

FAMILY ADORNMENTS bring the great outdoors, indoors



TRIM THE TREE

A feasting table for songbirds —Possum haw berries —Cheryl Kesterson



At Clear Creek Natural Heritage Center Education Building—Alex Lieban



Grasshopper makes contact with Alex Lieban at Clear Creek



Cheryl Kesterson took center aim on this beautiful Boneset



Old Alton Bridge— The mystic captured by Alex Lieban



Virginia creeper dressed for winter—Cheryl Kesterson

**"A society grows great when old men plant trees whose shade they know they shall never sit in."
Greek proverb**

DECK THE HALLS—a bird's eye view



Eastern Meadowlark, *Sturnella magna* or Western Meadowlark, *Sturnella neglecta*

You usually hear a meadowlark before you see them. Listen to the song. Eastern Meadowlark is simpler, sweet and lazy. The Western is flutelike, bouncy and is variable with seven or eight notes.

Reference and sound files for Eastern Meadowlark:

http://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/eastern_meadowlark/sounds

“The male Eastern Meadowlark’s primary song consists of 3 to 5 (sometimes up to 8) pure and plaintive flutelike whistles all slurred together and gradually dropping in pitch, up to 2 seconds long. Male have a repertoire of songs, singing one song repeatedly for a time and then switching to a different version. They typically sing from an exposed perch, but occasionally sing in flight as well.”



Photo by Joanne Fellows – Galveston State Park 2013

Reference and sound file for Western Meadowlark:

http://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/western_meadowlark/sounds



Photo by Joanne Fellows – Hagerman National Wildlife Refuge 2013

“Male Western Meadowlarks have a complex, two-phase “primary” song that begins with 1–6 pure whistles and descends to a series of 1–5 gurgling warbles. Males develop a repertoire of up to a dozen songs, and may switch the songs they sing in response to an intruder. When chasing competing males or responsive females, male Western Meadowlarks give a hurried, excited “flight song” of short-spaced whistles and warbles. Although Western Meadowlarks seldom sing more than 10–12 songs, their eastern counterparts exhibit a much larger repertoire of 50–100 song variations.”

They are members of the blackbird family and have a clear black V-shaped band on their yellow breast.

From Joanne Fellows



BEFORE THE CANDLE IS SNUFFED



FRAGRANT WHITE MISTFLOWER (*Ageratina havanensis*)

If you haven't planted your Fragrant White Mistflower, as recommended in September issue of Trinity Forks Native Plant Press, you need to make that your priority, or, possibly put that plant on your Christmas wish-list. It is a must! My plant, from which I photographed the Queen (*Danaus Gilippus*) butterflies recently, was planted about 5 or 6 years ago in a narrow flowerbed between my driveway and my neighbor's fence. I've never pruned it, so it has beautiful branches that arch approximately 5 to 6 feet over the edge of the driveway. Realistically, if the fence weren't there, the plant could occupy a 10 to 12 ft. diameter. If you don't have that much space to spare, the plant can be severely pruned in wintertime for a tighter, bushier, growth pattern and enjoyed within a smaller area.

Hopefully you can find an ideal spot for at least one plant in your landscape. If I should be so brave as to make a few suggestions, I would suggest the sunnier the better, that you select a spot close to your daily traffic pattern so that you can enjoy the intoxicating fragrance when the flowers are in bloom, and I would also suggest that you locate it in prominent view of your daily activities so that you can be mesmerized with the insect and pollinator traffic. For what more could you want?

**MAKE SURE TO PROVIDE FOR
OUR CREATURE FAMILIES**

Well, yes, there is still another glorious advantage to owning a Fragrant White Mistflower plant, and that reason is that it blooms in November. Yep, long after Gayfeather (*Liatris mucronata*), Goldenrod (*Solidago canadensis*) and Maximilian sunflower (*Helianthus maximiliani*) have faded, and just as you're witnessing the declining butterfly-luring powers of Blue mistflower (*Salvia greggii*) and Rock rose (*Rosa pavonia*), tiny white disk flowers begin blooming on the White mistflower with a big 'welcome' sign luring those same insects. Their frenzied nectaring activity is overwhelmingly entertaining to watch.



Queen butterflies on Fragrant white mistflower *Photo by D. Thetford*

The space you provide for this wonderful plant will be rewarding not only to our native bees and butterflies but, also, to you in your mission to provide native plants for healthy habitats! Native wildflowers in November? YES!

Dorothy Brown Thetford
Master Naturalist Class of 2001

The family's tree is trimmed, halls are decked,

Cookies are in the oven,

Invitations are out.

Let's party!



December 12, 2013

9:30 am: Business meeting followed by program and gift exchange. Bring a \$10-15 wrapped gift if you wish to participate in gift exchange.

Gift exchange is entirely voluntary. If you do not wish to participate in this activity, come anyway and join in the fun!

Lunch: Turkey and ham will be furnished; bring your own favorite dish to share.

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