



# The Sabal

May 2012

Volume 29, number 5

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### **Editorial Advisory Board:**

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### May Meeting of the Native Plant Project:

**Tues., May 22nd, 2012: 7:30pm**

Mike Heep, Native Plant Nurseryman and Revegetation Specialist speaks on very unique species of Deep South Texas:

“Primitive Plants of the Rio Grande Valley & How They Differ Fundamentally From the Flowering Plants”

**at Valley Nature Center  
301 S. Border  
(in 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 - Chris Hathcock - (956)-369-1744; <[chris\\_hathcock@fws.gov](mailto:chris_hathcock@fws.gov)>

**The Family Asclepiadaceae, Part II** (continued from The Sabal, April 2012 issue)

*Cynanchum angustifolium*. Photo by Al Richardson. Boca Chica Rd. 4-2-11.



**Narrow-Leaf Swallow Wort.** *Cynanchum angustifolium* is uncommon in the LRGV, primarily coastal in Cameron, and Willacy counties (Port Mansfield). Frequent near Boca Chica Beach. Also found in Chihuahuah woods near Mission. Bloom clusters above are immature, opening into umbrella-like clusters, yellow or purplish.



*Cynanchum maccartii*, photo by C. Mild on or near the Martin Ranch in Hidalgo County 10-7-06. A Queen Butterfly larva was munching on this vine at the time the photo was taken.

*Cynanchum barbigerum*. Photo by C. Mild, Harlingen Thicket.



You won't find this in a local fieldguide. Ken King provided tentative I.D. for a photo in Mild's extensive "unidentified" collection. Bill Carr has since confirmed the I.D. Note the wide-open blooms which distinguish this from the very-similar *C. barbigerum* (photo on bottom left).

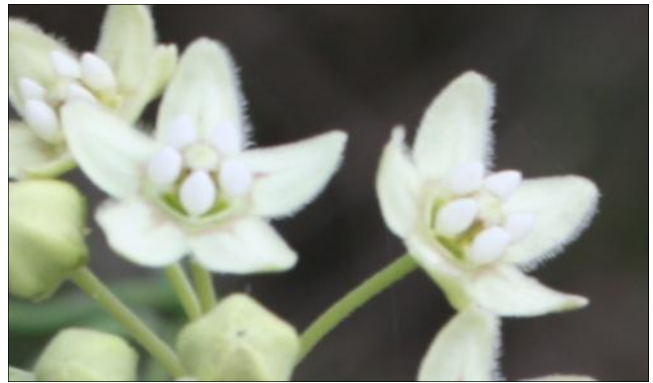
This species occurs in the Rio Grande Plains, the Edwards Plateau and n.e. Mexico.

*Cynanchum racemosum*, Talayote. Mild photo.



**Thicket Threadvine, Aphid Vine.** *Cynanchum barbigerum* has tiny, whitish, bell-like, hairy flowers. Leaves variable in length. Stems are wiry and much-branched. Inconspicuous due to small size. Found in the RGV, Edwards Plateau, Trans-Pecos and n.e. MX.

**Talayote** oftens grows high in treetops, noticeable by extremely large seedpods. Blooming occurs primarily in sunny areas. Note the large, deeply-cut heart-shaped leaves. Cameron, Hidalgo, Starr.



*Funastrum clausum* (*Sarcostemma clausum*),  
**Wavy Twinevine.** Produces runners along the ground, 20' or longer. Note the smaller flower cluster and long, thin leaves which distinguish this from the more common *F. cynanchoides*. Petals are hairy, which can be seen in the close-up above. Found in areas which remain wet such as Llano Grande drainage ditches, especially problematic in the marsh area at Frontera Audubon where it engulfs Moctezuma Cypress. Attractive to butterflies.  
 (Photos by A. Richardson, Penitas, 10-24-09.)

*Funastrum cynanchoides*,  
**Climbing Milkweed.**

Commonly encountered as a garden, citrus grove and farm weed.

The milky sap this plant exudes when damaged is especially stinky and difficult to wash off.

Almost every watered garden will produce this weed, which has a large fleshy root.

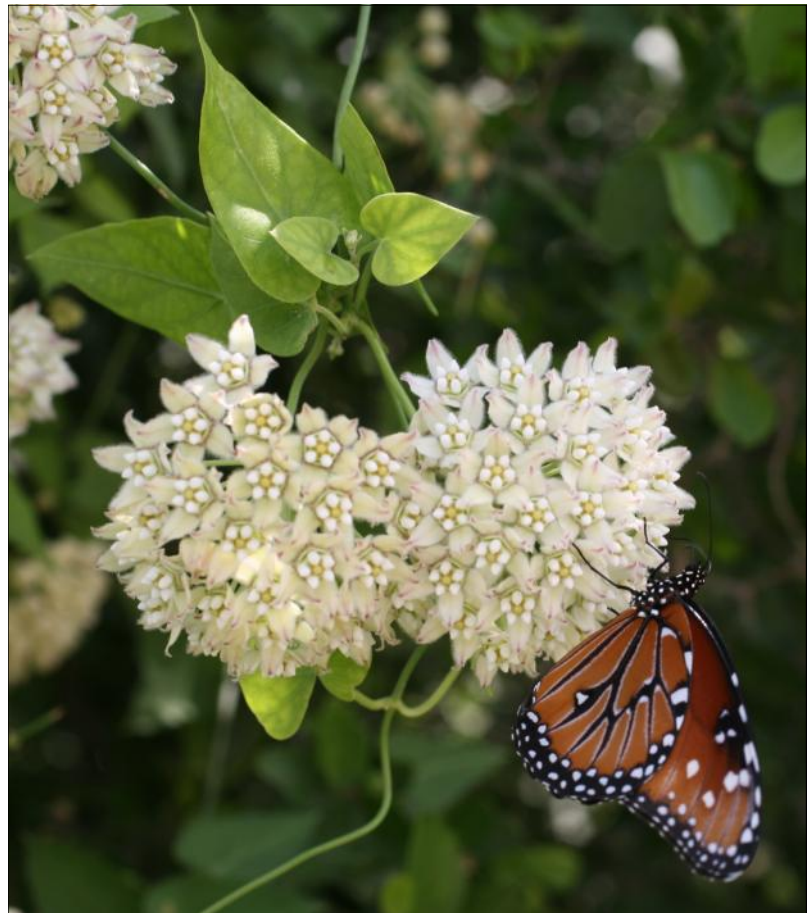
It is handy for covering brush piles and ugly chain-link fences.

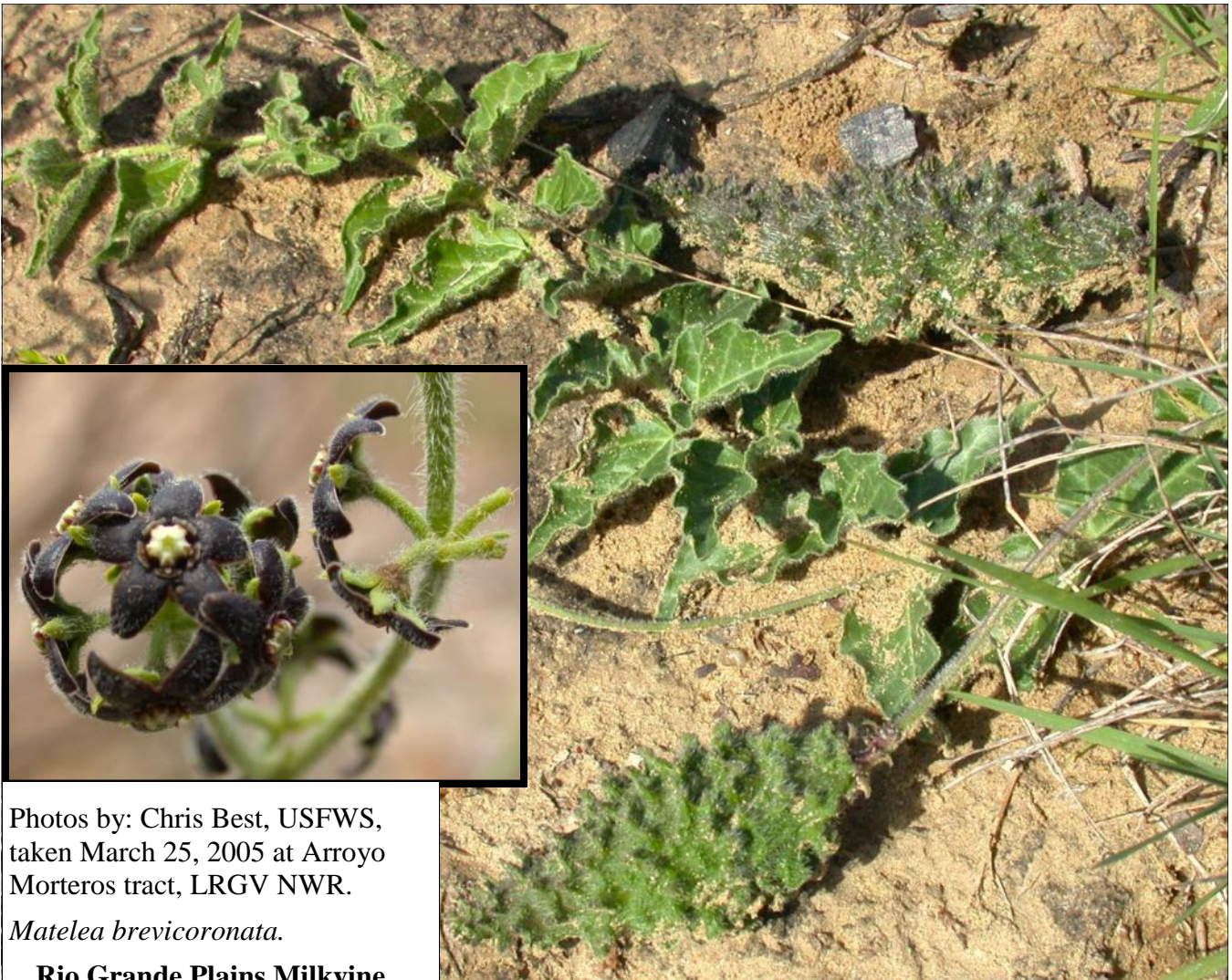
It serves as a nectar source for insects and is a host plant for the Queen, Monarch and Soldier butterflies.

Probably due to the waxy coating on the leaves, this vine is not deterred by RoundUp spraying. It is more efficient to find the root and remove it.

It probably comes as no surprise that this vine is widespread in states from California to Utah, and south to central Mexico.

(Photo by A. Richardson;  
 the butterfly is a Queen)





Photos by: Chris Best, USFWS, taken March 25, 2005 at Arroyo Morteros tract, LRGV NWR.

*Matelea brevicoronata*.

**Rio Grande Plains Milkvine.**

Very similar to *M. parviflora* which has smaller flowers (photo on right).

Also similar to *Asclepias prostrata* (April issue of *The Sabal*), which has much larger flowers.

This species is found in Hidalgo and Starr counties. The milky sap smells like burnt rubber.

The furrowed, hairy seedpod is certainly distinctive!

This is a Texas endemic species.

***Matelea parviflora*. Mesquite Plains Milkvine.**

Hidalgo, Willacy and Starr Counties, found in sandy soils. Queen butterfly larvae were observed feeding on the leaves by Richardson & King.

Knobby fruit splits lengthwise.

Other characteristics are much like *M. brevicoronata*, above.

Note the white hair-like appendages which extend from the center of the bloom.

Grown from seed by Ken King.

Photo by  
A. Richardson





*Matelea reticulata*. **Pearl Netleaf Milkvine.**

This is usually a rather small plant, which is not too large to grow on a trellis, although it prefers to amble along onto a nearby shrub or other support.

Seedpods are knobby.

Because this species grows in the Arroyo Colorado brush, it has been transplanted into local gardens and into Harlingen's Ramsey Park, where specimens have persisted for years.

Blooms are delicately-veined and quite beautiful.

The center of the bloom is like a liquid pearl. Easily grown from seed.



Leaves of this species are similar in size and shape to those of *Cynanchum racemosum*. As seen above, *M. reticulata* has prominently-veined leaves.

Photos by C. Mild.

*Matelea sagittifolia*.  
**Arrow Leaf Milkvine.**

Woody, twining vines.

Flowers are yellow-green and quite noticeable.

Note the protuberances on seedpod.

Found in Hidalgo & Starr counties.

A Texas endemic species.

With small leaves and stems and greenish flowers, this species is inconspicuous when growing within brushy thickets. This specimen is growing on "pencil cactus."

Ken King has attempted to grow *Matelea sagittifolia* from a very large root, without success.

Thompson has had some success in germinating seed collected at Perez Ranch north of La Joya, although it is difficult to keep the seedlings alive in containers.

Photos by A. Richardson and C. Mild.



## Family Apocynaceae

*Telosiphonia lanuginosa.*  
(*Macrosiphonia microsiphon*)

### Wooly Rocktrumpet, Flor de San Juan

Found in the brush of western Hidalgo and Starr counties.

Susan Thompson has been very successful in propagating this beautiful bloomer.

Photos at the bottom of the page were taken at the nursery in which she grows plants with Betty Perez at Perez Ranch Nursery in La Joya.

One can see similarities with the Milkweed family in the elongated seedpod which splits open, releasing seeds carried aloft by long hair-like fluff.

The seed-containing follicles occur in pairs.

The flowers of Flor de San Juan smell like gardenias and are open from evening to morning. They are pollinated by hawkmoths.

photos by C. Mild.



Many details in this issue were taken from and additional information on Asclepiadaceae occurring locally may be found in:

**Plants of Deep South Texas**, 2011, by Alfred Richardson & Ken King.

**Manual of the Vascular Plants of Texas**, 1979, by Correll & Johnston.

## **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  
and revegetation in south Texas.  
1714 S. Palm Court Drive Harlingen, TX 78552  
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Billy Snider, Jr.  
Sue Griffin



email <sue\_griffin@sbcglobal.net >

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-6 ac Nature Park & Trails -Book & Gift Shop-  
-Native Plant Nursery-Meeting Room-  
-Environmental Education and Exhibit Hall-

### **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))  
Sept. 25th is our next scheduled meeting.

**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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*Please mail this form with dues check payable to:  
Native Plant Project, POB 2742, San Juan, TX 78589-7742*

**TO:**

**Tues., May 22nd, 2012:**  
**at 7:30pm**

***Mike Heep,***  
*Native Plant Nurseryman /*  
*Revegetation Specialist*  
speaks on some  
very unique plant species of  
Deep South Texas:

*"Primitive Plants of the  
Rio Grande Valley & How  
They Differ Fundamentally  
From the Flowering Plants"*

**at Valley Nature Center**  
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**(in Gibson Park),**  
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**956-969-2475**

