

The Sabal

February 2013

Volume 30, number 2

In this issue:

February speaker p 1 below
Plants of Caliche Road Cuts pgs 2-6
With photos from Dr. Alfred Richardson and C. Mild.
Text by Dr. Richardson, Ken King & C. Mild.
LRGV Native Plant Sources, NPP Sponsors p 7
Membership Application (cover) p 8

Editor:

Christina Mild
<mild.christina@gmail.com>
Submissions of relevant
articles and/or photos
are welcomed.

Editorial Advisory Board:

Diann Ballesteros
Mike Heep
Ken King
Eleanor Mosimann
Betty Perez
Dr. Alfred Richardson

Native Plant Project (NPP) Board of Directors

President: Ken King
Vice Pres.: Ann Treece Vacek
Secretary: Kathy Sheldon
Treasurer: Bert Wessling

Diann Ballesteros
Ginger Byram
Carol Goolsby
Sue Griffin

Chris Hathcock
Sande Martin
Jann Miller
Eleanor Mosimann

NPP Advisory Board

Mike Heep
Benito Trevino

Feb. 2013 Mtg., Native Plant Project:

Tues., Feb. 26, 2013 : at 7:30pm

"The Natural Zones of
the Lower Rio Grande Valley"

by Chris Hathcock.

Hathcock is the Revegetation Officer for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service at the Lower Rio Grande Valley National Wildlife Refuge. Chris will show a new map of the RGV's Natural Zones based on geologic formations and other land features and explain how specific plants and animals are uniquely related to certain zones. Chris holds a M.S. in Biology and is a Board Member, as well as past president, of the Native Plant Project.

at Valley Nature Center, 301 S. Border,
(in Gibson Park), Weslaco. 956-969-2475

Photo: Coryphantha macromeris var. runyonii



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 - (956)-968-8890 - <wk_king01@yahoo.com>

Plants of the Caliche Road Cuts—Introduction:

Many fieldtrips of various environmental groups have visited the upland hills (cuestas) in the western valley. Many plants are unique to these upland hills, which are primarily composed of caliche. Access to these areas is especially aided by road cuts which have left steep, exposed areas.

One such road cut is near La Joya, and many species featured in this issue have been studied and photographed in that area.

In general, plants found on these caliche hills are adapted to infrequent rain, flash floods and desiccation. Leaves are frequently tiny, which is especially confusing when one is more familiar with the same species grown in a well-watered environment.

Some plants common to the caliche hills have been successfully propagated and are now common at revegetation sites, wildlife areas and butterfly gardens. Some of these will be seen at the conclusion of this article.

Runyon's Huaco

Family: Agavaceae (Amaryllis)

Scientific Name: *Manfreda longiflora*

Habit: Basal rosette of long, narrow succulent leaves, often with purple dashes (as opposed to spots).

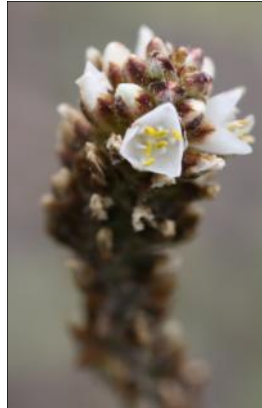
Fruit: Flattened seeds from leathery capsules which split into 3 parts.

Bloom Period: Summer.

Distribution: Hidalgo & Starr Counties.

Perez Ranch Nursery grows this species (see p 7).

(See p. 18 in *Plants of Deep South Texas.*)



Guapilla

Family: Bromeliaceae

Scientific Name: *Hechtia glomerata*

Habit: Clumps grow outward in a circular pattern.

Flowers: Male & female flowers on long, branched stalks on separate plants.

Bloom Period: Spring, summer.

Grows well in cultivation. Individual plants have long life span. Our only terrestrial bromeliad.

(See p. 28 in *Plants of Deep South Texas.*)





Texas Nerve Ray

Family: Asteraceae

Scientific Name: *Tetragonatheca texana*

Habit: Branching inflorescences, somewhat hairy-leaved perennials. Square-shaped flower buds.

Bloom Period: Spring & summer.

Distribution: Hidalgo & Starr Counties.

(See p. 129 of *Plants of Deep South Texas*.)



Two-Leaved Senna

Family: Fabaceae: Caesalpinoideae

Scientific Name: *Senna bauhinioides*

Habit: Gray-hairy, herbaceous with 2 leaflets.

Fruit: Hairy upright-pointing seedpods.

Bloom Period: Spring, early summer.

Distribution: Hidalgo & Starr counties.

(See p. 236 in *Plants of Deep South Texas*.)



False Mesquite Calliandra, Feather Duster

Family: Fabaceae: Mimosoideae

Scientific Name: *Calliandra conferta*

Habit: Shrubs 12" or taller, without spines.

Fruit: Flattened legumes which split open.

Bloom Period: Spring, summer, sometimes fall.

Distribution: Hidalgo & Starr counties.

Uncommon, heavily browsed by deer, low, compact growth. Pink-tipped flower parts are stamens.

Calliandra means beautiful men referring to the stamens. Many species are cultivated as ornamentals, but ours is not yet available.

(See p. 242 in *Plants of Deep South Texas*.)



Dwarf Senna

Family: Fabaceae: Caesalpinoideae

Scientific Name: *Senna pumilio*

Habit: Usually less than 8" tall, arising from tubers.

Fruit: Inflated legumes about 5/8" long.

Bloom Period: Spring, early summer.

Distribution: Hidalgo & Starr counties.

Narrow leaflets are in pairs. Pumilio means dwarf.

(See p. 238 in *Plants of Deep South Texas*.)

Prairie Dalea

Family:

Fabaceae: Papilionoideae

Sci. Name: *Dalea compacta*

Habit: Leaning or erect perennials with large fleshy root.

Fruit: Tiny, less than 1/8”.

Bloom Period: Summer

Distribution: Hidalgo Cty.

Widespread in N. Central TX but not previously reported for our area. Found growing in western Hidalgo County in roadside sandy soil and caliche/gravel hillsides.

Daleas typically have small glands dotted on the lower leaf surfaces.

(See p. 258 in *Plants of Deep South Texas.*)



Calderona

Family: Krameriaceae

Scientific Name: *Krameria ramosissima*

Habit: Shrubs up to 40” tall, often providing a protected “nursery” for cacti. Tiny, often clustered.

Fruit: Prickly above, hairy below. See inset above.

Bloom Period: Spring, summer.

Distribution: Hidalgo & Starr counties.

Krameria has been reported to be hemiparasitic on roots of other plants, making it difficult to cultivate.

(See p. 283 in *Plants of Deep South Texas.*)



Wright’s Indian Mallow

Family: Malvaceae

Scientific Name: *Abutilon wrightii*

Habit: Herbs with woody bases, up to about 24” tall, often trailing on the ground.

Fruit: 1/2” capsule, individual compartments opening, each with 2 or more seeds.

Bloom Period: Spring, summer, fall.

Distribution: Cameron, Hidalgo & Starr counties.

Abutilon wrightii is a tough and easily grown species. Would be a good choice for borders, ground covers and hanging baskets.

It blooms in the late evening.

(See p. 306 in *Plants of Deep South Texas.*)

Hostplant to the Texas Powdered-Skipper Butterfly.

Butterfly photo by Berry Nall.

[www.leps.thenalls.net]



Slender Stalked Mexican Mallow

Family: Malvaceae

Scientific Name: *Meximalva (Sida) filipes*

Habit: Erect herbs up to 40" tall.

Bloom Period: Spring, Summer

Distribution: Cameron, Starr & Hidalgo counties.

Frequents gravelly and rocky areas. Long pedicels.

(See p. 314 in *Plants of Deep South Texas.*)



Crowded Heliotrope

Family: Boraginaceae

Scientific Name: *Heliotropium confertifolium*

Habit: Hairy, mounding or spreading perennials, silvery, hairy foliage. 4" tall or less.

Bloom Period: Spring, summer, fall.

Distribution: Cameron, Hidalgo & Starr counties.

Grows in gravelly or gypseous soils, often with *Zinnia acerosa* or *Tiquilia canescens*.

(See p. 144 in *Plants of Deep South Texas.*)



Dutchman's Breeches (note shape of paired seedpods)

Family: Rutaceae (Citrus)

Scientific Name: *Thamnosma texanum*

Habit: Low perennials about 10" tall or less.

Fruit: About 1/4" long reminiscent of short pantlegs.

Bloom Period: Spring, summer.

Distribution: Cameron, Hidalgo & Starr counties.

Often detected by a pleasant citrus aroma.

Hostplant for Black Swallowtail butterfly.

(See p. 377 in *Plants of Deep South Texas.*)



Photo of Black Swallowtail Butterfly by Berry Nall. [www.leps.thenalls.net]

Propagated Plants of the Caliche Hills (Cuestas)

Rocky hills of the western valley are bulldozed daily for a multitude of mostly ridiculous reasons. Thus, propagation of the plants which inhabit those areas is an important mission in the fight to maintain genetic and species diversity. The plants shown on this page are some of the species which have been propagated more or less successfully. *Mortonia greggii* and *Manihot walkerae* have also been cultivated with moderate success and *Jefea brevifolia* (*Xexmenia*) is available as seed or transplants. Further information about most of these can also be found in publications of the Native Plant Project.



Above: Mexican Oregano. *Lippia graveolens*. p.418.



Above: Torrey's Croton. *Croton incanus*. p.217.

Page numbers are for:
**"Plants of
Deep South Texas,**
by Richardson & King, 2011.



Above: Woolly Pyramid Bush. *Melochia tomentosa*, p.405.



Above: Barreta. *Helietta parvifolia*. p.376.



Above: TX Kidneywood. *Eysenhardtia texana*. p.262.

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
By appointment. Phone: (956) 457-6834
[\[www.heepsnursery.com\]](http://www.heepsnursery.com)

MOTHER NATURE'S CREATIONS

- ◆ Native Landscapes
- ◆ Water Features, Ponds
- ◆ Pond Supplies & Rock
- ◆ Specimen-size Native Plants
- ◆ Consulting or Full Installation
- ◆ Office: 956-428-4897
- ◆ Mobile: 956-571-6051

Billy Snider, Jr.
Sue Griffin



email <sue_griffin@sbcglobal.net >

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 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)

Upcoming Speakers and Topics:

March 26, 2013 — —

“Wildflowers,” by Nick Hoelscher

Other Meeting Dates: April 23, May 28, 2013

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 _____ - _____

I'm choosing the "green option!"

Send my SABAL via .pdf file to:

Email address: _____

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

TO:

**NPP February meeting
and speaker on:
February 26, 2013 at 7:30pm –
Chris Hathcock –
"Natural Zones of the
Lower Rio Grande Valley"**

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

