



The Sabal

February 2020

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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: Tues., February 25th, at 7:30pm

“Landscaping with Native Plants to Attract Birds and Butterflies to Your Yard!”
presented by — Sue Griffin and Billy Snider

Sue Griffin is a native of the Rio Grande Valley. While pursuing a career in education, Sue followed in her mother’s footsteps as an avid gardener. A devastating freeze in 1987 led her to designing a wildlife habitat using native plants. Her new motto became “If it freezes, it didn’t deserve to live in my yard.” Sue served for many years on the Board of Directors of the Native Plant Project and now serves as the Chair of the Rio Grande Valley Birding Festival.

Billy Snider, Jr. is also a native of the Rio Grande Valley. Born in McAllen and raised in Mission he began his career in landscaping at the age of 16. He continued working in the landscaping trade off and on for over 30 years.

An interest in birding brought Billy and Sue together. They began collaborating on water gardens and native landscapes. They are former owners of Mother Nature’s Creations - a landscaping company that specializes in native wildscapes and water gardens. They are now semi-retired and specialize in consulting with home owners who want to use natives in their landscapes.

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

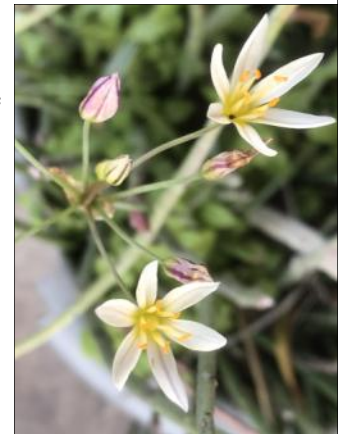


Photo: Wild onion relative blooms in pot of mixed natives.

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 - <wk_king01@yahoo.com>

Succulents — by Christina Mild

There are a wide range of plants which might be classified as succulents. Any or all parts of a plant may be succulent (thickened) in various degrees. Most plants marketed as succulents have succulent leaves.



Succulent leaves aid in moisture retention. When dry conditions prevail, these become less turgid. Succulent leaves tend to fall from plants when disturbed. The fallen leaves often have a capacity to grow roots. They aid the plant in reproduction and dispersal. (Photos of Texas Stonecrop, in bloom on left, rooted leaves above. *Lenophyllum texanum*, *Sedum texanum*. PDST 201. Stonecrop grows where it drops, as on the driftwood above.)

Succulent Leaves.

In areas where tides and high salinity are common, like the seashore, many plants have succulent leaves and/or stems. They retain moisture when tides are low.

Leaf surface and water absorption.

In addition to succulence, leaves of wetland plants and coastal succulents may have waxy surfaces. This has been shown in some species to keep excess water out of the leaves, which would ultimately burst if too much moisture was absorbed.

Ken King points out that the many succulents which grow along our coastal areas are potential landscape plants. One example is the lovely Sea Beach Pimpernel, *Samolus ebracteatus*, PDST 361, photos right. Growing on vacant island lots, it is definitely underappreciated.



Coastal plants grow in full, unrelenting sun and are buffeted by dry winds. Thickened, turgid leaves are less likely to wave in the breeze. A shiny leaf epidermis also helps to reflect excess sunlight.

Fleshy Stem. Cacti are often lumped with succulents.

The spine-covered fleshy part is actually a stem. In the minds of some, spines place cacti in a category distinct from “succulents.”

Photo left: potted Pincushion Cactus blooming and fruiting on the author’s patio 2/17/2020. *Mammillaria heyderi*, PDST 168. The edible fruits are crunchy and tasty.

Many of our native cacti are relatively dormant during winter.

Fleshy Roots. A number of plants emerge after native vegetation is scraped away. Many have fleshy roots. Many of these species die back during colder weather, re-growing stems and leaves when warm weather returns. Manfredas are examples. Jann Miller relates “various types of manfredas do well in pots. They sometimes lose leaves and disappear into the dirt during winter, only to reappear in spring.” (see p 3)

Photo right: *Ibervillea lindheimeri*, Globe Berry, PDST 201. Succulent stems and leaves emerge in hot weather, growing from a horseradish-scented swollen root.



Caudiciform plants: Many plants are valued for an enlarged fleshy, rounded base. This is a caudex. When this rounded base is tough enough to withstand the elements, it can be planted to emerge above the soil and admired.



Jathopha cathartica, Jicamilla, PDST 225. Grown and photographed by Dr. A. Richardson.

Ken King and Jann Miller mention the following potentials for caudiciform cultivation: *Amoreuxia*, *Talinum angustissimum*, *Anredera*, *Cissus incisa*, *Jatropha dioica*, *Ipomeoa rupicola*.

The following pages elaborate worthy native succulents.

Native Succulents for Cultivation

Monocots.

Agavaceae. (Amaryllidaceae) PDST 16-20.

A glance thru Plants of Deep South Texas of Agaves and their relatives reveals the spectrum of native Agave, Manfreda and Yucca species.

All have fleshy leaves.

Those of Agaves and Yuccas are very fibrous, rough and spine-tipped.

Others, the Manfredas, have soft fleshy leaves.

We find, in transplanting these species into Ramsey Park in Harlingen, that a number of animals feast on the leaves, however distasteful they may appear to humans.

Each of these natives is worthy of cultivation, from seed, bulbils, or plant rescue.

Below are photos taken by Dr. Al Richardson in the wilds of deep south Texas.

For the most part, they prefer growing outdoors; most prefer full sun.

Photo above right: *Hechtia glomerata*, Guapilla, PDST 28, is a Bromeliad which resembles an agave. Jann Miller: "Hechtia does all too well in pots and does not slow down in the winter." A striking plant.



Agave lophantha, Thorn-Crested Agave. PDST 17.

Reported in Texas only from Starr and Kennedy counties.

Reproduces prolifically by offsetting and forming large clumps or colonies.

Agaves are well-suited to hot, dry weather, xeriscapes and cultivation in pots.

A number of adaptive agaves from elsewhere in the New World, especially Mexico and the American southwest, can be seen throughout this area.



Manfreda longiflora, (*Polianthes runyonii*), Runyon's Huaco. PDST 18.

This specimen resembles a many-armed sea creature.

Spring and summer blooms should begin to appear soon in wild places and on potted specimens.

It is often difficult to spot these well-camouflaged plants until they display their magnificent blooms.

All native manfredas are worthy of cultivation. Many are disappearing from the wild.



(Amaryllidaceae) Amaryllidaceae. PDST 23-25.
Lily relatives grow from bulbs or fleshy roots.



Zephranthes pulchella
Yellow Rain Lily.
PDST 25



Requires rainwater to grow and bloom.
Small blooms may appear in vast colonies in undisturbed places where rainwater collects.

Endemic to Texas.
Mike Heep has grown this in his yard.



(Amaryllidaceae) Liliaceae. PDST 26.

Above:
Green Island Echeandia, *Echeandia texensis*. PDST 26.

Right:
Lily of the Lomas, *Echeandia chandleri*. PDST 26.

Note the fused anthers on *E. texensis* above.
On the right, one can see separate (unfused) anthers.
Otherwise, these species are almost indistinguishable.
They are genetically distinct.

Each is easily grown in cultivation.
Native plant growers would appreciate any mature seed you can manage to collect and store in a dry paper envelope.

Plants can easily become pot-bound, as many fleshy roots are produced. These roots can be separated and grown as individual plants.

Blooms occur from spring thru fall. During winter, the plants become somewhat dormant. The green leaves remain pretty.



Plants for the Desperate Gardener. (Commelinaceae).



Several succulents may appear on their own in your garden. On the left are Widow's Tears.

Depending on your soil type, one or more species may take over your garden space. These are *Commelina diffusa*, *Commelina erecta* and *Tradescantia subacaulis* (PDST 30-31). These blooms melt when you pick them, thus the "tears."

On the right is *Callisia micrantha*, Southern Coastal Roseling, PDST 29, which occurs in Texas and Mexico. The tiny pink blooms are beautiful, but the plant spreads all too quickly if not confined to a pot. Anyone can grow this!



Red-Stemmed, Fleshy-Leaved Vines Which Disappear Over Winter.

When these two vines emerge from the ground in spring, they can be hard to distinguish. They are not related, and their blooms are very different. When mature blooms are present, they bear little resemblance, but the red-tinged succulent stems and leaves can be confusing.



Left: Pink Baby's Breath, PDST 360. *Talinum paniculatum*. Portulacaceae.

This delicate vine emerges each year from a rescued tuberous root found near Harlingen Thicket. Note the red-dish stems. Single blooms emerge from leaf nodes. Resembles a tiny pink flame at sunset.

Right: Madeira Vine, Sacasile, PDST 139. Basellaceae. *Anredera leptostachys*. May appear in hedges. It is perennial, with red stems and succulent curled and wavy-edged leaves. Blooms appear during fall and attract many pollinators. Found in Texas only in Cameron, Hidalgo and Starr counties, also Latin America. Tuberous root.



Portulacaceae. PDST 358-60. Such names as Portulaca, Purslane and Chisme probably bring to mind low-growing succulents found in a wide variety of environments. While we think of these as weeds, and they probably volunteer in your plant pots, they are worthy of cultivation and some are edible.

Aizoaceae. PDST 55-56. Slender Sea Purslane, Cenicilla and Winged Sea Purslane resemble the Portulacaceae in having stubby leaves. Their blooms place them in a different family, though their common names and even species (*portulacastrum*) indicate their resemblance to what we commonly call Portulaca.

Amaranthaceae. See PDST 57 (Horse Purslane), and 62 (Silverhead), for examples of native Amaranth species with succulent leaves.

Asteraceae. PDST 92 (Fleshy Clapdaisy) and PDST 93 (Padre Island Mistflower) are examples of native composites with succulent leaves. Examination of blooming succulents in nurseries will bring several (often highly-invasive on the California coastline) cultivated composite succulents.

Dr. Al Richardson's "Wildflowers and Other Plants of Texas Beaches and Islands" is an excellent visual source for worthy succulents to pluck from the coastline for experimental cultivation.



Woody Shrubs with Succulent Leaves.

A number of native shrubs have succulent leaves. Many are found near the coast. These include Wolfberry, Snake-eyes, Sea Oxeye Daisy and Leather Leaf.

Carolina Wolfberry, photo on left by Matt Kaufman, is especially worthy of cultivation, as it produces tiny but marvelous edible red fruit and is an excellent pollinator plant. This rather short species, *Lycium carolinianum* var. *quadrifidum*, PDST 394, is found primarily in the moist, salty areas at or near the coast. Stems which fall on the ground will root; a good omen for possible cultivation.

Closely related Berlandier's Wolfberry (with white bell-like blooms) is typically found beneath a tree where perching birds have deposited seed. PDST 394, *Lycium berlandieri*. Growing to 8' tall, this shrub often loses all the leaves during cold weather. Note to the gardener: don't remove the "dead-appearing" shrub until you're certain it will not flush out with new growth in better conditions.

Funky Flexi-Stems.

Two very cool natives have flexible stems. Leatherstem and Candelilla. Both are Euphorbiaceae, which form 3-part seed capsules.



Above and left: Photos by Al Richardson.

Jathropa dioica, Leatherstem, PDST 222. These flexible stems lose their leaves completely during winter. They flush out beautifully in spring. Sap from the thick lateral roots turns red, containing an astringent with historical medicinal use. Blooms attract butterflies, especially swallowtails. Easy to grow and transplant. Roots are thickened, flexible and typically shallow.

Right:

Blooms and forming fruit of Candelilla, *Euphorbia antisyphilitica*, PDST 222.

Grows in colonies of thin dark green waxy stems. Spreads from lateral roots producing offshoots. Does not help to cure syphilis. Historically harvested for high-grade wax. Now uncommon in the wild. Easily grown in many soils.



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

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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

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Landscapers using Natives:

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125 N. Tower Rd, Edinburg

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and revegetation in south Texas.

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Manfreda variegata. PDST 19. Liverspot Lily.

This pot-grown specimen arose from a broken,
barren piece of basal stem about 4" long.

This is an excellent plant for cultivation, especially
in a deep planter in full sun.

NPP Board & General Meetings are held at
Valley Nature Center

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

Brd Mtgs 6:30pm — Speaker 7:30pm

(upcoming meetings)

3/24, 4/28, 5/26/2020

(*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: _____

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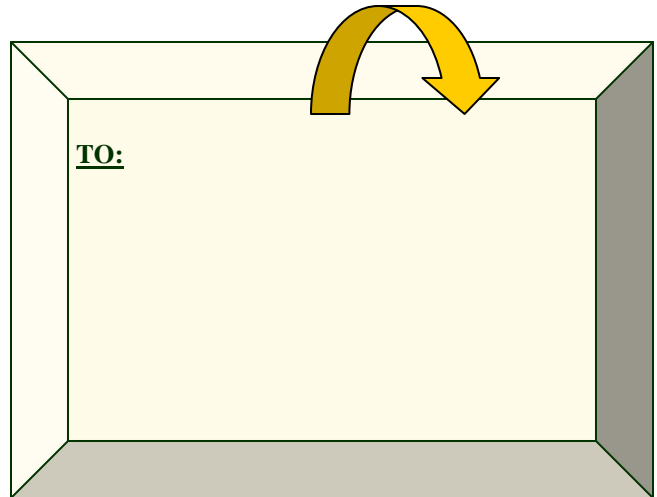
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Dues expired?



NPP meeting/speaker:

The Native Plant Project will present:

“Landscaping with Native Plants to Attract Birds and Butterflies to Your Yard”

presented by — Sue Griffin and Billy Snider

Tues., February 25th, 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 I.D.

Native Plants are available for a donation!



Articles in this issue:

Succulents, Native Succulents for Cultivation.

Plant Species in this issue:

Agave lophantha, Anredera leptostachys, Callisia micrantha, Echeandia chandleri, Echeandia texensis, Euphorbia antisiphylitica, Hechtia glomerata, Ibervillea lindheimeri, Jathopha cathartica, Jathopha dioica, Lenophyllum texanum, Lycium berlandieri, Lycium carolinianum, Mammillaria heyderi, Manfreda longiflora, Manfreda variegata, Portulaca oleracea, Samolus ebracteatus, Talinum paniculatum, Zephranthes pulchella.

Common Purslane, PDST 358, *Portulaca oleracea*. Volunteer of the sidewalk cracks. A native succulent with edible leaves and stems.