



The Sabal

www.nativeplantproject.org

Yellow Show (*Amoreuxia wrightii*)

by Christina Mild

Genus species: *Amoreuxia wrightii*

Common Name: Yellow Show

Family: Cochlospermaceae

Occurrence: rare

Distribution: Rio Grande Plains, northwest near the Rio Grande to Terrell County, also northeastern Mexico, and possibly as far south as Peru.

Amoreuxia wrightii is indeed yellow-blooming and quite showy. In my experience, the name *Amoreuxia* is used more frequently than the common name Yellow Show.

Not only is *Amoreuxia wrightii* the only *Amoreuxia* found in Texas, it's the only Texas representative of the very small (25 member) tropical American family Cochlospermaceae. (For further

information about Cochlospermaceae, see Correll & Johnston.)

Little is published about this beautiful plant and few people have grown it. Native plant grower Mike Heep reports that *Amoreuxia* must be well-drained, requiring much different treatment than the bulk of his greenhouse specimens. He was preparing to plant seeds when I called to pick his brain.

Gene Lester successfully grew *Amoreuxia* (which Heep propagated) on a berm at his home in Harlingen. It seasonally appeared in full show and then disappeared, dying back to a large tuberous root (caudex). Heep tells me that it was also planted at such locations as Frontera Audubon in Weslaco and NABA International Butterfly Garden in Mission.

David Dauphin provided the photo which accompanies this article. (David & his wife



Yellow Show

Amoreuxia wrightii

Jan maintain an excellent web site on south Texas nature at www.thedauphins.net)

Dauphin asked my help in identifying the plant when it appeared in full bloom in mid-July, 2008 at Santa Ana NWR. Dauphin found it growing under a Low Croton at the front butterfly garden (just at the intersection of US-281 and the Santa Ana NWR entrance road). Growing in that shady location, where it was probably introduced in recent years, the plant appeared vine-like.

Along the Texas Coastal Bend, *Amoreuxia* typically emerges in sunny openings on sandy or clayey loams, blooming in May through November (Jones). Correll & Johnston describe the usual habitat as limestone soils and silty flats.

The plant is typically low and compact, with attractive palmately-lobed leaves.

Five large yellow petals, several tinged with red at their base, are certain to grab your attention. (*Note: Correll & Johnston describe the petals as "pinkish to orange color, with a purplish blotch at base." This differs with every other description and photo I've found and is something I have yet to observe.*) The flowers are perfect, with one pistil and many anthers. Bob Harms notes that "flowers open very early in the morning and are closed by late morning." Blooming occurs in summer and fall.

Cheatham & Johnston include *Amoreuxia* in "The Useful Plants of Texas" for two reasons. **Ornamental use:** Yellow Show is obviously useful as an ornamental plant. While not widely marketed, it has been available in limited quantities from various Texas-based native plant growers. **Edibility:** A close relative, *A. palmatifida* (not native in Texas), produces edible roots and fruits. These were utilized historically by several Indian tribes. To test the edibility theory, the authors tasted a flower. It was "musty-tasting with a faintly unpleasant background flavor" and the experimenters were "not encouraged to repeat the experiment."

The seeds of *Amoreuxia wrightii* are not large: about 4 mm or 0.2 in. long. Many seeds are formed within each 3-chambered seed capsule, which is about 1.6" in length.

Robert T. Harms has posted two beautiful webpages on *Amoreuxia Wrightii*, complete with photos of tubers, seedling, green pod cross section, dry pod and seeds. Harms' webpages provide specific directions on propagating the seed. He refers anyone needing seed to the National Wildflower Center in Austin, TX, as he has "donated all my seed to them."

In the LRGV, Mike Heep propagates the plant.

Be on the lookout for *Amoreuxia* as you explore the LRGV. With late summer rains, this beautiful Yellow Show may yet appear within the reach of your camera's lens.

—by Christina Mild (www.riodeltawild.com)

Bibliography

Cheatham & Johnston. 1995. The Useful Wild Plants of Texas, Vol. 1, pgs. 313-314.

Correll & Johnston. 1979. Manual of the Vascular Plants of Texas, pg. 1073

Harms, Robert T. Undated webpages. Yellow Show, *Amoreuxia Wrightii*, pg. 1-2.

<http://uts.cc.utexas.edu/~harms/yelshow.html>.

Heep, Mike. Personal communication. [www.heepsnursery.com]

Jones, Fred G. 1977. Flora of the Texas Coastal Bend, pg. 124.

Richardson, Alfred. 1995. Plants of the Rio Grande Delta, pg. 168. (Personal communication, also.)

The Author.

Christina Mild has an M. S. in Biological Sciences. She taught high school science classes for most of her working life and now volunteers in revegetation and "locally-relevant environmental education." To contact her, send e-mail to: mild.christina@gmail.com. For more information about native plants, visit her web site at [www.riodeltawild.com].

CHACHALACAS

Chachalacas in the morning

Stand beneath the olive trees,

Casting from the tangled thicket

Noisy notes into the breeze.

Eager shouted conversations

Echo through the morning air---

Calls reflected through the treetops

Over den and hidden lair.

Sudden silence in the woodland,

Soft sounds rustling through the leaves,

Ghostly gray birds now retreating

Through the thorn and olive trees---

I the innocent intruder

Chanced upon the sacred ground---

Stopped the Chachalaca chorus...

Silence wrap the trees around.

by Willian MacWhorter

Olive tree
Cordia bossieri



Form: large multi-trunk shrub; to a single stem tree
Seasonality: evergreen; may be deciduous in colder climates
Size: 10-25ft with equal spread
Leaves: single, obovate, to 5in long, gray-green on top lighter underneath; thick
Flowers: on branch terminals, single, 2.5in across, attractive white flower with yellow center; bloom normally in late spring or early summer but sporadically all year
Fruit: olive-sized fleshy round fruit with large single seed, yellow-green; not edible
Stems/Trunks: not significant
Range/Origin: Texas Rio Grande area, northern Mexico
Hardiness: tip die-back seen in mid twenties

LANDSCAPE VALUE:
large shrub
specimen when in bloom
patio tree
medians and roadsides



WILDLIFE USE:
Nest site for small birds; but
Chachalacas use the erupting buds as
food.

CULTURAL

Exposure: full sun, reflected heat
Water: drought tolerant, 1-2 times per month when established; more frequently when young or to increase growth rate
Soil: adaptable, good drainage
Propagation: seed or cuttings

REQUIREMENTS:



Nature Happenings Lower Rio Grande Valley, Texas

For a comprehensive calendar of Nature Happenings go to RGV Nature Coalition at www.rgvnaturecoalition.org Scroll down to and click on Nature Events Calendar on right side.

Edinburg Scenic Wetlands and World Birding Center — Birding, butterflies, caterpillars, bats, and photography programs Call Marisa (956) 381-9922 or go to www.edinburgwbc.org for schedule 714 Raul Longoria Rd., Edinburg, TX

Quinta Mazatlan - McAllen Wing of the World Birding Center— 600 Sunset Ave., McAllen, TX. Call Colleen Hook (956) 688-3370 for scheduled events.

Bentsen Rio Grande Valley State Park WBC offers butterfly walks, bird walks, nature tours. Call 956-584-9156 for details and times.

Santa Ana NWR near Alamo offers **Nature Tram rides** with Interpreters at 9:30 a.m., 12 noon and 2:00 p.m. every day (956) 784-7500 or

Valley Nature Center (956) 969-2475 301 S. Border Ave., Weslaco

Estero Llano Grande State Park WBC - 3301 International Blvd. (FM 1015) in Weslaco, TX Call (956) 565-3919 for scheduled events.

Valley Proud Environmental Council Project Rio Reforestation XVII is Sat., Oct. 11 from 8:00am to noon. The event will take place near the Laguna Atascosa National Wildlife Refuge near the Cameron County Airport (rain date Oct. 25). Call Laura Maxwell 956-412-8004, vpec@sbcglobal.net or visit www.valleyproud.org

13th Annual Texas Butterfly Festival, October 16-19 2008, in Mission, TX

The Native Plant Project will be selling many varieties of Mike Heep's healthy native plants at the Festival. 1 gallon plants are \$6.50 each, or 5 or more are discounted to \$5.00 each. Questions about growing natives? Stop by and get the answers from the NPP booth at the Expo Marketplace.

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Sue Griffin



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Weslaco, TX 78596

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1714 S. Palm Court Drive Harlingen, TX 78552

Phone: (956) 457-6834 www.heepsnursery.com

The Sabal is the Newsletter of the Native Plant Project and conveys information on the native habitat, and environment of the Lower Rio Grande Valley Texas. Co-editors: Gene Lester and Eleanor Mosimann. You are invited to submit articles for *The Sabal*. They can be brief or long. Articles may be edited for length and clarity. Black and white line drawings -- and colored photos or drawings -- with or without accompanying text are encouraged. We will acknowledge all submissions. Please send them, preferable in electronic form - either Word or WordPerfect - to: Native Plant Project, P.O. Box 2742, San Juan, TX 78589 or contact **Gene Lester @ 956-682-0549, or g-el1951@sbcglobal.net**

See *The Sabal* and our 5 handbooks on our website:
www.nativeplantproject.org

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Native Plant Project Annual Membership Application Form

Regular \$15 per year Contributing \$35 per year Lifelong \$250 one time fee per individual. Members are advised of meetings, field trips, and other activities through *The Sabal*. Dues are paid on a calendar year basis. Send checks to Native Plant Project, P.O. Box 2742, San Juan, Texas 78589.

Name _____

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I wish to receive the *Sabal* at my e-mail address only

New Renewal Address Change

Comments/ suggestions/ speaker recommendations should be sent to: Native Plant Project, P.O. Box 2742, San Juan, TX 78589 or contact G. Lester (956)-682-0549; g-el1951@sbcglobal.net

Native Plant Project Meetings – September 23, 2008. **Board meeting** at 6:30 p.m.; **General meeting** at 7:30 p.m. Diann Ballesteros and Christina Mild will present “Impacts of Hurricane Dolly on the Arroyo Brush as Seen in Harlingen’s Ramsey Park”. They will discuss which trees were damaged most by the winds; the growth and spread of invasive plants like guinea grass and castor beans; and the explosive increase in butterflies, dragon flies and other insects.

Board and General Meetings 2008 and 2009:

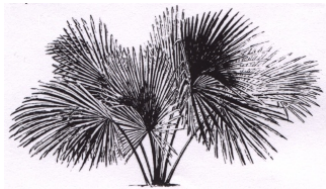
September 23	October 28	2009: January 27	February 24	March 24
	November 25	April 28	May 26	

SUMMARY OF THE MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETING – May 27, 2008

Mosimann received photos from Hagne for the new display board. Hagne reported on a native-plant swap hosted by the McAllen Chamber. A CD of photos from the NPP Handbooks, except the one on trees, will be available for loan from the Valley Nature Center. The NPP made a down-payment for a booth at this year’s McAllen Home Show.

Look for our booth at the Texas Butterfly Festival in Mission. See page 6 for details.

Native Plant Project
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