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MISSISSIPPI NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

MAY 1991

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FROM THE EDITOR:

This issue has lots of news--we have been busy! We were recently written up in a northeast Mississippi travel and leisure publication, called Kudzu and You. And National Public Radio, together with University Press of Mississippi, has been promoting the Wildflowers of Mississippi, a book of interest to all MNPS members.

In other news, there's quite a bit of information on mayhaws. There's a reason. Mayhaw, a native fruit tree, is are suggested as a commercial viable fruit crop for Southern growers in the 1990's, joining the ranks of other popular natives such as blueberry and muscadine in recent years. Enjoy!

PERCY QUIN STATE PARK - Vic Rudis, Starkville, MS

Our first meeting at Percy Quin State Park went well, with close to 30 people in attendance. We had talks on converting portions of lawns to semi-wild, landscaped meadows, mushroom uses, regional ecosystems assessment, getting the legislature to pass the state wildflower bill, and informal exchanges on native plant identification, cultural requirements, and propagation tips. We generated over \$150 in native plant, T-shirt and book sales. Thanks to all who donated plants, purchased plants, and showed their enthusiasm for MNPS by participating in the field trips. Special thanks to Bill Cibula, Halla Jo Ellis, John Allen Smith, Faye Swan, Sherrie Wiygul, Randy Warren, Sidney McDaniel, and Chris Wells for their wisdom and making this meeting both educational and enjoyable.

COREOPSIS SP. NAMED AS THE OFFICIAL STATE WILDFLOWER

Thanks to the tireless efforts of Halla Jo Ellis and the legislators she worked with, "Coreopsis sp." is the official State Wildflower of Mississippi. The bill takes effect July 1, 1991. See the May 1990 issue for a list of the "sp" that it entails, or drop me a note for a copy of the list.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING - Vic Rudis, Starkville, MS

At our April Board of Directors meeting, MNPS officers discussed and decided on the following items:

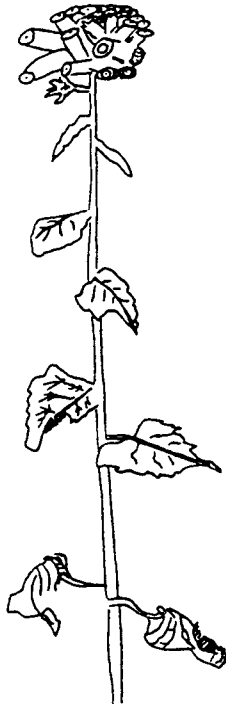
- (1) Granted \$150.00 for the project at Bayou View Jr. High, headed by Joyce Roberts.

(2) Awarded LIFE membership to Dr. Steven Lee Timme. Steve's tireless efforts at assembling the Wildflowers of Mississippi has helped put MNPS and the State of Mississippi in center stage of the native plant movement. Richly illustrated with over 500 photographs -- several from long-time MNPS members -- it is now in its second printing! The second printing should sell even more copies, as it has been bound in softcover and of lower cost. Quality of printing is just as good as the original hardbound edition. For those of you interested in purchasing a softcover edition, it is now \$19.50 + \$2.50 shipping through MNPS.

(3) Discussed the LOGO. No consensus on one design. Susan Haltom (of Madison, not Meridian) had the best color rendition, with Lynn Ashford's design and Bob's design following as a close second. There still is a desire to change the lettering toward emphasizing "Native" in the LOGO. All three are excellent. Since we still have a backlog of T-shirts, we have tabled the issue for the moment.

(4) Discussed increasing visibility through large-scale projects. MNPS dues structure has been sufficient to support 4 newsletters per year, with a little left over for miscellaneous expenses. The dues structure was established in 1980, yet postage and other costs have risen over the years. It is plant and book sales that have helped us fund plant and educational displays.

The Board of Directors welcome input from members on this matter. Plans are to raise the annual dues from \$5.00 to \$7.50 for regular membership (\$5.00 for student membership) and increase LIFE membership fees to \$125.00. LIFE members also would receive a copy of Wildflowers of Mississippi. If there are no objections, the new dues structure will take effect in 1992.



Additional funds would go mainly toward the purchase of educational materials, seeds, and plants, for school-aged children and teachers to help introduce native species cultivation and appreciation throughout the State. Initially, we are thinking about providing Coreopsis seeds to every 3rd grade teacher in the State. Such funding and organization will likely require the support of other statewide groups. Other programs would involve a competitive grants program to fund research or educational projects that further the science of native plant identification, cultivation, propagation, and other goals of MNPS.

(Artwork by Jeffrey Twiss. Weeds of wastelaces have their own unique beauty.)

MAYHAW: AN INTRODUCTION - Bill Fontenot, Lafayette, LA  
and Roger Danley - Hattiesburg, MS

Mayhaws claim to fame is the jelly that comes from its processed juice. It possesses a quality of taste that simply cannot be described. Besides jelly, mayhaw syrup is marketed out of Georgia. Some growers also make wine, which tastes something like the finest, most delicate sherry. It is felt that market demand will grow with expansion of markets northward and westward.

Mayhaws occur naturally in low wet areas in limesinks, bays, sloughs, river bottoms, and along streams and swamps from North Carolina to Florida and west to Arkansas and Texas. Though often found in wet, shady habitats, mayhaws thrive well in normal fruit orchard conditions. Cultivation occurs sporadically as far north as Ohio, but it is not known exactly how cold-tolerant or productive they will be at more northerly latitudes.

Trees are small with tiny branches. Leaves are 2 to 3 inches long, elliptic to oblong, and sometimes spatulate in shape. Color and texture of leaves are dark green above and rusty pubescent below along the veins. Fruits are shaped similar to miniature apples, 1/2 to 1 3/8 inch in diameter.

THE MAYHAW STORY - Bill Fontenot, Lafayette, LA

After locking his grocery store doors for the last time, a newly retired J.S. Akin decided to settle a question he had been having with himself for a long while: Will a mayhaw survive under cultivated conditions? Eager for a resolution, he wandered into the Red River bottom near his home in Sibley, LA. Most all of the mayhaw trees he had seen were too large for transplanting--except one--a scrawny, 12-inch tall seedling he found on the way out. Figuring he had little to lose, Akin planted it at the base of one of the sandy hills behind his home. The year was 1971.

I went to visit J. Sherwood Akin in July 1990, just to say hello, and of course, to have a look at his tree. You see, that tree has been named 'Super Spur' which has reportedly produced 200 gallons of fruit, or 40 5-gallon buckets. Akin is a religious man who is certain that the Lord gave him this tree. I'm not about to argue.

Several years earlier, T.O Warren was getting serious about searching out the best mayhaws near his Hattiesburg, MS home. Setting out into the Pearl River bottoms, Warren began a process of collecting scionwood and grafting them onto Parsley Haw and wild mayhaw seedling bases. Planting these grafted specimens in the yards of any neighbor who would let him, Warren began the first episode of mayhaw horticultural research--a project that continues to this day. In 1969, after spending a tortuous day stumbling over mountains of timber felled by the earlier passage of Hurricane Camille, Warren miraculously relocated the biggest and best fruit-producing tree that he and his brother had ever come

across. This was 'Big Red', the first of the legendary wild clone varieties to be named.

Led by Akin, Warren, and others like Herb Durand in east Texas, a growing legion of "mayhaw maniacs" are singing the praises of mayhaw cultivation. Some 15 wild clone cultivars exist today. Mayhaw processing plants are planned for several locations in Louisiana and Texas. The first annual "Mayhaw Mania" conference was held in April 1990, with about 200 people in attendance.

Currently, two species of mayhaws are recognized: Crataegus aestivalis, a native of FL, southern parts of NC, SC, GA, AL, and MS; and C. opaca, native to the upper TX coast, including the Big Thicket in east TX, and eastward through LA, MS, AL, and the western tip of the FL panhandle.

C. aestivalis has ovoid red fruits. When the fruits start to ripen, it turns a light cream-yellow uniformly, and two days later it turns a brilliant, shiny shellac red. Flower petals, sepals, and calyx are pinkish, and crepe paper thin. The calyx cavity is broad, and the fruit's outer skin is tough.

C. opaca's fruit is a beautiful mixture of reds and yellows when ripe. Fruits ripen unevenly, starting as pink at the upper shoulder or lower end. The calyx end is narrow like a purse string pulled tight. The fruit is elongate and sub-globose, with tender outer skin that bruises easily when shaken to the ground. The leaf edges are more entire, and the leaves are a deeper green than C. aestivalis. Flower petals on C. opaca are generally white, thick and waxy. The calyx, pedicels, and sepals are all solid green.

Where these two species overlap--in MS and AL--it is probable that they're hybridizing. Thus there's a good opportunity for finding more wild clones of commercial significance.

Cultivation is simple. Being opportunists, mayhaws will thrive in most any but the driest situations. Some growers dose them with mild fertilizer a couple of times per year for the first few years. Fruiting begins in 4 to 5 years. C. opaca blooms occur in mid-February and normally bear fruit in April; C. aestivalis blooms about 2 weeks later. Trees grow at a medium rate, reaching maturity at about 10-15 years. Mature heights range 20-25 feet, with a girth of 10 inches in diameter. Trees should be planted about 20 feet apart in full sun to maximize fruit production.

Cedar apple rust, a fungal disease common to many rose family members, can affect fruit quality in some areas. Akin suggests a spray of a mild insecticide and fungicide, just after blooms begin to fall, followed by another dose about 10 days later. Organic versions that combat this disease should work as well.

## MAYHAW PROPAGATION - Roger Danley, Hattiesburg, MS

The seeds of mayhaw can be started successfully, though the seedlings exhibit the variability typical of the genus (see Feb 1991 issue). Seeds from the fruit can be separated from the pulp in a blender during processing. If the seeds cannot be planted immediately, they must be treated with cold temperatures (stratified) for 4 months or soaked in sulfuric acid for 1 hour to break dormancy. The highest germination rates have been achieved using fresh seed.

Mayhaws also can be grafted onto rootstocks of other *Crataegus*, making it possible to multiply desired varieties without having to wait for seedlings. I was fortunate enough to have several young parsley haw trees on a dry hillside next to my house. I used the existing trees as rootstock for a collection of mayhaw varieties that I am studying. The excitement of collecting scionwood for grafting from MS swamps is second only to seeing a successful graft grow and bear fruit.

Grafting is an underutilized method of collecting wild plants-- a method that promotes their cultivation without seriously risking the parent plants. Scionwood should be collected in late winter on wood that grew the previous year. Sticks with 2 or 3 buds can be grafted using the cleft, or whip and tongue method (Check your local libraries for information on grafting).

Mayhaw is an easy tree to graft. If anyone is interested, I will be glad to provide scionwood next spring from my collection of selected varieties. Many were collected from Pearl River swamps--making them true Mississippi native plants.

T.O. Warren, of Hattiesburg, is credited with discovering their cultivation potential. His grafting abilities are legendary, and helped him with introducing named varieties such as Big Red, Heavy, Warren Opaca, and Superberry. [EDITOR'S NOTE: Mississippi State University's Dept. of Horticulture also has information cultivation, and additional descriptions of several named varieties. For the 2-page memo, ask for "Mayhaw trees in the home orchard," c/o Dr. Freddie Raspberry, Box 5446, Miss. State, MS 39762. (601)325-3935.]

For sources of named varieties, contact:

J. Sherwood Akin, Sherwood Nursery, Box 6, Sibley, LA 71073.  
(318)377-3653.

Billy Craft, Box 227, Woodworth, LA 71485. (318)442-9780.

Hector Black, Hidden Springs Nursery, Rt. 4, Box 159, Cookeville, TN 38501. (615)268-9889.

Elmer Langston, Rt. 1, Box 10, Pollack, LA 75467. (318)765-9625.

Maurice Palmer, Swamp Treasure Products, Route 1, Box 205, Pelham, GA 31779.

Tom Stone, Stone Pecan Groves, 12 Skyline Drive, Thomasville, GA 31792.

Burl Turnage, 1813 Lincoln Avenue, Albany, GA 31707.

T.O. Warren, 1423 West 7th Street, Hattiesburg, MS 39401.  
(601)582-3614.

[EDITOR'S NOTE: I don't know of any nurseries that stock named varieties in large sizes or large quantities. Prices vary widely (\$3-\$20), with a median price of \$6.00 plus shipping for a 3-foot tree.

Many Mississippi nurseries have never heard of the plant. Grafted varieties should be available commercially for the 1992 planting season. Seedling mayhaws are available this year in the Jackson area at Brent's Landscaping, on Raymond Road.]

#### THE SOUTHERN FRUIT FELLOWSHIP - Becky Gillette, Hattiesburg, MS

The Southern Fruit Fellowship, a group of amateurs and professionals interested in studying, testing, propagating, and spreading information about fruit cultivars that do well in the South, will hold its summer meeting in Hattiesburg, June 13-15.

Highlights of the meeting will be talking with experts from all over the South about the best fruit varieties for our area, taste testing varieties from members' orchards, scionwood swapping, demonstrations of budding and grafting techniques, lectures by experts and tours of the Ellisville muscadine plant, and State and federal Experiment Stations in Poplarville.

Sign-in for the meeting begins at 4 PM Thursday, June 13, at the Cabot Lodge, 3250 Hwy 49 North, in Hattiesburg. Make reservations before May 22 by calling (800)642-2268 [or (800)225-9429 out-of-state]. Ask for the special rate of \$41.00. Less expensive accommodations are available at campgrounds and the nearby Budget Inn (601)544-3475. There is a bus tour (\$12) which must be reserved by May 20 through T.O. Warren, 1423 W. 7th Street, Hattiesburg, MS 39401. (601)582-3614.

If you can't make the meeting, you may want to join SFF to get their newsletter. Membership is \$5.00 per year. Contact: Dr. David Ulmer, President of SFF, P.O. Box 9415, Columbus, MS 39705.

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

MAY 18 Harold Prairie Field Trip, near Forest, MS. Half-day tour of a remnant prairie on the Bienville National Forest, led by Ken Gordon, MS Natural Heritage Program. Meet at 8:45 AM at the USDA Forest Service Headquarters, Highway 35 and 1 mile south of Interstate 20.

MAY 25-26 Alabama Wildflower Society, 20th anniversary meeting. Ramada Inn, Skyline Blvd, Tuscaloosa, AL, beginning at 9:00 AM. View the Cahaba lily in West Blocton, and the University Arboretum. A plant sale is planned for Saturday night. Contact: George Welch, 20 Fredrick Drive, Tuscaloosa, AL 35401 by May 17. His number is (205)752-3081.

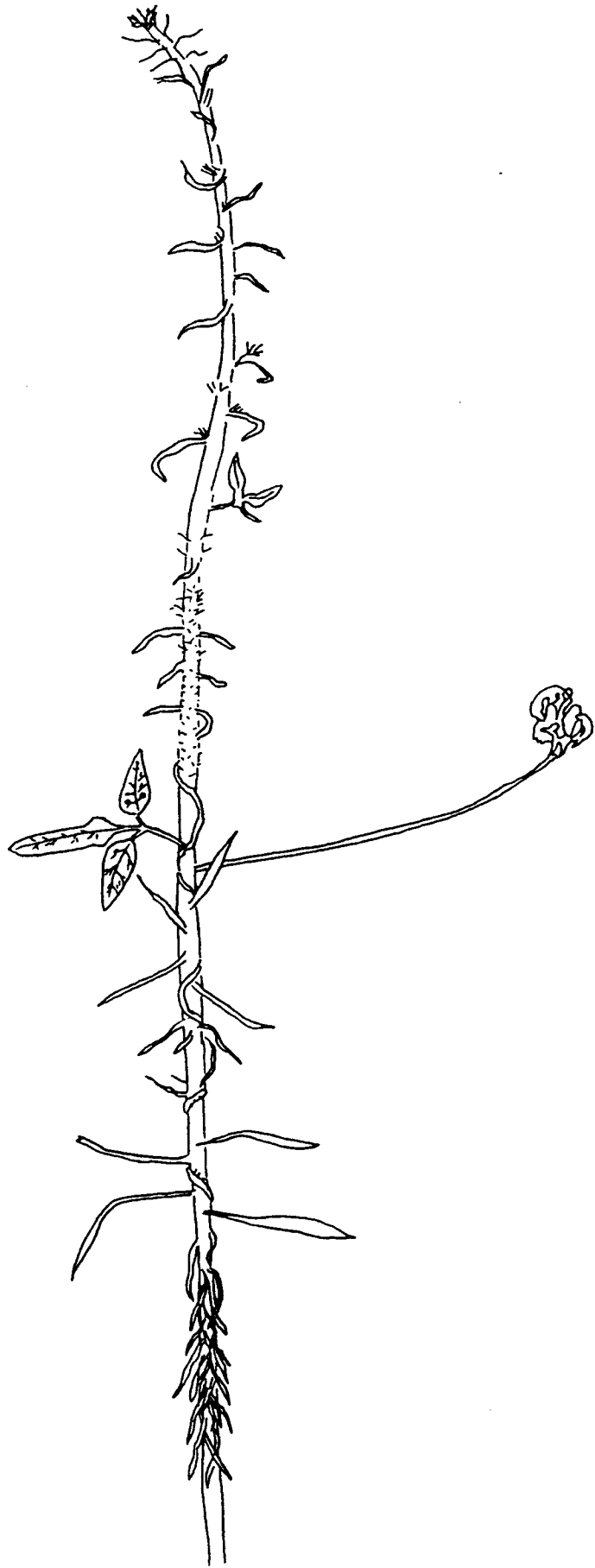
JUNE 1 Tour of the native prairie recently acquired by the Institute for Botanical Exploration, MS State University. Meet at 8:45 AM at the Sessums General Store. For more information, contact Sidney McDaniel at 325-7570.

JUNE 8-9 Flowerplace Plant Farm Open Garden, Meridian, MS 39304. Daylight on Saturday and noon till dusk on Sunday. Gail Barton and Richard Lowery's mail-order nursery is open to visitors. 10% discount for items purchased at that time. Refreshments will be served. For directions, contact Gail Barton, P.O. Box 4865, Meridian, MS 39304. (601)482-5686.

JUNE 13-15 Southern Fruit Fellowship Summer Meeting, Hattiesburg, MS. Contact Becky Gillette 582-5975 or T.O. Warren 582-3614.

JUNE 14-16 Conference for Conservation and Use of Native Plants of the Gulf Coastal Plain, New Orleans, LA. MNPS is a co-sponsor. Contact John Mayronne, Native Nurseries, 317 Theard, Covington, LA 70433. (504)894-5424.







Mississippi Sierra Club, Mississippi Nature Conservancy, and similar groups.

-- Lectures, seminars, and slide shows by native plant experts, ecologists, landscape professionals, knowledgeable amateurs, and gardeners.

-- Offer Wildflowers of Mississippi by S. Lee Timme, T-shirts, and related materials for sale to promote the goals of the Society.

-- Facilitating the study of Mississippi flora and monitoring of nature preserves through newsletter announcements, networking with concerned and knowledgeable members, and awarding small grants to support research and education consistent with the Society's goals.

-- Plant and seed exchanges, creating and maintaining displays for public education and appreciation, and plant rescues in areas about to be developed.

#### NEWSLETTER AND MEMBERSHIP

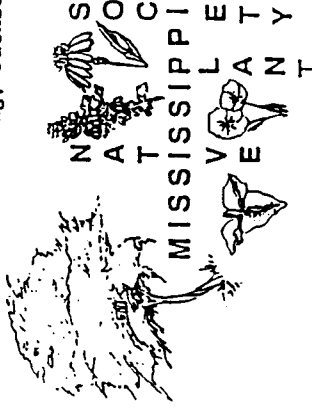
The MISSISSIPPI NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY NEWSLETTER is published 4 times annually. In addition to a calendar of upcoming events, the newsletter contains articles on native plant propagation and identification, notes on plant and seed exchanges, landscape design, habitat preserves and descriptions, reviews of books, activities, and people associated with native and naturalized plants of Mississippi.

Membership is open to any interested individual, family, or organization. If you wish to join us, please mail the application below, indicate the class of membership desired and enclose appropriate dues.

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION AND DUES NOTICE	
Renewal	New
Please indicate class of membership desired and enclose appropriate dues:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Student \$2.50	The Mississippi Native Plant Society is an organization dedicated to the scientific and educational exchange of information about native and naturalized plants occurring in the State of Mississippi.
<input type="checkbox"/> Regular \$5.00	
<input type="checkbox"/> Family \$7.50	
<input type="checkbox"/> Sustaining \$10.00	
<input type="checkbox"/> Contributing \$25.00	
<input type="checkbox"/> Life \$75.00	
All classes of membership receive the MNPS Newsletter. Please make checks payable to: Mississippi Native Plant Society. Return this form with payment to: Mississippi Native Plant Society, P.O. Box 3151, Starkville, MS 39759	
Be sure to include the following information with your payment:	
Name	_____
Mailing Address	_____
Telephone No. (optional)	_____
If Mississippi, county of residence	_____

#### 1990-1991 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

PRESIDENT: Sidney McDaniel, Mississippi State 325-7570  
VICE-PRESIDENT: Chris Wells, Picayune 798-6961  
SECRETARY/TREASURER: Sherrrie Wiygul, Sturgis 465-8603  
EDITOR: Vic Rudis, Starkville 324-0430  
PAST PRESIDENT: Felder Rushing, Jackson 982-6542



T-SHIRTS with the above logo are available in adult and children sizes in GRAY background. A few in LARGE and EX-LARGE are also available in PINK or WATERMELON background. Cost \$8.50 + \$1.50 for shipping.

WILDFLOWERS OF MISSISSIPPI by S. Lee Timme is available at a cost of \$37.00, plus \$2.50 shipping 4th class (an additional \$1.00 for 1st class.) Quantity discounts are available for 5 or more books. (Softcover \$19.50).

ATTENTION WRITERS! ATTENTION ARTISTS AND PHOTOGRAPHERS! If you've got an interest in native plants, here's your opportunity to be "published."

Photos and drawings must be capable of reproduction for standard (black and white) photocopy machines. Deadlines for submission of materials is one month prior to the issue date. The deadline for the next issue is July 15th.

In addition, a NEW MNPS T-SHIRT LOGO is desired -- one that incorporates several native Coreopsis species -- as well as native shrubs or trees. Send your designs to the Editor for publication in a future newsletter.

Address sales and newsletter items to: Vic Rudis, Editor, Mississippi Native Plant Society, P.O. Box 2151, Starkville, MS 39759.

NOTE: MAILING LABELS with "FINAL ISSUE" have been marked for deletion. For those interested in continuing to receive the newsletter and share in membership, send dues to: Mississippi Native Plant Society, c/o Sherrrie Wiygul, Secretary/Treasurer, P.O. Box 2151, Starkville, MS 39759

MISSISSIPPI NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY  
P. O. BOX 2151  
STARKVILLE, MS 39759



As a result of a meeting called by Fred Searcy, Jr. on April 19, 1980 at the Museum of Natural History in Jackson, the Mississippi Native Plant Society drew its first breath. The organization was formed for individuals and groups interested in all aspects of botany, particularly the vascular flora of Mississippi.

There always have been people with a love for the native plants of Mississippi. The overall purpose of the Mississippi Native Plant Society is the furtherance of knowledge about the native and naturalized plant species of the State of Mississippi and the encouragement of an attitude of respect and appreciation for these species.

GOALS are to:

- Gather and disseminate knowledge about the native and naturalized plant species and their habitats in Mississippi
- Work for the preservation of these species and conservation of their habitats
- Inform the public about these species and habitats, including their propagation, importance, ecology, and need for protection
- Encourage the propagation and use of native plants and habitats in designing residential, commercial, and public landscapes
- Promote fellowship among all persons interested in the understanding and appreciation of native plants and their habitats

PROGRAMS include:

- Field trips. In past years, Mississippi locations have included Ocean Springs, Crosby Arboretum, Davis Lake, Tishomingo State Park, Delta National Forest, Starkville, Horn Island and Gloster. Joint meetings are sponsored with the Alabama Wildflower Society.