Redbud Menodora, but erect to 3' tall.

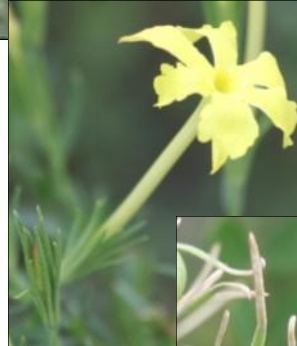
Long floral tubes and blooms opening in late evening indicate a moth-pollinated bloom.

Blooms to 2" long, 1.25" wide.

Leaf size is variable, up to 5.5 cm long and 1 cm wide.

Infrequent in Starr County.

Compare with Redbud Menodora (*M. heterophylla*), PDST 334.



***Schoenocaulon ghiesbreghtii*,  
Ghiesbreght's Feathershank.**

Melanthiaceae.

(Photos by Ken King)

Seen near Encino on highway right of way.

Similar species: *Schoenocaulon texanum*.

(Eason p146. Powell p1022.)

Erect, bulbous perennial to 24" tall in bloom.

Basal leaves are grass-like, to 2' long, 1/4" wide.

Leaf margins are serrate.

Base is sheathed by dark brown fibers.

Bulbs are ovoid to oblong, 2-4.5 cm long, 1-4 cm wide.

Blooming in late summer.

Flowers in terminal, crowded racemes to 12" long.

The white parts visible on the racemes are filaments (not petals). Yellow tips on each filament are anthers.

Fruit capsules and seeds are described by Powell.

Distinguishing feature of this species:

(from eflora of North America)

[[http://www.efloras.org/florataxon.aspx?flora\\_id=1&taxon\\_id=242101882](http://www.efloras.org/florataxon.aspx?flora_id=1&taxon_id=242101882)]

“Tepal margins crenulate to minutely denticulate”





## LRGV Native Plant Sources

See also our  
Sponsors on right

### **Perez Ranch Nursery**

(Betty Perez)

12 miles north of La Joya, TX

(956) 580-8915

<PerezRanchNatives@gmail.com>

**These vendors may sell exotics:**

### **National Butterfly Center**

Old Military Hwy/3333 Butterfly Pk Dr  
Mission, TX 78572

office 956-583-5400x754 Max Munoz

<max@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

### **M&G Double D Native Plants & Seeds of South Texas.** (Gail Dantzker)

956-342-5979; <gdld@att.net>

7500 N 21st St; McAllen, TX 78504

[[mandgdoubled.com](http://mandgdoubled.com)]

*Grown at The Woods, Willacy Cty., TX.*

### **Landscapers using Natives:**

Landscaping, Etc. Inc.

**Noel Villarreal**

125 N. Tower Rd, Edinburg

956-874-4267, 956-316-2599

## *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 <heep0311@yahoo.com>

**[[www.heepsnursery.com](http://www.heepsnursery.com)]**



*Come visit the VNC:*

301 S. Border Ave.

Weslaco, TX 78596

(956) 969-2475

info@valleynaturecenter.org

www.valleynaturecenter.org



*Native Plants  
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Rio Grande Valley*

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



Photos above:

Top: Photo by Mike A Rickard. Crysalids of the Mexican Silverspot, grown from eggs collected in Rickard's Mission yard. (Candi Welliver observed this species ovipositing on January 12, 2019. We may not think butterflies are active during winter, but such observations dispute that idea.)

Bottom: Mexican Silverspot showing the silver "spots" on the underwings. Kenneth Wilson photo.

NPP Board & General Meetings are held at

Valley Nature Center

(4th Tues. each month, except thru summer)

Brd Mtgs 6:30pm — Speaker 7:30pm

1/22/2019, 2/26/2019, 3/26/2019, 4/23/2019, 5/28/2019,

\* 9/24/2019, 10/22/2019, 11/26/2019 \*

(\*No meetings during summer or in December.)

**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  
Other donation: \_\_\_\_\_

Please print:

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_

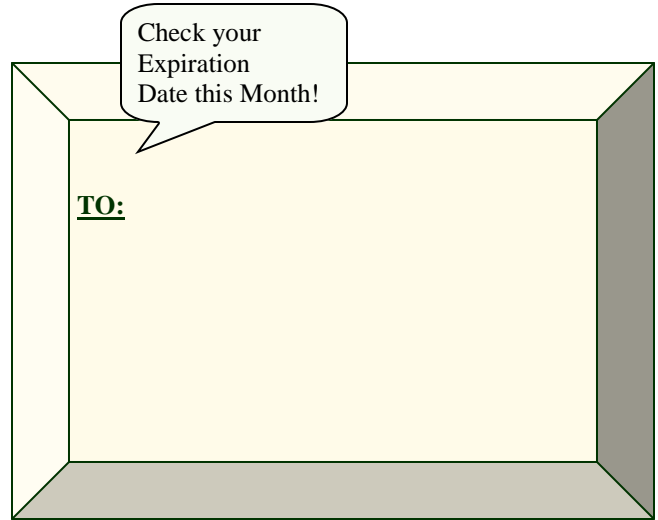
Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_

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Send my SABAL via .pdf file to:

Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

*Please mail this form with dues check payable to:  
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**NPP meeting/speaker:**

The Native Plant Project will present:

**“McAllen Nature Center: An Urban Oasis”**

—by *Ernest Herrera and Raziell Flores*

**Tues., January 22nd, at 7:30pm**

The meeting is held at  
**Valley Nature Center,**  
301 S Border, (in Gibson Park),  
Weslaco. 956-969-2475.

We hope to see you there!  
Feel free to bring a native plant for identification.

Photo below: Mexican Silverspot.  
Photo by Honeylet Jones.  
This butterfly lays eggs on Passionflower Vines.  
Photographed nectaring on *Dicliptera vahliana*.  
More about the Silverspot on p1 and 7.



**Now is an excellent time to plant!**  
**Native plants are available at our meetings, for a donation.**

**In this issue:** Recent, As-Yet-Unpublished Discoveries by Dr. Alfred Richardson and Ken King:  
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