

Mississippi Native Plants



The Newsletter of the Mississippi Native Plant Society

Summer 1996

Volume 16 Issue 3

Dry Shade Gardening

Gail Barton

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. 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 rain tends to roll off the 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.

I consulted quite a few garden books after my initial planting died but 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. Many of them were existing on the site and I appreciate their steadfastness more each year.

I have grown to love the existing Partridge berry or twinberry (*Mitchella repens*). It has small dark green foliage with texture to rival the popular Japanese groundcovers 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. Lyre-leaf salvia (*Salvia lyrata*) has foliage marbled with red veins and spikey blue flowers in spring. Wild petunia (*Ruellia caroliniensis*) bears purple trumpet-shaped flowers throughout the summer. Elephants-foot (*Elephantopus tomentosus*) has a coarse rosette of interesting foliage and small purple August flowers.

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 gigantea*) has wonderful purple flowers in late summer. Both of these plants are smaller than normal in my garden.

For spring color I have planted ozark or prairie 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 (*Agarista populifolia*) and yaupon holly (*Ilex vomitoria*). These shrubs are all progressing nicely.

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."

Article continued on page 2



The preceding article was printed unabridged in the Summer 1989 MNPS Newsletter. Now, seven years later, I am still gardening in the same spot and struggling with the same predicament.

All the plants I described above are thriving with a few exceptions. The sundrops and ozark phlox gradually declined and now Louisiana phlox (*Phlox divaricata*) and yellow star grass (*Hypoxis hirsuta*) fill the spring color gap. Both are well adapted to the site and starry yellow *Hypoxis* is the perfect companion for the icy blue phlox.

The best of all the evergreen screening materials I tried is definitely leucothoe with yellow anise running a close second. The yaupon holly and wax myrtle are surviving but growth is painfully slow. I have added some Florida anise (*Illicium floridanum*) to the planting. It is not nearly as vigorous as the yellow anise but its red flowers provides a bit of color contrast when in bloom.

Other newcomers to my garden include witch alder (*Fothergilla gardenii*) and New Jersey tea (*Ceanothus americanus*). Both are low shrubs with white flowers. The fothergilla bears bottlebrush flowers in late winter and has excellent red and orange fall leaves. New Jersey tea produces frothy and fragrant blossoms in summer when flower color is in short supply.

I gambled on bellwort (*Uvularia perfoliata*) and was delighted by my first spring crop of yellow bell shaped blooms. I was really impressed, however, when the plants formed respectable clumps the second year. I've also had good luck with Christmas fern (*Polystichum acrostichoides*) and the evergreen gingers (*Hexastylis* spp.) I've tried. The native columbine (*Aquilegia canadensis*) blooms well for me along with the columbine look-alike, rue anemone (*Anemonella thalictroides*). The rue anemone looks so fragile that I never imagined it could survive in such a harsh environment. After bearing ethereal white flowers in spring, this six inch charmer goes dormant and avoids the summer drought!

I've realized that my plant choices for this site are actually wider than I had initially imagined. As I build the garden, I constantly look for new plants to try. I take my inspiration from wild places and then search mail order catalogues or figure out how to propagate for my own garden. I take note of plants naturally growing in dry shade under large old oaks and hickories and look for perennials which bloom early and go dormant during the brutal summer heat. I've also discovered that plants which grow on steep shaded slopes in the wild (like bellwort and Christmas fern) will usually tolerate the drought in my garden.

When I wrote the first article, I was struggling to develop patience. My struggle continues into the present as my garden grows on in slow motion. Last year I considered taking out a seven foot native azalea (*Rhododendron canescens*) which refused to bloom. This year it surprised me with a bounty of blossoms! I rewarded myself by sitting and swinging for a spell beside the azalea. I breathed in her perfume and studied a bigleaf magnolia I planted over a decade ago. The magnolia is finally beginning to look like a tree. When she blooms, sometimes in the next ten to twenty years, you are all invited to a party!

Gail Barton is a Horticulture Instructor at MCC and gardens in Meridian MS.

Additional shade tolerant plants:

White wood aster

Aster divaricatus

Blue stemmed goldenrod

Solidago caesia

Woodland silphium

Silphium asperrimum

Greater tickseed

Coreopsis major

Mayapple

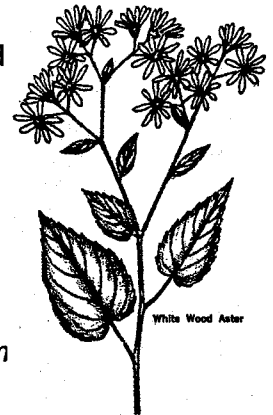
Podophyllum peltatum

Green and Gold

Chrysogonium virginianum

Sessil flowered wood oats

Chasmanthium sessiliflorum



Do You Recognize?

With ray flowers having bright yellow petals this reseeding annual fills an area with color in a few short years. Blooming from late May through July this two to three foot tall native is just as happy in damp roadside ditches as it is in a dry prairie. Found through out the state it can be identified by the smooth ovate leaves which clasp around the stem of the flower stalk. Seedlings begin to germinate in late October and remain short evergreen mounds through the winter.

The answer can be found on page 7



What's on the Menu?

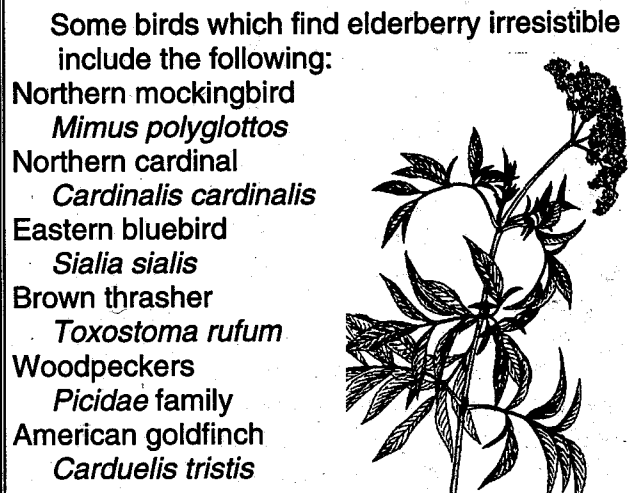
Elderberry (*Sambucus canadensis*)

Alice McLuskie

In early summer ditch banks and hedgerows are white with lacy clusters of elder flowers (*Sambucus canadensis*). This widespread shrub thrives on low ground, wet areas, and the edges of fields and hedgerows throughout much of North America. The creamy heads of flowers with their characteristic, slightly limey, scent will produce clusters of purplish-black, berry-like drupes or fruits which begin ripening in late summer. Elderberries have a high sugar and vitamin C content: a favorite with birds at a time when they are raising their young. They provide a food source for many native birds, including mockingbirds, northern cardinals, eastern bluebirds, brown thrashers and woodpeckers, to name but a few.

Thrashers, mockingbirds, and American goldfinches are some of the species that also like to use the elderberry for cover and nesting. This shrub is a good choice for a wildlife garden. It is easy to grow in full sun or light shade, preferring a moist fertile soil to fruit well. The elderberry does, however, have a tendency to sprawl and grow rampantly so is best planted where there is room for it to spread.

Alice McLuskie is a Mississippi Master Gardener and amateur naturalist. She and her husband are British, but are currently living in Greenville with their baby daughter.



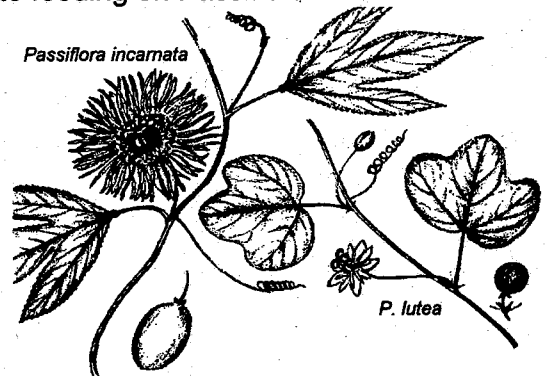
Maypops or Passion Flower (*Passiflora incarnata*)

Bryant Mather

Mississippi is very fortunate in having, in some abundance, two species in the Passifloraceae, or passion-flower family: The familiar and beautiful maypops (*Passiflora incarnata*) and the smaller, less colorful passiflora (*Passiflora lutea*). Mississippi is also very fortunate in having two relatively abundant species of butterflies called fritillaries. Our two common fritillaries are members of the Brushfoot family and although they belong to different genera their larvae (caterpillars) have a host plant in common—*Passiflora* species. The Gulf Fritillary (*Agraulis vanillae*) larvae are limited to feeding on *Passiflora incarnata* and other species of passion-flowers; the Variegated Fritillary (*Euptoieta claudia*) larvae can, and do, feed on a wide variety of other plants including native violets but are frequently reared on maypops. Few Mississippians need a photograph of a maypops flower but good pictures of flowers of both Mississippi species of *Passiflora* are on page 195 of Timme's book on Wildflowers of Mississippi; the Gulf Fritillary (*A. vanillae*) and the Variegated Fritillary (*E. claudia*) are discussed on pp. 146 and 149 of Opler and Maliul's Eastern Butterflies (Peterson's Field Guide); The Xerces Society-Smithsonian book Butterfly Gardening has a very good picture of an Gulf Fritillary (*A. vanillae*) egg on a *Passiflora* sp. leaf (p 26) and of an adult Gulf Fritillary on page 119. Maypops and passiflora vines are found on roadsides, open meadows and fence rows throughout the state.

Bryant Mather is a butterfly enthusiast who helped compile the Butterflies of Mississippi checklist distributed by the MS Museum of Natural Science. He resides in Clinton, MS.

Editors Note: If you live in the coastal pan handle counties of Mississippi, the northern boundary of its range, you may be fortunate enough to see the Zebra butterfly (*Heliconius charitonius*) during the summer months. It too uses *Passiflora* spp. as a host for its larvae.



Coming to terms with ...

Lynn Libous-Bailey

More often than not it is the petals that first attracts our attention to a flower. But are what we find so attractive on the native copper iris, (*Iris fulva*), yellow eyed grass (*Hyposis hirsuta*) or catesbae lily (*Lilium catesbaei*) just petals or are they something more?

A **petal**, usually colored and often showy, is a part of the inner most series that makes up the floral envelope. The petals taken as a whole are referred to as the **corolla**. The **corolla** may be made up of a single whirl of petals or, as in the case of a double flower, many whirls. Each individual petal is connected to the floral structure by a single connection or trace that supplies it with nutrients.

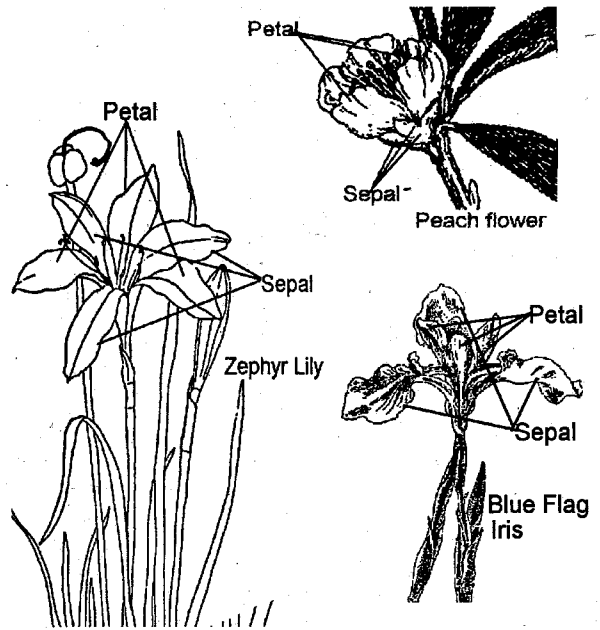
The outer most part of the floral envelope is made up of structures called **sepals**. Taken as a whole the **sepals** are referred to as the **calyx**. They are connected to the floral structure by the same number of traces as the leaves on that plant are connected to the stem. In many instances they are, but not always, green or leaf like in appearance.

The term **perianth** is used when referring to the corolla and sepals combined. When we read a plant description that states '...**perianth** is red' we know that the petals (**corolla**) and the sepals (**calyx**) are both red. When the perianth is not clearly differentiated, that is one can not easily tell the calyx from the corolla because they closely resemble each other in form and color, they can also be referred to as the **tepals**.

Almost all of the plants in the iris, amaryllis, and lily families possess flowers that have conspicuous brightly colored sepals which which are petal like in appearance. The next time you see any of the plants mentioned earlier or a blue flag iris (*Iris virginica*), atamasco lily (*Zephranthes atamasco*), or yucca (*Yucca angustifolia*) you can confidently say "That **perianth** is a lovely shade of (fill in the color)".

Because the petals (**corolla**) and sepals (**calyx**) on the atamasco lily (*Zephranthes atamasco*), blue-eyed grass (*Sisyrinchium angustifolium*), and Turk's cap lily (*Lilium superbum*) are almost indistinguishable in form and color you would also be correct in saying "The **tepals** on that flower are a beautiful color".

Or you can do as I often do and recite "Here's the petals, and here's the sepals, open the flower and see all the tepals". Ouch. Lynn Libous-Bailey gardens in the Mississippi Delta (Leland) and often looks at plants from a scientific angle.



Ever wonder why...

The state highway department decided to start mowing around the Clinton, MS interchanges at a time when the calliopsis (*Coreopsis tinctoria*) was in full bloom? So much for the Roadside Wildflower Planting Program becoming a working reality.

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The Newsletter of the Mississippi Native Plant Society

Mississippi Native Plants is the official publication of the Mississippi Native Plant Society and is published quarterly.

- Winter (Issue 1) December/January/February
- Spring (Issue 2) March/April/May
- Summer (Issue 3) June/July/ August
- Fall (Issue 4) September/October/November

Deadlines for the **Fall issue** are as follows:
Articles---**July 15** Calendar of Events---**July 30**

Deadlines for the **Winter issue** are as follows:
Articles---**Oct 15** Calendar of Events---**Oct 30**

Hard copies and/or articles in Word Perfect or Word, submitted to the Editor are solicited and welcomed

Seasonal Favorites - MNPS Members



"Oh - it has to be butterfly weed (*Asclepias tuberosa*). It makes the roadsides glow orange/red this time of year." Charles Bryson / Leland, MS.



"This week it is the bold beautiful leaved cabbage-leaf coneflower (*Rudbeckia maxima*). The six foot plus towers carrying flowers donning deep yellow reflexing petals and tall black cones are a sight to behold. They make traffic slow way down!" Lynn Libous-Bailey / Leland, MS



"One of my favorites is the naturalized tall verbena (*Verbena bonariensis*). This plant has height (at least five feet tall) without bulk. It doesn't take up a lot of ground area and is a great peek through plant. The purple color of the flower clusters seems to glow in the evening. The fact that it reseeds is another plus." Andrea Walker / Oxford, MS (Telephone interview)

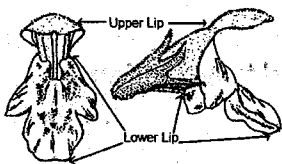
Family Portrait:

Lamiaceae - The Mint Family

Gail Barton

General Characteristics: Members of the Mint Family are usually herbaceous plants with square stems. A few are small shrubs. Most members contain aromatic oils and so it is of little surprise that the culinary herbs like basil, sage, rosemary, lavender, thyme and mint belong in this family.

Leaves: The leaves are simple and opposite (with 2 leaves at each node). They are often arranged along the stem rather than being basal and are generally crenate (scalloped), serrate (with teeth) or lobed.



Flowers: Individual flowers are usually bilabiate. The flowers have 5 petals which are fused forming a tube which divides into 2 lips (bilabiate). Forming most often at the ends of stems or branches they are often arranged into elongated or rounded clusters which may include small leafy bracts. The fruit consists of 4 small nutlets.

Members of interest include the following plants native to or naturalized in Mississippi:

Salvia (*Salvia lyrata*, *S. azurea*, or *S. coccinea*)

Horsemint (*Monarda punctata*)

Self heal (*Prunella vulgaris*)

Lemon mint (*Monarda citriodora*)

Bee Balm (*Monarda fistulosa*)

Lemon Balm (*Melissa officinalis*)

Catmint (*Calamintha nepeta*)

Georgia savory (*Satureja georgiana*)

Blue curls (*Trichostema dichotomum*)

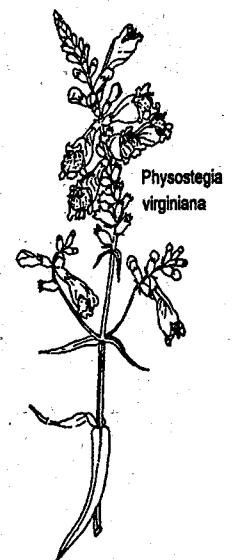
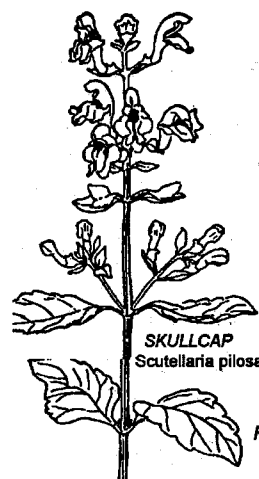
Obedient plant (*Physostegia virginiana*)

Mountain mints (*Pycnanthemum* spp.)

Beach rosemary (*Conradina canescens*)

American germander (*Teucrium canadense*)

Skullcap (*Scutellaria incana* and *S. integrifolia*)



Cultivated Cousins: Coleus, salvia, ajuga and most of the culinary herbs.

The Black Sheep of the Family: Florida betony (*Stachys floridana*) and ground ivy (*Glechoma hederacea*) are invasive and considered to be noxious weeds. Henbit (*Lamium amplexicaule*) and dead nettle (*Lamium purpureum*) are called "weed" by some and "wildflower" by others!

From: *Flowers Native to the Deep South* by Caroline Dornon

Companion planting for around the birdbath

Lynn Libous-Bailey



"Oh, you cursed brat! Look what you've done. I'm drowning, drowning." That's what I used to hear emanating from the backyard after filling the newly acquired birdbath located in the middle of a flowerbed. Normal filling of that drinking / bathing station involves hitting said target from a distance of fifteen feet with the 'thumb over the end of the hose' projectory technique. Once every ten days or so I would pull a brush up from under the elm-leaf goldenrod (*Solidago ulmifolia*) give the basin a good scrubbing and dump a fresh gallon of water into the bath.

The goldenrod never seemed to mind the excess of water. The bee-balm (*Monarda fistulosa*) stayed so laden with powdery mildew that it was unsightly and the *Aster ericoides* couldn't keep its head above water and drowned. It was time to regroup.

The easiest solution would be to move the birdbath. But that would put it out of 'thumbs' reach. A more careful consideration of the plants placed in the area was in order. Since the elm-leaf goldenrod was doing fine it could stay. I moved the *Monarda* about five feet away and figured it would maintain a happy distance on its own. Replacing it was the southeastern naturalized bog salvia (*Salvia uliginosa*). It's blue flowers from June through frost can't be beat. Behind that I placed several woodland silphium (*Silphium asperifolium*) to provide a five foot backdrop and clear yellow composite flowers from late May through July.

So far so good. The replacement for the aster came along while thumbing through a mailorder catalogues 'new listing' section. Chipola River *Coreopsis* (*Coreopsis integrifolia*), with its glossy green leaves and November bloom is everything they said it was and more. Nothing brightens the Thanksgiving table more than a small vase of these bright orange/yellow blooms. For structure as well as fall leaf color and berries I planted an *Aronia arbutifolia* nearby. Although it is still small it has become a popular hang out for birds awaiting their turn at the water.

The planting is several year old now and doing nicely. I am currently on the look out for another birdbath that suits my 'style'. Since my aim with the water hose only seems to be getting worse its designated home is in the low ditch area. I will probably place it in front of a clump of swamp sunflower (*Helianthus angustifolius*) where where it will keep perfect company with the swamp milkweed (*Asclepias incarnata*), Louisiana copper iris (*Iris fulva*), ironweed (*Vernonia gigantea*), purple-stemmed aster (*Aster puniceus*), and Texas star hibiscus (*Hibiscus coccineus*).



The Mississippi Native Plant Society is a non-profit organization established in 1980 to promote the preservation of native and naturalized plants and their habitats in Mississippi through conservation, education and utilization.

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Mississippi Natural Heritage Program Special Plant List

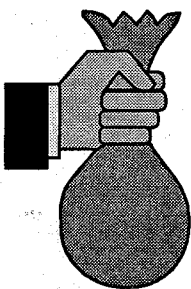
Lynn Libous-Bailey

While I eagerly await an article from Ron Wieland addressing the particular what, where, and why's of the Special Plant List I couldn't help but bring to the members attention a few things that I found to be of interest.

I was unaware of the number of plants that are currently placed in the MNHPSPL Critically imperiled, Imperiled or Rare and Uncommon groups or ranks. To give you some idea, the following plants mentioned in various articles in this newsletter alone are either Critically Imperiled (**S1**); Imperiled because of rarity or factors making it vulnerable to extirpation (**S2**) or Rare and uncommon, having 21-100 natural population occurrences (**S3**). I'm not sure how many are placed on the list because of habitat destruction (vs natural rarity to our state) but it makes you sit up and take notice.

Wild ginger (<i>Asarum canadense</i>)	S2	Turks Cap Lily (<i>Lilium superbum</i>)	S3
Evergreen ginger (<i>Hexastylis shuttleworthii</i>)	S1	Beach Rosemary (<i>Conradina canescens</i>)	S1
Green and Gold (<i>Chrysogonum virginianum</i>)	S3	Hairy Mtn Mint (<i>Pycnanthemum pilosum</i>)	S2
Texas Star Hibiscus (<i>Hibiscus coccineus</i>)	S2	Purple Stemmed Aster (<i>Aster puniceus</i>)	S1
Copper Iris (<i>Iris fulva</i>)	S3	White Heath Aster (<i>Aster ericoides</i>)	S2

Membership Renewals or 'Are your dues due?'



If you've noticed that your **address label** is decorated with a brilliant shade of **Crayola Celery** take heed. It's our way of letting you know that your dues are not current and this will be your **last issue** of Mississippi Native Plants.

While we will give you a grace period (because everyone, including us, forgets once in a while) lapsed memberships of longer than 6 months will no longer be considered 'active but negligent'!

Please note that the **checks** and **membership form** should be **mailed to Ron Wieland**, the **Secretary/Treasurer** and not the newsletter editor.

Mississippi Native Plant Society
Membership Application

Membership Categories:

New Member Renewal
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All members receive **Mississippi Native Plants**. Life members also receive **Wildflowers of Mississippi** by S. Lee Timme



Do You Recognize...

Clasp cone flower

Dracopsis amplexicaulis

Gulf Coast Native Plant Conference in Baton Rouge, L.A. - One participants observations



When asked what about the Gulf Coast Native Plant Conference caught her attention, MNPS member Karen Partlow responded with the following:

"Enthusiasm and a willingness, coupled with desire, to talk plants. Being a nursery woman and offering plants for sale at the conference brings me into contact with most of the 'attendees'. When explaining to one woman that the ginger (*Hexastylis* sp.) she was purchasing was very slow growing, and she would need patience as it would not fill in or spread fast, her response was "Good! Been there, done that." People attending the conference are into their plants. They know their gardens and are evolving with them."

Karen Partlow is the owner of Nature's Nook mailorder nursery in Meridian, MS

Wondering what the rest of the GCNPC had going for it? Check out the fall newsletter.

Food for thought about Public Projects

If you're interested in or currently involved with public projects why not make it an opportunity to educate all parties involved about native plants. Terry Tate (Native Plant Society of Texas) makes a point in the following quote taken from the May/June issue of their newsletter. "The important thing to make note of here is how these projects are presented and represented to the public. A butterfly garden utilizing butterfly friendly **natives** from around the state should be represented as precisely that, a butterfly garden utilizing butterfly friendly **natives** from around the state. When a member takes on a beautification project such as sowing an area in wildflowers, every effort should be made to use species historically indigenous to that site. Resist the urge to sow a commercial 'blanket' mix for convenience sake.The public has enough misinformation concerning native plants as it is."

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