# Gideon Lincecum Chapter Texas Master Naturalist™

# *NEWS*

***April, May 2015***

## ***From the President***:

The time sure flies, our Chapter has graduated another class of Master Naturalists. Many thanks to the Training Committee and a special thanks to Cindy Rodibaugh, without her I am not sure we could have pulled it off. Believe it or not, it's almost time to start thinking about the 2016 class: speakers will need to be notified and confirmed, locations have to be determined and dates reserved. We are not there yet, but by Jul/Aug the work must begin. Please consider a term on the training committee. If you're new to our group we would love to hear your ideas for our 2016 class.


The new By-laws for the Chapter have been sent out to the entire Chapter for review. Please be prepared to discuss and vote on the new By-Laws at the **May 16th Chapter Meeting at 9:00AM**. What changed? The Board changed the term of service for Board Officers, it went from a one year service obligation to a two year service obligation. Special language required by the State was added to the 501 (3) C section of the by-laws, these changes were required statewide. The categories of membership were changed and new language used. Please review that section. A great deal of work and coordination was required to get this ready for a vote in May. Thank you, Christine Morrison.

We have many volunteer opportunities available in the coming months please check out our website for the latest information.

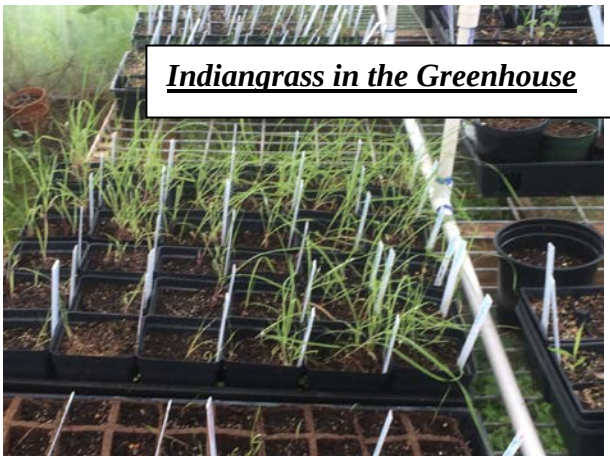
Lastly, I threw down the challenge at graduation: I am looking to help Cheryl Karr complete her scat collection. I am offering a prize to the first member that brings me real Armadillo scat. She has never been able to find any, so the hunt is on!

**Cindy Hobbs, President**

## *Prairie/Greenhouse Committee Report*

Contributed by Charlotte Von Rosenburg

There was much slipping and sliding as Dave Redden instructed the tent crew on how to set up our two new tents the morning of the Burton Cotton Gin Festival, April 18. The plan was to have plants to sell as well as our usual recruiting and educational efforts. Back on March 7, our faithful greenhouse crew emerged from dormancy and planted native grass seeds from our collection in the greenhouse at Brenham High School. In past years we have had full trays of plants at 30 days, but then the sun appeared every day. This year is different – I don't have to tell you. The cloudy days brought precious rain but let our seeds continue sleeping in their trays. At four weeks we had virtually zero plants. Yikes!!! Plan B was to have two workdays and package our collection of seeds to sell. We also dug up Eastern Gamagrass and Little Bluestem plants and broke those into bunches to sell as "live roots". Certainly, not as attractive an option as those charming little green seedling plants. Our sales were about 50% of last year.



***Indiangrass in the Greenhouse***

Mary and David Butler are conducting **germination tests** on our seed collection to determine viability.

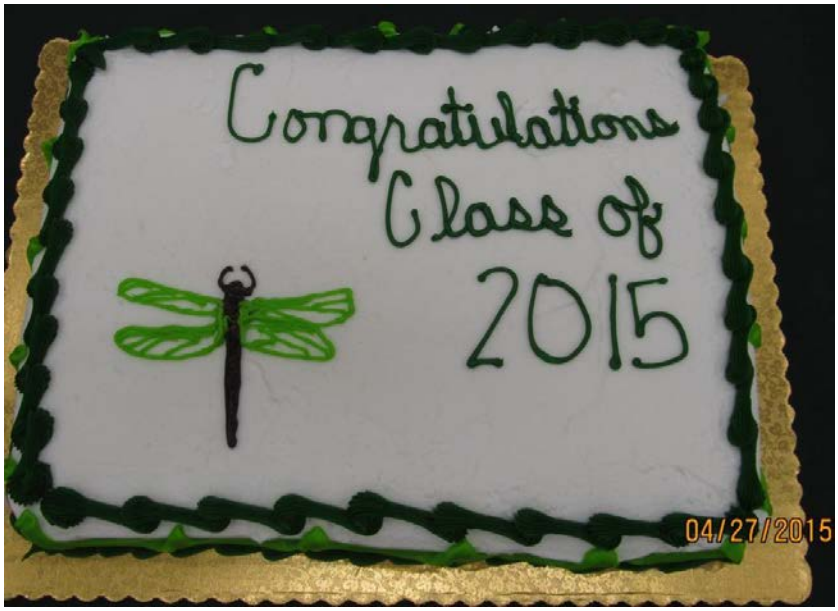
Next up on **May 30, is the Chappell Hill Garden Club** event. Please go to our website www.txmn.org/glc for details. Due to recent sunny days we will have some baby plants to sell as well as seeds. Our recruiting table will be set up also. This is an event that everyone will enjoy and – you should go.

**The plan for the summer** is to have boots on the ground – Prairie Stomps - and go see the known native prairies in our area. Some of our members have property with excellent growth of natives and we should plan to go see those. Once the grasses bloom in **August and September** they are easy to identify and beautiful to see. In late summer we can harvest grass seeds for our collection and the cycle starts over again.

## *Congratulation to the Class of 2015*

Contributed by Cindy Rodibaugh

On April 25, 2015, 15 students completed the minimum 40 hours classroom and field training required by the Texas State TMN organization and coordinated by the GLC-TMN training committee. Training classes began on January 26, 2015 and were held weekly through April 25. On April 27, 2015 a graduation celebration was held. Each student that completed the training classes was rewarded with a




certificate and official nametag.

Both Nora Knowles and Debra Kollmann had perfect class attendance records in spite of difficult weather conditions and challenging directions to class or field trip locations.

The class members were very helpful in completing post class evaluations and generally gave a favorable assessment of their personal learning experience. As the training classes progressed, the students became aware of the challenges facing a Texas Master Naturalist and how much they didn't know about the world we inhabit.

A special THANK YOU to Daniel Lewis, Donna Mueller, Lori Buffum, and Debbie Copeland for filling in for a missing Forest Ecology professor. Dr. Appel sent "a huge apology" to the class for his "inexcusable failure to fulfill his commitment".

All in all, the training sequence flowed very well. Some of the graduates have begun to accrue credits toward certification—reaching for that dragonfly pin!

The chapter welcomes the new grads and looks forward to their help in our volunteer activities and demonstrating good stewardship within our chapter region.

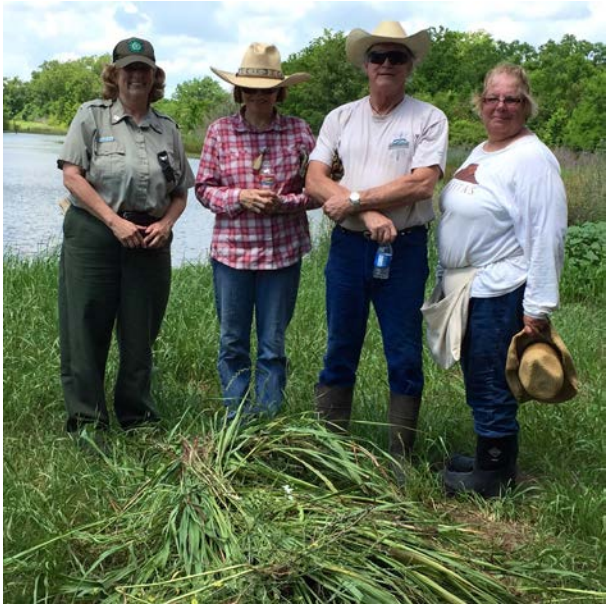
***Editor's Note:*** A picture and write-up by Cindy was published in the Fayette County Record in the Friday May 8 edition Page A2.

## *Workday at Washington on the Brazos State Park*

Contributed by Judith Deaton

On this bright day four of our local Texas Master Naturalists gathered at the park offices and sprayed themselves with insect repellent against chiggers for the first of many invasive plant removal efforts: Tom Yates, Charlotte von Rosenberg, Debra Healy and Judy Deaton. The object was to pull out as much Bastard cabbage as we could from around the lake at the north end of the park. We have a special

problem in that the park is not only historical, but is an archaeological site and digging is forbidden so everything needs to be hand weeded. We arrived with tools and Roundup, but found they were unnecessary. The Bastard cabbage had already gone to seed and all that remained of it was dried out stems. Unfortunately, the weather had delayed planning this workday, as the pond area was a mud bog. The cabbage had a chance to set seed and dry out. We removed as many of the old plants as we could and will wait for the new crop next year to really knock it back.



While looking for the cabbage we ran across several large stands of Johnson grass and have made good inroads into that population on the north ½ acre of the pond. The park is getting overrun with Johnson grass that is difficult to control in this manner, but we can keep the beautiful lake area where the wildflowers are flourishing clear. Giant reed also has a foothold in this area, but doesn't seem to be spreading much and is good cover for the wildlife. We took out a small stand of reed that had spread from the main patch and can continue to keep it contained.

One great bonus was the discovery of several Eastern gamma plants that the park manager and newly qualified Texas Master Naturalist, Cathy Nolte, says we may harvest seed from with her permission. Frogs began to call and two wild ducks flew overhead. This pond is full of wildlife, but it has moccasins, so we need to wear boots and watch while we work. . There is a lovely yellow aquatic flower that we were unable to identify. We include a photo so if you know what it is, put the ID on our Facebook page!

After two long, warm hours of pulling we gathered around a Texas Parks and Wildlife representative who was there to document a particularly difficult erosion gully cutting through the trail near our worksite. We learned that it was exposing a debris pile of bricks as the trail overlies a century-old brickworks. It was very interesting to see how it had been reclaimed by Mother Nature.

It was a great start and we look forward to our next workday. Join us next time.

## ***Edible Plants***

Contributed by Cindy Hobbs

I was surfing websites when I came across one that tells you what Texas plants are edible and how to eat them. I was unable to download the pictures, but the information provided was excellent. I am going to try some of this. If you try it too please share with the group.

**Amaranth (Alternanthera sp.)** Amaranth - The amaranth can be cooked as greens or the succulent

stems and leaves can be eaten raw. This plant is very high in calcium, phosphorus, and potassium. The spikes of these plants also produce numerous tiny black seeds which are high in protein. The leaves contain oxalic acid which tends to bind calcium restricting its absorption by the body.

**Blackhaw (Viburnum rufidulum)** The blue-black drupes produced by this plant have a dry sweet pulp available late summer through the fall.

**Chenopod (Chenopodium albescens**) The chenopods belong to the same family as beets, chard, and spinach. They can be cooked or eaten raw; however, cooking will destroy the naturally high amounts of vitamin C. They are also high in vitamin A, calcium, and potassium. The seeds can be cooked or ground into a meal for an added source of protein. Like spinach, the chenopods contain oxalic acid which tends to bind calcium.

**Dewberry (Rubus flagillaris)** The fruit of the dewberry can be eaten raw, cooked, or dried. The tender shoots of the early spring can be peeled and eaten raw. Dewberries are a good source for potassium as well as vitamins A and C.

**Grape (Vitis sp.)** Grapes can be eaten raw, cooked, or dried. The mustang grape (Vitis mustangensis) should not be gathered until after the first couple of frosts which sometimes help reduce the sourness found in that species. It is a good source of potassium and vitamin A. Grape leaves are loaded with calcium, iron, potassium, and vitamins A and niacin.

**Green Brier (Smilax sp.) smilac** New growth can be cut and eaten raw or they can be prepared as a cooked green. The roots can be brewed for a sarsaparilla-like beverage.

**Ground Cherry (Physalis sp.)** You can gather ground cherries when they are green, but you must let them ripen before you eat them. They can be eaten raw or cooked for a good source of vitamins A and niacin.

**Hackberry (Celtis laevigata)** Hackberry fruits, available summer and fall, are a good source of calcium and protein.

**Hawthorne (Crataegus sp.)** The fruit of the hawthorne can be eaten raw, made into a drink, or dried for later use.

**Honey Locust (Gleditsia texana)** The pods of the honey locust have a sugar-sweet pulp and the young pods can be eaten raw, or boiled and eaten like string beans. They can also be pounded and soaked in water to make a beverage. Both the fruit and seeds are good sources of calcium and phosphorus.

**Live Oak (Quercus virginiana)** Acorns must first be leached of the tannic acids they contain. To do this they are shelled and placed in water to be boiled. The water must be emptied and replaced several times until it remains clear. The acorns are then dried and ground into flour. Acorn flour is high in protein, calcium, phosphorus, potassium, and niacin.

**Nettle (Urtica chamaedryoides)** Nettles must be cooked to avoid the stinging hairs on the leaves and stems. They are rich in protein, as well as vitamins A and C. Do not confuse the true nettle with the bull nettle (Cnidoscolus texanus) because the bull nettle has poisonous leaves.

**Onion (Allium sp.)** The wild onions are like cultivated onions, they are a good source for vitamin C and potassium.

**Peppergrass (Lepidium sp.)** Peppergrass is in the Brassicaceae family like Tansy mustard. Like mustards it can be eaten raw or as cooked greens. It is high in vitamin C, calcium, and potassium. It is also a good source for thiamin and riboflavin.

**Persimmon (Diospyros virginiana)** The fruits of the persimmon are best gathered after the first frost. They can be eaten raw, dried, or cooked. The persimmon is high in potassium and vitamin C.

**Pokeweed (Phytolacca decandra)** These plants are highly poisonous so only the new shoots should be used that contain no woody parts. It has to be boiled and drained and then boiled again several times to eliminate the poisons. Pokeweeds are high in vitamins A and C.

**Portulaca (Claytonia virginica)** The leaves, flowers, pods, and stems can be eaten raw, boiled, or steamed. It is high in potassium and vitamin A, and is a good source for calcium and vitamin C. I have heard that the ashes of burned portulaca make a good substitute for salt.

**Pricklypear (Opuntia sp.)** The blooms, fruit, seed, and entire plant of the pricklypear can be eaten. In the summer the blooms and pads can be eaten raw, cooked, or dried. Both are high in calcium, and the blooms are high in vitamin C. In the fall the fruits and seeds as well as the pads can be used. The fruits are high in potassium and the seeds are a good source for vitamin C.

**Redbud (Cercis canadensis)** The flowers appear in late winter and early spring and can be eaten raw or cooked. They have a slightly sour flavor and are high in vitamin C. The young green pods may also be eaten raw or cooked.

**Sumac (Rhus aromatica)** sumaclemon Sumacs are related to the cashews, mangoes, and poison ivy and thus some people may have an allergic reaction to it. The drupes of this plant are ripe in the early fall and can be used to produce a lemonade-like drink that is high in vitamin C. The fruits should be removed from the stems and soaked in cold water to avoid releasing the tannins found in the seeds.

**Sunflower (Helianthus sp.)** Sunflower seeds are eaten either raw or cooked. A cooked unopen flower bud has a taste reminiscent of artichokes. The seeds are high in protein and phosphorus.

**Tansy Mustard (Descurainia pinnata)** The leaves can be eaten raw or cooked for greens like any other mustard. They are high in vitamins A and C, as well as, calcium and potassium. They are also a good source of thiamin and riboflavin.

**Thistle (Cirsium sp.)** Except for the spines found on the leaves, stems, and flower bases, the rest of this plant is considered edible. They can be eaten raw after removing the spines or cooked for a good source of vitamin A.

**Turk's Cap (Malvaviscus arboreus sp.)** You can eat the flowers, fruits, and young leaves of Turk's Cap either raw or cooked. They are high in calcium and vitamins A and C.

**Yellow Passionflower (Passiflora lutea)** The fruit of the passionflower contains mostly juice and seeds. The juice is consumed as a beverage or used with other foods to give them a sweet flavor. The fruit is high in potassium, and vitamins A, C, and niacin.

**Yellow Stonecrop (Sedum nuttallianum)** The fleshy leaves and stems of sedums can be eaten raw, steamed, or boiled. They are slightly tart and crisp and mix well with stronger flavored greens.

**Yellow Woodsorrel (Oxalis dillenii)** The fruit, flower, leaves, and roots are eaten raw or cooked. They are enjoyed because of the salty/sour flavor. They contain oxalic acids so they should be eaten in moderation.

**Violet (Viola sp.)** The blooms and leaves of the violet can be eaten raw or cooked. The leaves are very high in vitamins A and C. The blooms can be gathered for eating in the spring, and the leaves are best gathered late fall and early spring because they will turn bitter towards the summer.

## ***Adopt-A-Highway***

Contributed by David and Mary Ann Butler

The Adopt-A-Highway volunteers met on April 22 to clean up our two miles of highway between Reutersville and La Grange. Cindy Rodibaugh, Ron and Mary Ann Peach, Carol Montgomery, David and Mary Ann Butler and Greg Walker worked as long as it took (about 3 hours) to remove 19 bags of trash and the usual auto parts and tires.

We especially enjoyed talking with each other as we worked and seeing all of the wildflowers blooming along the roadway. We were really pleased to spot some healthy groups of flowering Antelope Milkweed plants for the Monarch butterflies.

# ***Milkweed, the On-Going Story***

Contributed by Cindy Hobbs

After 30+ days in the refrigerator, my six species of milkweed seeds were ready for dirt and pots. I wanted to keep the species separated, and because some of the seeds were so small, I filled six, 5 inch pots with good potting soil and a species of milkweed. I tapped the dirt down as Charlotte has showed us and put my seeds in at a shallow depth. I continued to use distilled water on them, and put them under a grow light to sprout.

Within the week I was seeing little leaves pushing out of the dirt, some faster than others. After a month they were ready to be put in bigger pots and left outside on the deck.

The number of seeds germinated by species:

Antelope Horn (Asclepias Asperula) – 4 plants

Green Milkweed (Asclepias Viridis) – 8 plants

Butterfly Weed (Asclepias Tuberosa) – 6 plants

Showy Milkweed (Asclepias Speciosa) – 6 plants

Swamp Milkweed (Asclepias Incarnata) – 3 plants

Common Milkweed (Asclepias Syriaca) – 6 plants

This weekend I will get everything into the ground with a fence around it and see how they do. It's obvious that the Swamp Milkweed has stricter germination requirements than the rest. Another

observation, bugs love the Swamp and Antelope Horn, all pots are sitting together and I have had to spray these two for bugs. With luck they will all transplant in the ground without issue.  I will keep you posted.

## ***Mangroves Matter***

Contributed by Lori Buffum

My fascination with Mangroves probably began with a kayak paddle through the vast tracts of these botanical marvels on the island of Bonaire, Netherland Antilles.

There they are recognized and protected as essential to all life along the shore and the adjacent land, sea, and reef. But they are threatened and endangered there as they are almost everywhere in the world because of human development. Read more about Bonaire's Mangrove Forest. www.bmp.org/flora-lac.html#mangroveforest

These woody shrubs and trees thrive in salt water by propping themselves up on stilt roots that rise high above water level and penetrate deep below. It's that structure that protects the shore from erosion, provides a nursery for sea life of all kinds, and filters the tidal flow in ways that help protect the reefs that line so many of the tropical coastlines.

They could in fact be called a "Mother" plant because they protect and nurture so many living things.

I got reacquainted with Mangroves (primarily the Red mangrove: Rhizophora mangle L.) along the Costa Maya - the southernmost Caribbean coast of Mexico, sharing the Bay of Chetumal with Belize. I was able to investigate several pods of Mangrove up close on walks down the beach and that's where I took the pictures. But even more amazing was a boat trip we took through intricate channels of Mangroves in the shallow bay and out to Bird Island - essentially a huge forest of Mangroves isolated from the shoreline where Wood Storks were nesting. We didn't see a Manatee on our excursion but these Mangrove swamps are protected habitat for them as well as for thousands of other species.

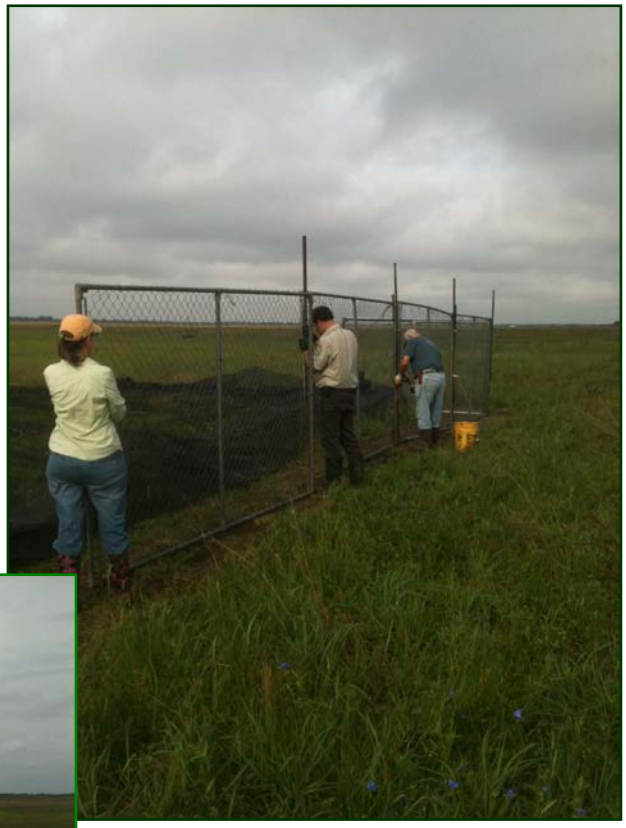
I was curious about Mangroves here in my home state and learned that the black mangrove (Avicennia germinans) can tolerate the cooler temperatures found along the Texas Gulf Coast and so thrives there. For an interesting ongoing study, see "Consequences of black mangroves expansion into grassy salt marshes" - www.uh.edu/mangrove/index.html

I'm intrigued by this tropical "wonder" plant and will continue my studies, hoping for another mangrove excursion on my next trip to the tropics or even to the gulf.

## *Relocating Acclimation Pens at Attwater*

Contributed by Butch Young

Ann Ray, Russ Healy, and Ferris Calderon raised the walls and got the top netting installed on relocated acclimation pen.



*Acclimation pen at Attwater*

## *Family Science Night was a Huge Success*

Contributed by Natalie James and Carol Paulson

*From Natalie*: Not a success that happens by chance, by crossing your fingers and winging it, but one that was **planned with the end in mind**.
This wasn't a success for one person or one group of teachers or volunteers, this was a success for **every single person** that contributed something to Family Science Night.

This wasn't a successful night that was a "one-off". This was a successful night that showed us all **what is possible when resources are combined** and - truth be told - it raised the standard for things to come.

The photos (taken by Natalie James) tell the tale of families, community members, and schools coming together to **create positive, educational experiences for our kids** - and for each other.


***Thank you again for all the hard work you do!***

***Discovering the Wonders of Scat***

*From Carol*: In addition to the Family Science Night which included all BISD schools and was attended by 250 or more parents, grandparents and children, we have also had 2 of our 3 spring outings at Lake Somerville with BISD 3rd graders to teach them about Texas Mammals, Wildflowers, and Ecosystems.

This is always a rewarding day as the third graders are just little sponges who soak up so much information so willingly and so fast! There are also new discoveries every day as evidenced by the following article from Lori Buffum who volunteered for Wildflower I.D. in March:

## ***New Discoveries at Nails Creek, Lake Somerville***

Contributed by Lori Buffum

Thanks to LuAn Yarnell for looking up our flower finds and identifying this beauty.

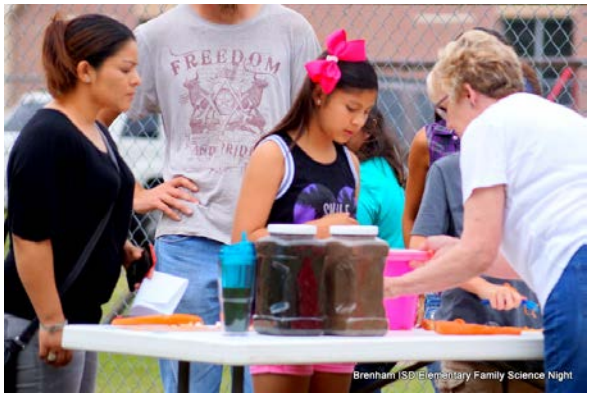
When children are encouraged to discover the beauties of nature... 3rd graders out on a "Wildflower Hunt" and one shy girl asked me if this was a little blue eyed grass because that was one of the pictures on her card. No, but she had just discovered a Prairie Celestials (Nemastylis geminiflora) and we only saw 3 more in all the field we were exploring. "The sky-blue flowers open in late morning and curl up before 3 in the afternoon, even on overcast days. Each flower only lasts one day." Wow - what a find!

Here's the link to the Wildflower Center page for this plant: http://www.wildflower.org/plants/result.php?id_plant=NEGE

Congrats to all for what I think is a pretty rare sighting. I smile in awe of Mother Nature for her gifts

## ***More pictures of GLC TMNs in action:***

*Making Compost*




*Filling the Compost Bin (Royceanna Kendall)*

*Mangroves on Beach*