

Coastal Prairie Chapter Courier



We are a group of trained volunteers who share our appreciation and knowledge of nature with the community through outreach, education and conservation/restoration projects

Feral Hogs Attack Again at Seabourne!

Diane Russell, CPCTMN President

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Chapter events and nature-related articles, photos, and items of interest to the chapter need to be sent to Lynn by the 15th of the month. Suggestions for the newsletter are also welcome. Thanks.

Lynn Trenta,
Courier Editor



The recent rains brought not only flooding, but also feral hogs up into the two beautiful gardens we maintain at Seabourne Park. They have been torn upside down. After many attempts to repair them, we gave up and rescued the plants we could for safekeeping elsewhere. AgriLife is setting up a trap and cameras and are monitoring the situation. Several of us have met with the director of Rosenberg Parks & Recreation Department, who has encouraged us to take plans for hog-proof (but rustic and aesthetic) fencing to the various city agencies that need to approve it, a sequential process that will take the summer. TPWD's David Lobpries is hopeful as things dry out that the hogs will retire back to the wooded areas, which would be great, but we all know they are like the Terminator - they never really go away. We will keep membership updated on our progress.

From Nursery to Nature: Are native cultivars as valuable to pollinators as native species? by Annie S. White (Shared by Jade Hems, CPCTMN Membership Director, on Facebook)

The availability of native plant cultivars is widespread and growing in the nursery & landscape industry. Native cultivars are typically marketed for their ecological benefits, but until now, scientific studies neither supported nor refuted these claims. So are native cultivars as valuable in pollinator habitat gardens as the true native species? The answer is complicated; some cultivars are and some cultivars aren't.

Initiatives to address pollinator decline are widespread and growing in the United States. Pollinator-friendly landscaping and land management practices aim to preserve or restore floral-rich habitat in urban backyards, in agricultural landscapes, and everywhere in between. Enhancing floral resources can improve the abundance and productivity of domestic honey bees, wild bees, and other insect pollinators, even in landscapes with little natural habitat.



Several studies suggest that wild bees prefer to forage—but not necessarily exclusively—on the nectar and pollen from native plants. Native plants are also typically well-adapted to local soil, climate, and other environmental conditions, making them more durable in the landscape. For these reasons, native plants are frequently recommended for pollinator habitat restoration and pollinator garden projects.

The growing demand for native plants in ecological landscaping, including pollinator habitat gardens, has led to the selection and breeding of native cultivars. A native cultivar or “nativar” is a cultivated variety of a native plant, that has been selected by humans (in nature or through repeated selections in a breeding program), cross-bred, and/or hybridized by botanists and plant breeders seeking desirable characteristics that can be maintained through propagation.



The flowers of native cultivars may vary from the native species in size, shape, abundance, color, and bloom time—all attributes known to influence pollinator visitation. In addition to floral traits, native cultivars are sometimes selected for disease resistance, and more predictable sizes and shapes than their wild relatives, making them more desirable landscape plants. But native cultivars can also be less hardy and may prefer different soil moisture and fertility than the species, and most serious of all, may not be as attractive and useful to pollinators.

From Nursery to Nature: Are native cultivars as valuable to pollinators as native species? by Annie S. White (Continued)

Some of the traits that humans find attractive in native cultivars, such as a double flowers or an unusual color, may make the flower less attractive to pollinators, and furthermore, may decrease the quantity, quality, and accessibility of the nectar and pollen rewards.



*The use of strongly selected cultivars is generally discouraged in ecological restoration projects, but native cultivars are widely available and widely used in the landscape industry. In fact, when gardeners visit their local garden centers, it's often impossible to find true native species. Gardeners can find echinaceas in every color, size, and shape possible, but will struggle to find a non-cultivated variety of *Echinacea purpurea* or *Echinacea pallida*.*

With the National Pollinator Garden Network aiming to register one million pollinator gardens; the Pollinator Health Task Force aiming to enhance seven million acres of land for pollinators; and bee habitat on private farms remaining a priority of all conservation programs under the U.S. Farm Bill, it's important that we understand if native cultivars are comparable substitutions for native species, and if they can perform the same ecological functions in pollinator habitat gardens.

Since 2011, I have been studying this topic at multiple field sites in northern Vermont (zones 4a and 4b) as a PhD student in Plant & Soil Science at the University of Vermont. Under the guidance of Dr. Leonard Perry, I established replicated experimental pollinator gardens to monitor pollinator visitation to 12 native species and 14 native cultivars, to evaluate their garden performance, and to study patterns of nectar production in an additional two native species and four native cultivars.

*Some native cultivars attract just as many insect pollinators as the native species. This was seen mostly for open-pollinated seed cultivars such as *Asclepias tuberosa* 'Hello Yellow' and *Monarda fistulosa* 'Claire Grace.' (However, it's noteworthy that 'Claire Grace was not as cold hardy in zone 4 given that it's a selection from a southern ecotype.) One native cultivar selection, *Veronicastrum virginicum* 'Lavendelturm' actually attracted significantly more total pollinators than the native species and had a longer bloom time. This illustrates that there's potential for pollinator-friendly cultivars (with long bloom periods and high nectar production) to be selected for and marketed.*



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From Nursery to Nature: Are native cultivars as valuable to pollinators as native species? by Annie S. White (Continued)

One clear trend was observed across all species; the more manipulated the cultivars became, the less attractive they became to pollinators. Cultivars such as Achillea millefolium ‘Strawberry Seduction’ and Symphytum novae-angliae ‘Alma Poetschke’, which are the result of repeated selections in breeding programs, attracted significantly fewer pollinators in nearly all pollinator groups. The same held true for hybrid varieties from breeding programs such as Baptisia x varicolor ‘Twilite Prairieblues’ and Tradescantia ‘Red Grape,’ Echinacea ‘Sunrise’ Big Sky and Echinacea ‘Pink Double Delight.’ Although our research doesn’t answer why some pollinators strongly preferred the native species, we hypothesize that color differences and decreased nectar and pollen production in hybridized cultivars are the leading factors

We also studied patterns of nectar production (in other words, the quality, quantity and distribution of the floral reward) in Lobelia cardinalis (hummingbird pollinated), L. cardinalis ‘Fried Green Tomatoes,’ L. cardinalis ‘Black Truffle,’ L. x speciosa ‘Fan Scarlet,’ L. x speciosa ‘Fan Blue,’ and L. siphilitica (bumble bee pollinated). This study showed slightly decreased nectar volumes in ‘Fried Green Tomatoes,’ comparable nectar in ‘Black Truffle,’ and significantly decreased nectar volume and nectar sugars in the L. x speciosa hybrids, which are crosses between L. cardinalis and L. siphilitica. L. x speciosa ‘Fan Scarlet’ may perform nicely in the garden and may lure hummingbirds to its bright red tubular flowers, but these pollinators are being rewarded with less than 20% of the nectar energy that they would find in the native species, Lobelia cardinalis.

Results may vary in other regions and with other native species and native cultivars, but this research highlights that in some cases, pollinators (bees, in particular) exhibit strong floral preferences for native species. If evaluating native cultivars for use in a pollinator habitat garden, try to limit the use of cultivars to open-pollinated seed-grown “selections” or “sports” of the native species. Cultivars that differ significantly in color and morphology from the native species should be used cautiously and cultivars with hybrid origins should be avoided in the context of pollinator habitat restoration.

This research is just the beginning of what needs to be many more scientific evaluations of native species and all their cultivars. Three of our research projects related to native cultivars are currently in preparation for publication in 2016. Stay tuned!



Did You HEAR ABOUT THE SWAMP RABBITS? DID YOU EVER SEE ONE?

By Diane Eismont

In our area we have a unique species of Cottontail called a "Swamp Rabbit" and, you guessed it - they live along rivers & in other wet areas. They are larger than regular cottontails and have longer ears, a darker color & a tan ring around the eyes. At our place, they appear near deer & bird feeders. One is a young one & the other is full grown.



Leave Baby Birds Alone

Shared by Jade Hems on Facebook

Just because a young bird appears to be alone – whether on the ground or squawking loudly from a bush or tree – doesn't necessarily mean it is sick or injured. In June, young birds, including this juvenile Northern Flicker, are leaving their nests. And most likely, a parent is near-by and will soon return. What can you do to help? Keep your cats indoors - especially during the birds' breeding season. And leave the birds alone. If you do find a sick or injured bird, visit NWRAwildlife.org, the National Wildlife Rehabilitators Association.

For more about this go to <http://birdnote.org/show/baby-birds-leave-them-alone>



© 2008 Debra Hukriede flickr.com/hummybird53

Invasive Species (*Contributed by Carol Schwartz*)

ALERT! Emerald Ash Borer Confirmed in Texas

*It was bound to happen, and unfortunately it finally has: the emerald ash borer (*Agrilus planipennis*) has made its way to Texas. This invasive wood-boring beetle from Asia has been decimating ash trees in the Northeast and Midwest, causing millions of dollars in damage. Expecting it to arrive in Texas, a trapping and sentinel program has been in place to keep a watch out for the beetle, run by the Texas A&M Forest Service and U. S. Forest Service and including the Sentinel Pest Network of Texasinvasives.org. In April, the strategy paid off, as four beetles were trapped in Harrison County just south of Karnack in northeast Texas. Earlier this month, lab work by the USDA-APHIS confirmed their identity. Importantly, no ash trees have been found to be infested.*



Photo credit: David Cappaert, Michigan State University.
Bugwood.org

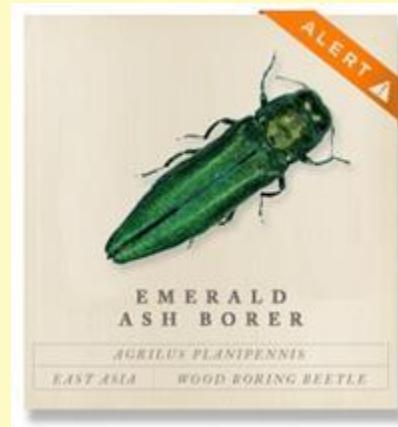
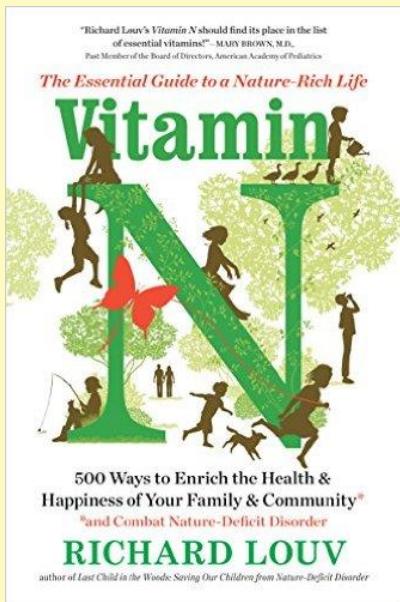


Photo credit: Pennsylvania DCNR

All 16 species of ash found in the United States are susceptible to the emerald ash borer; seven of them occur in Texas. The beetles lay eggs on the bark, and the larvae bore through the bark and feed under the bark, eventually killing the tree. Since it was discovered in Michigan in 2002, it has spread to 26 states, including Arkansas and Louisiana. "We are the 26th member of a club nobody wants to belong to," said Shane Harrington, forest health coordinator for the Texas A&M Forest Service.

Read the [Houston Chronicle article](#), and for more information see the [TA&MFS website](#) on the emerald ash borer.

Vitamin N by Richard Louv



From the author of the New York Times bestseller that launched the international children-and-nature movement, Vitamin N (for “nature”) is a complete prescription for connecting with the power and joy of the natural world right now, with:

- **five hundred activities,**
- **scores of informational websites,**
- **an abundance of down-to-earth advice,**
- **and dozens of thought-provoking essays.**

*In his landmark work [Last Child in the Woods](#), Richard Louv was the first to bring widespread attention to the alienation of children from the natural world, coining the term *nature-deficit disorder* and outlining the benefits of a strong *nature connection*—from boosting mental acuity and creativity to reducing obesity and depression, from promoting health and wellness to simply having fun.*

*That book “rivaled Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring*” (the *Cincinnati Enquirer*), was “an absolute must-read for parents” (the *Boston Globe*), and “an inch-thick caution against raising the fully automated child” (the *New York Times*). His follow-up book, [The Nature Principle](#), addressed the needs of adults and outlined a “new nature movement and its potential to improve the lives of all people no matter where they live” (McClatchy Newspapers).*

Vitamin N is a one-of-a-kind, comprehensive, and practical guidebook for the whole family and the wider community, including tips not only for parents eager to share nature with their kids but also for those seeking nature-smart schools, medical professionals, and even careers. It is a dose of pure inspiration, reminding us that looking up at the stars or taking a walk in the woods is as exhilarating as it is essential, at any age. This came from the website <http://richardlouv.com/books/vitamin-n/>.

Native Prairie Plant Sources

Are you looking for native plants and/or native prairie plants? There are 2 good sources of native plants that are grown from seed collected in prairies in this area.

Our own Coastal Prairie Chapter Member Mark Morgenstern has been growing prairie plants for several years. He is the proprietor of Morning Star Prairie Plants and has 600+ native prairie plants available with around 35 varieties of forbs and grasses for \$8.00/gallon pot.

Those of us who have worked with Mark out at the Seabourne Creek Nature Park know what beautiful plants he contributes to our demo garden and prairie restoration projects and what enthusiasm and knowledge he brings to our chapter. His seeds are collected from the Nash Prairie as well as other area native prairies.

Another option is Houston Audubon's Natives Nursery at the [Edith L. Moore Nature Sanctuary](#). The plants sold are grown only from seed collected in coastal prairie remnants in Harris or surrounding counties. These seeds were collected and planted by the hands of dedicated Houston Audubon staff and volunteers. The Natives Nursery fills a unique niche by offering native plants not readily found elsewhere.

Native wildflowers and grasses that were available at the time of this notice were: [Texas coneflower](#), [rough coneflower](#), [sanguine purple coneflower](#), [blue sage](#), [silkgrass](#), [rattlesnake master](#), [clustered bushmint](#), [buttonbush](#), [Kansas blazing star](#), [hairy sunflower](#), [lanceleaf gaillardia](#), [indiangrass](#), [little bluestem](#), [saltgrass](#), [arrowfeather threeawn](#), [plains lovegrass](#), [brownseed paspalum](#), [gulf dune paspalum](#) and [Florida paspalum](#).

If you'd like to learn more about the plants mentioned, recommended resources are the [USDA Plants Database](#) and the [Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center Native Plant Database](#).

If you would like to purchase plants, please contact Flo Hannah at fhannah@houstonaudubon.org. Houston Audubon members receive a discount on plant purchases.



Our Texas Master Naturalist Annual Recertification Pin for 2017 *This came from the Texas Master Naturalists Email*

What native, iconic Texas species would you like to see as our next Texas Master Naturalist Annual Recertification pin in 2017?

Post your comments for suggestions (or “like” other suggestions listed to vote) on our official Texas Master Naturalist Program Facebook Page: https://www.facebook.com/pages/Texas-Master-Naturalist-Program/120849573095?ref=br_tf

We implemented annual recertification pins beginning in 2002.

To date here is the list of pin icons that we have had:

2002 Post Oak Leaf

2003 Texas Star Flower

2004 Frog

2005 Kingfisher

2006 Prickly Pear Cactus

2007 Shrimp

2008 Texas Sage

2009 Salamander

2010 Wood duck

2011 Texas Horned Lizard

2012 Mexican Free tailed bat

2013 Monarch Butterfly

2014 Armadillo

2015 Bluebonnet



2016 Guadalupe Bass

2017 ????

So far other chapters and members have suggested the following for 2017:

Mockingbird

Sideoats Grama Grass

Texas rat snake,

black-chinned hummingbird

Black Tailed Prairie Dog

Eastern Diamondback Rattlesnake

Greater Roadrunner

Bobcat

A fossil

A raptor

Our Annual re-certification pin for the upcoming year is announced and debuted at our Texas Master Naturalist Annual meeting each October.

Seabourne Happenings

PRAIRIE BUMP UPS *Prairie plants are being bumped up into gallon pots by volunteers out at Seabourne Creek Nature Park. With the help of the young LDS volunteers and supervision by chapter members Jim Butcher, Than Colvin, Roger Hathorn, Donna Pisani, and others, we now have over 1400 plants in gallon pots. Some of these are ready to be planted in our prairie along the new prairie pathway.*

Also, Than Colvin and Jerry Trenta created new spaces for our bumped up plants. Jerry installed new sprinkler connections as well. Our bump-up capacity has been substantially increased. Photos Lynn Trenta



Chapter Members Help with Dove Banding

Chapter Members are helping the Texas Parks and Wildlife band doves, mainly white-winged doves. The doves are first trapped, using feed to attract them and cages to enclose them.

Several dove banding sites have been chosen. Seen below is banding at chapter members Susan and Bill Archer's property. Other sites are at Wharton, Sealy, and chapter member Peg d'Hemecourt's property. The Wharton site yielded the highest numbers so far.

Members who are participating include Amber Leung (who took these photos), Roger Hathorn, Michelle Sullivan, Susan and Bill Archer, Peg d'Hemecourt, and others.

This is a fun activity and a chance to help TPWD and get to know your fellow chapter members better. Contact [David Lobpries](#) or [Michelle Sullivan](#) if you are interested in participating.



Get your "Save Houston Prairies" T-Shirt Available until June 6th



Deadline: 6/29, Wed, for "Save Houston Prairie" T-Shirt Order
by HNPAT

Order NOW your Jaime Gonzalez designed
"Save Houston Prairies" T-Shirt

Hello Prairie Partners!

CPP & HNPAT teamed up and created this 'Save Houston Prairies' t-shirt to show our support for conservation of local prairies as a way of engaging folks. Order your t-shirt and wear it proudly to start a conversation or display your love of our local prairie habitat.

Note: this is NOT a fundraiser. You are getting the t-shirt at cost.

The screenshot shows a product page for three different styles of t-shirts:

- Gildan Ultra Cotton T-shirt – Black:** \$13.46 each. Options for sizes XS-4XL. A man in a black t-shirt is standing on the left.
- Gildan Ultra Cotton Ladies T-shirt – Black:** \$13.46 each. Options for sizes XS-XL. A woman in a black t-shirt is shown.
- Gildan Ultra Cotton Long Sleeve T-shirt – Black:** \$16.53 each. Options for sizes YS-SX. A man in a black long-sleeve t-shirt is shown.

At the bottom, a green bar says "Get your shirts at" and provides the link: <https://www.customink.com/g/gwp0-00ak-9t5t>.



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We're on the Web!

See us at:

<http://txmn.org/coastal>



Check out our Facebook Page at

[TXMN Coastal Prairie Chapter Facebook](#)

To post photos and information, email
[John Donaho](#) or [Lynn Trenta](#)

*Also Share our chapter Facebook entries
with your friends on your Facebook Page*

**COASTAL PRAIRIE CHAPTER OF THE
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