

October 2021

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Cross Timbers Master Naturalist Newsletter

President's Pen — Sharon Hamilton

“Nature, red in tooth and claw”—this phrase, written by Alfred, Lord Tennyson but made famous by supporters of Charles Darwin—describes the competition between living things as ruthless, merciless. For hundreds, even thousands of years, Western naturalists and scientists have observed, studied, and reported on competition, from male bighorn sheep fighting for dominance over a group of females, to invasive giant Salvinia outcompeting native aquatic species in our lakes and ponds. Think about our favorite Nature TV programs--nothing makes for better watching than animals competing for mates, such as huge bison charging at challengers, or for access to food, like the hummingbird hovering over “his” feeder, flying dangerously close to much bigger animals to keep us away.

When compared with cooperation, it seems that competition among species and even between individuals dominates Nature. High school textbooks identify cooperation among living things as symbioses, and spend only about two paragraphs describing categories—mutualism, parasitism, and commensalism. Only after researchers began using microscopes did we learn about the multitudes of tiny creatures that inhabit the bodies of bigger animals, ourselves included. Only after DNA analysis became commonplace did we learn just how many different kinds of microbes share our bodies, and that their well-being affects our own. Our gut microbiomes* protect us or harm us, depending on which species make up their communities. When we wipe out these helpful organisms by using antibiotics, we may fall victim to—ahem—unpleasant side effects of digestive malfunction and antibiotic-resistant infections like *Clostridium difficile*. (Trust me, you don’t want that critter populating your gut.)

And yet, the more we study how organisms survive, the more we learn that it is through encounters with and cooperation with other species that allows living things to thrive. It’s not just the clownfish and sea anemone, not even just the bumblebees and bluebonnets, but untold interactions that have yet to be observed. I am reading *Finding the Mother Tree* by Suzanne Simard, and am astonished at the wealth of interactions between fungi, conifers, and birches that enable both types of trees to flourish, while the trees provide cooperating fungi with nutrients leaking out of their roots. As naturalists, we are not surprised that fir trees, even those farmed commercially, grow stronger when their native community of creatures surrounds them. Yet, at page 188 of 305, Simard has yet to convince the old-guard foresters and researchers of her findings. I have no doubt she will prevail.

So hurray for researchers finally providing evidence for what we believe instinctively—that organisms belong in a native community and that preserving natural ecosystems strengthens Nature.

* The term microbiome was coined by Joshua Lederberg in 2001.

Wild Petunia, *Ruellia nudiflora* Acanthaceae (Acanthus Family)

Are you dreaming of a plant that can bloom in the heat of summer with very little water and propagate itself? If so, this is the plant for you!!



This plant is a wonderful choice for edging a flower bed because of its low profile of about twelve inches. It can also be used as a ground cover and can even be mowed or cut back very short, but don't worry, it will bounce back with renewed vigor.

The flowers are light purple little trumpets that last one day, but never fear, it will continue to make new ones everyday for a long blooming season that starts in late June and continues through fall.

Ruellia nudiflora has amazing roots that are at least five times the length of the plant and maybe more, making this plant basically fool proof and very drought resistant. This plant is not picky about soils and does well in sand or clay, but it likes full sun to part shade. It doesn't do well in full shade and it may not bloom there.

Propagation is not a problem with this plant because it is so very prolific. I have never had to plant seeds or root cuttings from it. Once you have it will propagate itself for you abundantly.

I have seen it blooming lately at the xeriscape where it has planted itself and looks like a carpet of purple trumpets, Beautiful!!

One of the special reasons for this plant's ability to reproduce itself is the fact that it is "cleistogamous". This is a special process that *Ruellias*, *Violas* and other plants take advantage of when they want to make seeds without spending too much energy. They make self-fertile flowers without petals that never open, thus allowing them to make seed a lot quicker and with very little effort.



Plant of the Month– Wild Petunia- Josephine Keeney

As if all those attributes were not enough, this plant is also a larval host for the beautiful Buckeye butterfly and the Texan Crescent butterflies which happen to be two of my favorites.



1) What year did you get certified? 2017 with the Mid Coast Chapter. We lived in Victoria, Texas. But I transferred to the CTMN Chapter shortly after moving back to the Metroplex 3 years ago.

2) Where do you get your VH? That's a great question! I'm on the CTMN Education Committee and volunteer at BRIT. I'm on queue for Lake Mineral Wells State Park Pollinator Garden. And I signed up for the Hill County Monarch Waystation. There is a special place in my heart for Monarch Butterflies.

3) What about your love of Monarch Butterflies? I traveled to Mexico to experience overwintering Monarchs. That was an incredible experience. To get to the Mexican habitat, we had to climb over 1,000 steps straight up! A challenge I wouldn't trade for anything! The prize at the end of the journey was unbelievable! We listened to the sound of the swarm of Monarchs. The sheer beauty of the experience made me cry with pure joy. It changed my perspective and inspired me to champion butterflies- particularly Monarchs - when I returned home.

3) Tell us about your family life. I've been married to John Walker for 11 years. He is a Licensed Professional Counselor who has his own practice w/ offices in Hurst and Mineral Wells. I have a daughter who lives in Austin, a wonderful son-in-law, and two lively granddogs. I grew up in Ft. Worth. However, my husband had a job opportunity in Victoria. Now we're back to our old stompin' grounds. We moved to Mineral Wells last November. I love it here.

4) What got you interested in the Master Naturalists program? I wanted to learn more about the south coast ecosystem around Victoria and meet likeminded people in the Gulf Coast area. But, I am equally interested in our Cross Timber region!

5) What do you do when you're not chasing after Monarch butterflies or advising CTMN Trainees? My husband & I are part time musicians. He plays guitar and sings. I harmonize. We play soft rock, folk, country and 70's music. I tap into my creative self with watercolor painting & collage.

6) What advice do you have for our Trainees? OMG! You are in the right place at the right time. Attend as many classes and field trips as possible. Experience and absorb as much as you can. Apply what you learn. Share your knowledge with others. Be aware of your environment. As for me, I want to learn something new every day!





This Striped Fishing Spider was found at Village Creek pond in Arlington.

Fish-eating spiders live in freshwater environments like ponds and wetlands, where they hunt for meals on foot instead of using a web. Some can even swim, dive, and walk on the water's surface. (Google.com)

A common, medium to large tree with a short trunk and a compact, rounded crown, commonly reaching a height of 50 feet and a diameter of 2 feet, but sometimes considerably larger.

Range/Site Description: One of the most widespread oaks in Texas, common to both East and Central Texas, west to the Panhandle, growing on upland soils either deeply sandy or on gravelly clays with poor surface drainage.

Leaf: Simple, alternate, usually 4" to 6" long and nearly as broad, highly variable but typically 5-lobed, no bristle-tips, the lobes broadest at the ends and often forming a "cross" shape, thick and somewhat leathery, dark green and shiny on the upper surface, lighter green and finely-pubescent beneath.

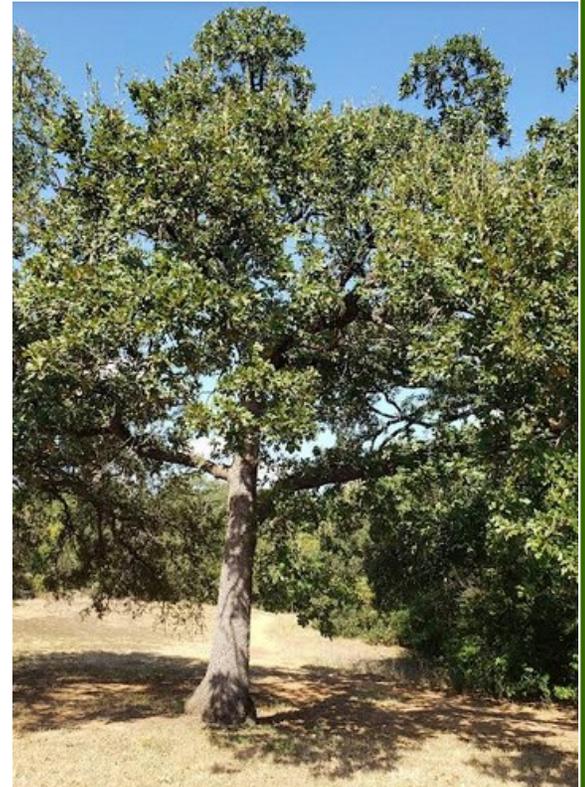
Flower: Male and female flowers borne in spring on the same tree, the male flowers on drooping, clustered catkins, 2" to 4" long, the female flowers inconspicuous.

Fruit: An acorn, requiring one season to mature, oval, 0.5" to 0.75" long, set one-third to one-half its length in a gray, bowl-shaped cup which has thin scales, sometimes with a short stalk.

Bark: Thick, gray-brown, developing narrow, irregular fissures and scaly ridges on older trunks.

Wood: Heavy, hard, close-grained, light to dark brown and durable in contact with the soil; used for crossties and fence posts and occasionally for lumber.

Interesting Facts: The species is so common it gives rise to the name for an entire ecoregion: the Post Oak Savannah.



A 200-year-old Post Oak tree in Southwest Nature Preserve was recently recognized as a historic tree. It was officially proclaimed, the "Old Caddo Oak" in 2019.

Watch the dedication ceremony here:
<https://youtu.be/oupNqeQHMDw>

The State Champion Post Oak is located in Bowie County.

References: <https://www.wildflower.org>, <http://texasreeid.tamu.edu>,
<https://greensourcedfw.org>



The WS Monarch Way station and Wildscape project is a hidden gem with immense potential. Tucked away, within the courtyard of the White Settlement community services complex, sits the vibrant and humble beginnings of a revitalized ecosystem. Many NPSOT and CTMN volunteers have dedicated their time in this grassroots project, sharing the vision of something great to come. This garden connects to an underdeveloped 8.5-acre linear greenbelt park. The beginnings have been humble, but our dreams and goals are big!



The City of White Settlement is a landlocked suburb city on the west side of Fort Worth. At only 5 square miles, the city still maintains ownership of approximately 203 parkland acres, many of which are greenbelts within the Trinity River Watershed. An ongoing and proactive partnership with the city will hopefully restore, develop, and better protect these vital habitats.

Activities: General garden maintenance

Training: Provided by current CTMN volunteers if needed.

Dates and Times: Thursday 9:00 am, weather permitting. Interested volunteers can come visit anytime. We welcome the help and fresh ideas to improve our garden.

Location: 8211 White Settlement Rd,
White Settlement, TX 76108

In the courtyard between the senior center and recreation center, near the library.

How do I participate?

Email project lead: Tom Salmi at tsalmi@ymail.com Or ask CTMN Members: Avon Burton, avonburton@att.net or Marcella Clark, marciecella.clark@gmail.com

Photos by Robert, a White Settlement city employee.





Scenic - On the Prairie Trail -
Kim Conrow

Birds - Birds on the Move -
Carol Marcotte



Wildlife - Bee and Blue Mist - Mary Beth Lampe

Plantlife - First Bluebonnet - Michele Cyr



Re-Certification - Sideoats Grama Pin

Phyl Baloga
Sandy Fountain
Christopher Honkomp
Marsha McLaughlin
Beverly Moore
David Vestal

New Certified Texas Master Naturalists

Megan McConnell class of 2020
Deborah Brown class of 2019

Milestone Pins

Christopher Honkomp 250 hours - Bronze Dragonfly
Phyl Baloga 500 hours - Silver Dragonfly
Joan Carey 500 hours - Silver Dragonfly
Kay Dansby 500 hours - Silver Dragonfly
Kim Conrow 1,000 hours - Gold Dragonfly

BRIT Lecture Lunch Series, October 5th from Noon-One pm

In October we will welcome Dr. Cristobal Sánchez from Jardín Etnobotánico Francisco Peláez R (San Andrés Cholula, Puebla, Mexico) as he presents examples of the current work of botanical exploration in Mexico by the scientific community, from fieldwork to the publication of new taxa, and the importance of herbaria and botanical gardens in this process. Dr. Sánchez will also address some changes that have occurred in the way of working with the arrival of Citizen Science Observation Platform, cybertaxonomy, and the COVID-19 pandemic. This 1-hr seminar will include a short Q&A.

Event page: <https://brit.org/events/new-species-in-mexico/>

Reporting Your VH - Travel TIME vs. Travel MILEAGE: Carol Marcotte

Travel TIME is different from Travel MILEAGE.
Travel TIME is measured in hours, but mileage is measured in miles.
Miles don't count for VH, but hours (even 1/2 or 1/4 of an hour) do count.

Here is the reporting page with the two sections circled.
It's always a good thing to have healthy conversations with other members!

Volunteer Hours

How many hours did you volunteer?
(To the nearest quarter hour, including travel time)

Describe your service or training:
(255 character limit)

For your personal records....

What was the total number of miles you drove round trip?

October 2021

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					I	2 B, F
3	4 E	5 K	6 F	7 A, B	8	9 B, G, M, I
10	11 N	12	13 E, F	14 A, B, J	15	16 B, G, H
17	18 D, O	19	20 F, C	21 A, B	22	23 B
24	25	26	27 F	28 A, B, J	29	30 B
31						

- A– FWNC– Restorative Greenhouse from 9:30– 11:30 AM [HERE](#)
 B– FWNC– Natural Guard– Outdoor Conservation from 9 AM to 12 PM [HERE](#)
 C--Sierra Club Monthly Meeting via Zoom. Via Facebook or Meetup.
 D– CTMN Monthly Chapter Meeting via zoom
 E– CTMN Board Meeting, contact a board member if you would like the Zoom link.
 F– Molly Hollar Wildscape Volunteer Opportunity from 9 am –12 pm. [HERE](#)
 G– SW Sub Courthouse Garden 9-12 pm [HERE](#)
 H-Mineral Wells State Park, 9-11 am, [HERE](#)
 I– Fall Festival at River Legacy Science Center Garden
 J-Southwest Regional Hulen Library Native Plant Demonstration Garden 8:30 to 12:30 am [HERE](#)
 K– Texas Master Naturalist Virtual Trainings #TMNTuesdays!
 L– Fielder House Butterfly Garden 9-12 am [HERE](#)
 M– OS Gray 9-12 am/pm [HERE](#)
 N– Knapp Heritage Park Garden 9-12 am [HERE](#)
 O– River Legacy Science Center Garden 9-12 am [HERE](#)