



# The Sabal

September 2019

Volume 36, number 6

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"Plants of Deep South Texas" (PDST).

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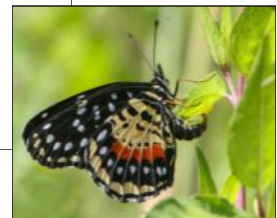
### NPP meeting topic/speaker:

"Native Host Plants for Texas Butterflies & Moths" by *Jim & Lynne Weber*  
**Tues., September 24th, at 7:30pm**

Want to attract beautiful and beneficial pollinators like butterflies and moths to your garden? Learn about the special relationships that exist between several native plant species and the butterflies and moths that use them, beyond monarchs and milkweeds! Explore why native plants are essential to healthy ecosystems, the role of nectar and host plants, and how these insects find the desired host plant species upon which to lay their eggs. This talk will leave you with the knowledge and resources needed to encourage and appreciate a wider diversity of caterpillars, butterflies, and moths in a Texas native plant garden.

The Webers are TX Master Naturalists. They will be selling and signing their book: "Native Host Plants for Texas Butterflies" for \$25/copy. See p7.

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



**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)>

**Butterfly Gardening in Deep South Texas** (photo: Green-backed Ruby-eye by B.Nall)

The Native Plant Project is proud to be on the forefront in providing assistance to those who wish to attract and provide for the needs of butterflies.

Our handbook on “*Butterfly Gardening with Native Plants of the Lower Rio Grande Valley, Texas*” is available as a free download at: [<https://www.nativeplantproject.com/butterflygardening.pdf>].

It is also available at our meetings as a print publication: \$4.50/copy.

Research in the field of host plant interactions continues amongst the locals.

Barry Nall of Falcon Heights [[www.leps.thenalls.net](http://www.leps.thenalls.net)] provides an extensive collection of butterfly photos which is helpful in identification. His collected research on host plant utilization, with illustrative photos, is beautiful, extensive, amazing and continuous. A spreadsheet on proven host plants is available for download, as well.

Jan Dauphin’s photographic studies on butterflies and their hosts appear frequently in “American Butterflies,” member journal of the North American Butterfly Association. Jan provides extensive natural history information on her website [[thedauphins.net](http://thedauphins.net)]. We are proud that Jan is one of The Sabal’s editors.

For those who wish to read more about butterflies and what they need to survive, older issues (2005 to 2014) of American Butterflies can be found online at [<https://www.naba.org/pubs/abm.html>].

Facebook provides an information-sharing forum for locals who wish to expand their knowledge of which butterflies appear, the plants they use, and their variability. Check out these groups: Rio Grande Valley Butterflies and Native Plants of the Rio Grande Valley. Moths are showing up regularly on these forums, as well.



**Container Gardening & Butterflies.**

Several of us have begun to grow more natives in containers. This diminishes the competition from faster growing and taller natives which tend to crowd them out in the wild.

One of the leaders in this effort is **Matt Kauffman**, Park Superintendent/Naturalist at Valley Nature Center. Matt is a vital and frequent contributor on the Facebook group “Native Plants of the Rio Grande Valley”.

These are a few of the photos Matt posted on September 7. Some are not noticeable in the wild except after good rain. Container growing provides the advantage of keeping them well-watered year-round. Barry Nall pointed out in a presentation for NPP: these “edge plants” are in constant threat from herbicide, mowing and traffic. Several serve as hostplants for known critters, probably for unknown ones as well.



Below: Yellow blooms of *Senna lindheimeriana*, PDST 237. Prefers low, wet places. Coral blooms of *Indigofera miniata*, PDST 264. Host for Cassius Blue, Reakirt’s Blue and Funereal Dusky Wing. (Both plants are Legumes.)

Above: Round Copperleaf. Reddish male blooms of *Acalypha monostachya*, PDST 205. Sprawling perennial blooming from spring thru fall. Cameron, Hidalgo and Starr counties. Euphorbiaceae.



Container Gardening makes it easier to observe and photograph blooming, fruiting, and animal interactions.

**Jann Miller & Rachel Nagy's Advice on Container Soil Mix:**

Following up on The Sabal, May 2019, Rachel Nagy has provided additional photos from the garden which she and her mother Jann Miller share. Both are NPP board members. Here are their clues for a good soil mix:

The ratio of materials depends on the size bag of soil per size bag of perlite. The ratio varies depending on the type of plant being potted, the material of the container, and if the soil mix already has perlite in it.

Usually, it's 2 small bags of perlite per 1 larger bag of soil. Some perlite has Miracle Gro in it and some plants are sensitive to that, so it's worth noting.

For native plants we use more perlite than someone would typically consider necessary. Sometimes blood meal and bone meal is added, depending on what is being potted. Pea gravel or extra peat moss may be added.

**The usual potting soil ratio is:**

- One 1.5 cubic ft. bag of organic potting soil;
- Two 8 dry qt. bags of perlite;
- 1/2 cup of organic bone meal; and
- 1/2 cup of organic blood meal.

**Yeatesia platystegia, PDST 54. Texas Shrimp Plant. Acanthaceae.**

*Photos by Rachel Nagy.*

Starr county. Considered as rare, this colony-former is easily apparent only after good rainfall. It grows in remote areas of Starr county on dry, rocky hillsides under brush. Seedlings often occur around the parent.

Jann and Rachel have beautiful potted specimens, and a vast colony grows to 30" tall near their water faucet. In Dr. Al Richardson's rather xeric front yard, Yeatesia has colonized in several places.

Attractive green pointed bracts surround emerging purple tubular flowers.

It is host for the Elf, a butterfly of nearby Tamaulipas. (Elf photos from: Butterflies of Northeastern Mexico by Kim Garwood & Richard Lehman)

As more of us grow this near our homes, we may encounter an adventurous Elf. Jan Dauphin points out that a sighting would be rare.



*Gomphrena nealleyi*, PDST 65. Coast Globe Amaranth. Amaranthaceae. Photo collage by Rachel Nagy.  
 This is a good choice for year-round blooms. The purplish structures are bracts; flowers are inconspicuous.  
 Containers help to support the weak stems, which tend to fall over. Note the hairy leaves.  
 Amaranths are often inconspicuous, but may provide seeds to many critters, including humans and birds.



***September 25th,  
 on Netflix, "Birders."***

*A film focusing on birds and their habitat in Deep South Texas. Local bird bander Mark Conway of Harlingen is featured. Features migration of the diverse species and numbers of birds who successfully traverse the US-Mexico border each year.*



Many of us think of birds when we select native species to include in our plantings. This new film might shed a bit more light on why this effort is so terribly important.

*Isocarpha oppositifolia* var. *achyranthes*. Rio Grande Pearlhead, Bernadette. PDST 109. Asteraceae.

This is a good butterfly nectar plant. It grows especially well in cultivation, often achieving a rounded form of 2.5' in diameter and height. In the wild, where moisture is less abundant, it struggles along on trail edges, often mangled underfoot or beneath the tires of trail bikes.

It is a Mexican species, occurring in Cameron and eastern Hidalgo county.

Preservation efforts are especially important for species such as this one. It transplants easily. Seeds are achenes less than 1/16" tall, thus hardly noticeable.



**Asteraceae. Good nectar and host plants.**

Some butterflies are considered to be “generalists,” in that they will use several members of a plant family as their host. The **Bordered Patch** (photo series above right) is known to use several species in the Aster family, including: *Calyptocarpus vialis* (Prostrate Lawnflower), *Helianthus* sp. (sunflowers), *Simsia calva* (Bush Sunflower), and *Verbesina encelioides* (Cowpen Daisy).

The adult butterfly and the larvae are highly variable in pattern and color.

Barry Nall has an excellent series of photos to help with identification: [www.thenalls.net].

Barry Nall has observed butterfly larvae hosting on 11 Malvaceae, including:

*Abutilon abutiloides*, *A. fruticosum*, *A. trisulcatum* and *A. wrightii*

*Allowissadula lozanii*

*Herissantia crispa*

*Malva parviflora*

*Malvastrum americanum* and *M. coromandelianum*

*Rhynchosida physocalyx*

*Sida abutilifolia*.

**Butterfly species utilizing Malvaceae as hosts:**

Common Streaky-Skipper

Common Checkered-Skipper

Texas Powdered-Skipper

Erichson's White-Skipper

Desert Checkered-Skipper

Laviana White-Skipper (see photos below right)

Gray Hairstreak

Red-crescent Scrub-Hairstreak

Mallow Scrub-Hairstreak

**Malvaceae as Butterfly Hosts.**

Photo Collage Below:

*Abutilon hulseanum*, Jann's Mallow, PDST 303.

Jann grows this tall species directly in the soil, rather than in a pot. In well-irrigated yards, it will colonize easily. Blooms open in the evening, something to appreciate if you work during daylight hours. Numerous insects hang out on the fuzzy fruiting structures. Large seeds are easy to collect and grow.

The adult butterfly below is a Laviana White-Skipper. Rachel Nagy photographed the adult on *Malvastrum coromandelianum* (yard mallow). She found the larva in the partially-opened leaf of *A. hulseanum*. Laviana White-Skipper also uses *Allowissadula lozanii* (Pseudoabutilon, Velvet Mallow).



Mallows are some of our best year-round sources of nectar.

## 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

## NPP Board & General Meetings are held at Valley Nature Center

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

### **Brd Mtgs 6:30pm — Speaker 7:30pm**

(remaining 2019 meetings)

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

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

## *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 for Sale*

*Watch Birds  
& Butterflies*

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

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



**September Speakers/Topic.** Both Lynne and Jim Weber are recently retired from 30+ years, accomplished careers at IBM in Austin. They are certified Texas Master Naturalists and Lynne is a past president of the Capital Area chapter. The Webers are dedicated naturalists who have been studying Texas natural history since 1989. They currently serve on the Balcones Canyonlands Preserve (BCP) Citizens Advisory Council (CAC) and have served on the boards of the Big Bend Natural History Association, the Big Bend Conservancy, and the Chihuahuan Desert Research Institute. They conduct Golden-cheeked Warbler and Colima Warbler surveys, lead guided hikes, restore

native habitat, map and remove invasive plants, and manage a privately owned 8-acre preserve. Their nature photography (<https://www.flickr.com/photos/webersaustin/>) and writing appears in their monthly blog (<http://naturewatchaustin.blogspot.com>) as well as in several publications, and they have co-authored Nature Watch Austin (2012), Nature Watch Big Bend (2017), and Native Host Plants for Texas Butterflies (2018), all published by Texas A&M University Press. The Webers are currently at work on a fourth book, tentatively entitled "Native Host Plants for Texas Moths".

**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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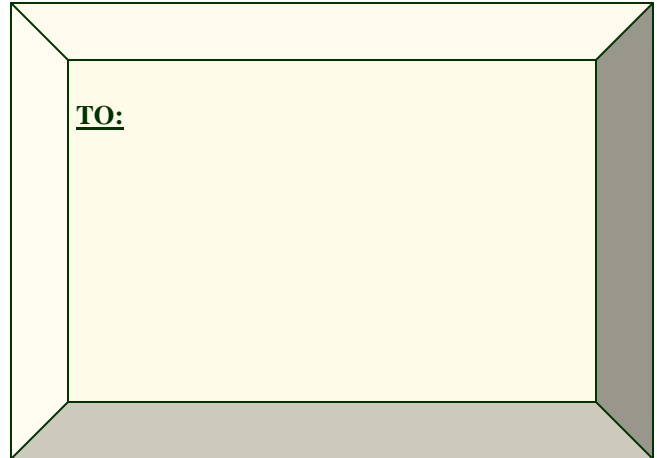
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**NPP meeting/speaker:**

The Native Plant Project will present:

**“Native Host Plants for Texas  
Butterflies & Moths”**  
by *Lynne & Jim Weber\**

**Tues., Sept. 24th, 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.  
**Native Plants are available for a donation!**  
\*See more on p7.

**Honey Mesquite, *Prosopis glandulosa*, PDST 252-3.** Host for Reakirt's Blue (*Echinargus isola*) which also utilizes Blackbrush, Ebony and Powderpuff. Photos and information: [www.leps.thenalls.net] Mesquite has been invaluable as a human and animal foodsource. The wood has many uses.



**Planta Nativa 2019, Quinta Mazatlan, McAllen.** [quintamazatlan.com] Tickets are \$15/person.

**Thursday, Oct. 17<sup>th</sup>, 6:30-9:30pm.**

Keynote speaker:

Christine Ten Eyck (Austin, TX)  
“Return of the Natives”

“Majestic Mesquite Social” Cocktails, Tapas,  
Cooking Demos, Art Experience  
Native Plant Sale, Heep’s Native Nursery



**In this issue:** Local Butterfly References,  
Container Gardener Matt Kauffman,  
Rachel Nagy’s Featured Species:  
*Abutilon hulseanum, Gomphrena neallyi,*  
*Isocarpha oppositifolia, Yeatesia platystegia.*