
MISSISSIPPI NATIVE
PLANT SOCIETY
DECEMBER 1989

"MIDGETS"



A.



B.

A. Lepuropetalon spathulatum

B. Ophioglossum crotalophoroides

GREENWOOD FIELDTRIP

Well our Wildflower Meeting here in Greenwood on October 7 was a huge success. The Mississippi Native Plant Society met at Cottonlandia at 9:00 on Saturday morning. People came from Picayune, Hattiesburg, Little Rock, Ark., Starkville, Carrollton, Schlater, Sidon and Minter City. There were about 35 or 40 people total.

After everyone viewed and oohed and ahed over Miss Perle's Wildflower Garden at Cottonlandia, we formed a caravan and headed for Veterans Park on the riverbank off Claiborne behind the fire station. Sidney McDaniel was our guide, pointing out interesting plants such as wild cucumber, Virginia dayflower, a grass that he called wood-oats (Chasmanthium latifolium). Frank and Dr. McDaniel found lots of seed on the uncommon snowbell tree. Also the purple ironweed was still blooming. Just as we were leaving the park it began to rain so we gathered under the bridge to plan our next stop- which was a Quick Stop on Highway 7. Then we went out to Dr. Heys wonderland area near Teoc where we saw water hyacinths, peppermint, watercress and jewel weed. Another unusual find was an aquatic orchid (Habenaria repens) which is largely tropical in distribution. From there we drove to the Malmaison Wildlife Refuge and Nature Trail for our sack lunch picnic. We walked from the picnic tables a short distance to the Frank Jones Fottbridge Trail bridge, but we did not take the trail because it was the opening day of bow season and the deer hunters were still in the woods, even though it was after noon.

Our last site was off Humphrey Highway on the Odom Estate. By this time our crowd had dwindled as the Starkville bunch which included one of our guides had headed home trying to beat the football game traffic. Philip Barbour coaxed us through fields of rough walking to see rare Southern rice and lotus blossom seed pods. Mary Ann Townes jeep came in handy there because she drove back and gave Mary Norman Brown and I a lift back to the car. Perle, who is 86, preferred to walk along with Ann Breaux and Dot Burge from Picayune and Frank. It wasn't far. I insisted that Perle ride but she wasn't the least bit interested. Her amazing vitality in the field was also an asset as she planned the whole meeting of the MNPS, wrote letters, made phone calls, handled publicity, and all the time worked hard in her garden at Cottonlandia. It was 5:30 when the last of the wildflower lovers returned to the cars at Cottonlandia, weary, but with wonderful new memories.— Mr. & Mrs. Frank Jones.

MIDGETS

Many species of diminutive, but interesting and beautiful plants hide among the conspicuous, showy plants that surround us. While some of these are woodland species, others occur in our lawns, cemeteries, parks and roadside shoulders. Examples include species of bluets (Hedyotis), spring beauty (Claytonia) and Veronica, individuals of which are inconspicuous, but great masses of which often give color to lawns and other grassy areas. Other species are even less obvious, for example bulbous adders tongue fern (Ophioglossum crotalophorioides). This species is rarely reported, but probably fairly common and widespread in grassy areas such as parks and cemeteries. The light green shoot, 1-5 inches tall, consists of a single blade one-third to 1 inch long, thick, ovate, smooth-margined, inconspicuously veined, base lobed and abruptly constricted to a very short stalk. The root stock is round and up to one-third inch in diameter with a few fibrous roots. The fertile spike is one-third to two and one-half inches long. The spore-bearing portion is up to one-half inch long and resembles a tiny green rattlesnake rattle. The spores, typical of ferns, are wind borne and therefore scattered over large areas. They germinate to produce the alternate phase (gametophyte) of the life cycle which underground, colorless and dependent on fungi for sustenance. Because of this relationship and the difficulty of its establishment, adders tongue ferns apparently disperse only erratically. After an appropriate period of underground development, sexual organs are produced with subsequent fertilization and development of the green, above ground shoots in the very early spring (late February to March). While adders tongue may be erratic, careful search may reveal them to be more common than is currently thought. Besides, the thrill of discovery awaits the curious and diligent.—Lloyd Bennett.

ADDED NOTE

If anyone finds any localities for the above, I would appreciate the information. A short chat about the above adders tongue fern with Lloyd resulted in my bringing out the folder of specimens of another, if anything smaller, midget, Lepuropetalon spathulatum. The plants are about the size of ones smallest fingernail and scarcely as tall as a pencil is thick. It also blooms very early in the spring. Both species are illustrated on the cover.—Sidney McDaniel

DRY SHADE GARDENING

About five years ago I bought a tree which happened to have a little house standing nearby. As I paid closing costs and signed papers, I smiled envisioning a wonderful woodland garden in the dappled shade.

I have never regretted the purchase of that white oak tree. It has been a pleasure to watch though these twenty seasons. My shade garden plans, however, had to be modified. My graceful white oak was not growing in wonderful humusy woodland soil as I had anticipated. In fact, I have had to deal with a true gardening dilemma - DRY SHADE.

Part of my problem is that the oak is indeed huge, measuring over 11 feet in circumference 3 feet above the ground. The oak and the other hardwoods nearby suck gallons of water from the earth daily. My yard is sloped so that rain tends to roll off the compacted soil rather than soaking in. To top it off the soil itself is a disturbed compacted clay. I am amazed that the oak survived the construction of my house, but it must have been well established and healthy.

I consulted quite a few garden books after my initial planting and I have yet to find a book which addresses adequately the problems of gardening in dry shade. I experimented and by trial and error found some species which work well for me.

Partridge berry or twinberry (Mitchella repens) was existing on the site and I have grown to love it. Partridge berry has small dark green foliage with texture to rival the popular Japanese groundcover used in landscaping. In spring pairs of white flowers appear followed by a red berry which is a fusion of the two.

Several purple-flowering perennials were also native on the site. Elephants-foot (Elephantopus tomentosus) has a coarse rosette of interesting foliage and small purple August flowers. Wild petunia (Ruellia caroliniensis) has purple trumpet-shaped flowers throughout the summer. Lyre-leaf salvia (Salvia lyrata) has foliage marbled with red veins and a spike of blue flowers in spring.

Beautyberry or Callicarpa americana was present in abundance and I have come to treasure the clusters of magenta fall berries. I am working to establish oakleaf hydrangea (Hydrangea quercifolia) which I have found to be very drought tolerant. The native azaleas I planted have not fared so well. They have survived, but drought forces them to drop flower buds and they seldom bloom. Aralia spinosa or devils-walking-stick is as tough

as its name indicates. With age it forms majestic clumps and provides sprays of white summer flowers followed by purple berries.

One of our native sunflowers (Helianthus tomentosus) grows well in my dry shade and contributes lemon-yellow summer flowers. A volunteer ironweed (Vernonia altissima) has wonderful purple flowers in late summer. Both of these plants, by the way, are smaller than normal in my garden.

For spring color I have planted ozark phlox (Phlox pilosa) and sundrops (Oenothera fruticosa). The pale lavender phlox mixes nicely with the waxy yellow primrose. I am currently trying to establish an evergreen privacy screen using southern waxmyrtle (Myrica cerifera), yellow anise (Illicium parviflorum), leucothoe (Leucothoe populifolia), and yaupon holly (Ilex vomitoria). These shrubs are all progressing nicely.

Quite a large portion of the plants I have mentioned planted themselves. I really began to appreciate and encourage them after my early experiments failed. Perhaps my shade garden came to fruition one summer day as my husband Richard and I walked about the yard with visiting friend Ned Blake. As we walked and looked we shared the revelation that landscaping with native plants in many cases involves thinning out and encouraging existing plants rather than prescribing all new species.

Five years later I do not have the shade garden I once visualized but, in the words of Mick Jagger, "You can't always get what you want, but if you try sometimes you just might find, you get what you need."—
Gail Barton

WILDFLOWERS OF MISSISSIPPI

The long-awaited book, *Wildflowers of Mississippi*, Steve L. Timme, was published in late 1989. This indispensable reference for MNPS members, is a handy 7 inch by 10 inch, hard-bound book, 352 pages long, and contains line drawings and 500 full-color photographs. The book lists for \$35.00 plus tax (total \$37.10).

We have made arrangements with the University Press of Mississippi to act as a dealer for this book. The small profit made will go toward educational and scientific activities of the MNPS. So buy your copy from us! MNPS with paid-up dues get a \$5.00 discount! The member price is \$32.00 (tax included). Books will be on sale at most field trips. Prepaid mail orders accepted with an addition \$3.75 for shipping. Please allow 4 to 6 weeks for delivery. (Quantity discounts available for 5 or more books.) Contact: Vic Rudies 324-0430, or write MNPS, P.O. Box 2151, Starkville, MS 39759.

BOOK REVIEW

Trees, Shrubs, and Woody Vines of Northern Florida and Adjacent Georgia and Alabama by R. K. Godfrey. 1988, 734 pp., illus., \$50.00. University of Georgia Press, Athens.

I was especially pleased to see the appearance of Bob Godfrey's book on woody plants. It represents not just a few years of compilation from works of others, but a life-time of personal observations. There is more information here about individual species than in a dozen other similar works on woody plants combined. There are keys to families, genera, and species as you would expect, plus careful detailed descriptions based upon the plants themselves. Habitat and distribution are given for each species. For trees the National Champion of that species is given with size and location, perhaps to spur the search for larger individuals in the Gulf South. And practically all species are accompanied by detailed illustrations, some of which are among the finest of botanical art. In many cases this book is the only reference available with a good illustration of a given species.

For MNPS members in the southern part of the state species coverage of Godfrey's book is excellent. In fact for all practical purposes it could be said to cover to the Pearl River. As one goes north coverage becomes less complete, though even at the level of Starkville only a couple dozen woody species or less are not included. A few treatments of groups such as hawthorns (Crataegus) and blueberries (Vaccinium) leave me slightly disappointed. But perhaps this is partly my own fault, since my own research has not been finalized and published. The price (\$50.00) might seem to those who have not seen the book a bit steep. But considering the truly outrageous prices charged for some books and the wealth of information included in this book, it is well worth it. All in all this is a very fine book and an excellent reference and I recommend it to any MNPS member with a bent toward woody plants.—S. McDaniel.

SUGGESTIONS

We need your suggestions concerning field trips. Also please let us hear from you about any aspect of MNPS. Articles for inclusion in the newsletter are always encouraged. And above all do participate in the activities of the society.



UNICORN PLANT
Proboscoidea louisianica

OFFICERS

Tentative officers for 1990-91 are given below. A formal balloting will take place with the next issue of the newsletter. In the meantime if you have any suggestions concerning officers or wish to volunteer your services please contact Vic Rudis, 324-0430 or P. O. Box 2151, Starkville, MS 39759.

President- Sidney McDaniel
Vice-president- Christopher J. Wells
Secretary-Treasurer- Sherri Wiygul
Editor- Vic Rudis

A FINAL NOTE

This will be the final newsletter for which I will have primary responsibility. I have enjoyed the opportunity to serve MNPS in this capacity, but I look forward to someone else taking on the burden. This will presumably allow me more time for other botanical things including the Flora of Mississippi. I wish to thank everyone who has contributed in one way or another including the staff of IBE, my graduate students, writers of articles, and our artist, Paul E. Nace. It would not have been possible without the help of so many.—S. McDaniel.