

Mississippi Native Plants

The Newsletter of the Mississippi Native Plant Society

Fall 2002

Volume 20 Issue 4

RETURN OF THE NATIVES SEMINAR A SUCCESS

By Bob Brzuszek, MNPS President

On June 15, 2002, over 145 people attended the MNPS annual meeting at The Crosby Arboretum in Picayune, MS. It was good to see many of our long-standing members again and join in fellowship with other native plant enthusiasts. Lectures were conducted in the morning followed by a brown bag lunch and tours in the afternoon.

I had the opportunity to discuss and show slides of some of the new native plant cultivars that are emerging from area nurserymen. Marc Pastorek, president of the Cajun Prairie Restoration Society and new MNPS trips chair, discussed his success and approaches to establishing prairie plants in grassland settings. John Mayronne, landscape architect and owner of Natives Landscape Corporation, thoroughly entertained the crowd with his observations and tips on incorporating natives in landscape design.

A tour of The Crosby Arboretum was conducted for attendees to see the native plant exhibits in the woodland, water, and savanna habitats; and then we all headed out to Marc Pastorek's place for a great tour of his prairie plantings. We were honored to have Malcolm Vidrine, Charles Allen, Charlotte Seidenberg, Gail Barton, Peter Luce, and other native plant notables in the audience. A good time was had by all.

MS NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY TO FORM CHAPTERS

In order to better serve the members of the MS Native Plant Society across the state, the Board of Directors is considering the establishment of area chapters. Debora Man, Secretary/Treasurer, has researched and developed amendments to the MNPS Constitution which be submitted to current members for their vote.

There is interest in forming a chapter along the Gulf Coast, and contact information on this will be available in upcoming newsletters. If you feel there would be strong interest for a chapter in your area, please contact Bob Brzuszek for details.

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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Jackson, MS 39204
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248 Charles Daughdrill
Carriere, MS 39426
601-799-1808
www.meadowmakers.com

We're Not Asking for Prairie Dogs . . .

By Joseph McGee

Just west of the town of Lawrence at the intersection of U.S. Highway 80 and Interstate 20 in western Newton County lies a tiny, remnant prairie. This postage stamp-size prairie is easily recognized along the south side of Highway 80 by occasional white areas of exposed limestone, or, at least, chalky soil.

In the recent past it could also be recognized by the prairie plants which grow and, at one time, bloomed there. The "normal" or expected ranges of some of these plants are the prairies of some of the mid-western and western states!

Open (treeless) remnant prairies once dotted the Jackson Prairie physiographic region of central Mississippi as well as the Black Belt Prairie of the northeastern part of the state. There is lack of a consensus among experts as to why these prairies remain treeless, but edaphic (soil) conditions and occasional, random fires seem to have played a natural role in their original creation.

Most of these open areas were converted to human (usually agricultural) uses long ago, but a few do remain in a more or less natural state. One of the best examples of a remnant prairie in central Mississippi is the Harrell Prairie Hill Botanical Area in Bienville National Forest in Scott County. But perhaps the most accessible and easily observed (even without leaving one's car) prairie is the one at Exit 100 off I-20, known as Lake Prairie.

Among the wildflowers one could find blooming at this roadside prairie in spring (early to mid-April) were: spiderwort (*Tradescantia* sp.), two species of blue-eyed grass (*Sisyrinchium* spp.), golden Alexanders (*Zizia aurea*), spider milkweed (*Asclepias viridis*), *Coreopsis lanceolata*, fleabanes (*Erigeron* sp.), a species of native thistle, obedient plant (*Physostegia virginiana*; bloomed mid-spring), self-heal (*Prunella vulgaris*; introduced), lyre-leaved sage (*Salvia lyrata*), Illinois bundle flower (*Desmanthus illinoensis*), and *Oxalis* or two, prairie phlox (*Phlox pilosa*), a species of *Houstonia*, and many others.

As the spring flowers faded and set seed, summer bloomers came into their own and the prairie revealed its true spectacle. Competing for attention were: agave (American aloe, *Agave virginica*), rattlesnake master (*Eryngium yuccifolium*), the aforementioned golden Alexanders (most intriguing in seed), wild petunia (*Ruellia* sp.), black-eyed Susan (*Rudbeckia hirta*), gray-head coneflower (*Ratibida pinnata*), compass-plant (*Silphium laciniatum*), which, at a height of six feet, really defined the prairie in summer; a sunflower (*Helianthus* sp.), ironweed (*Vernonia*; bloomed mid to late summer), a *Liatris* (very late summer to early fall), several asters, a blue lobelia, a white morning glory (*Ipomoea* sp.), flowering spurge (or prairie spurge, *Euphorbia corollata*), partridge pea (*Chamaecrista fasciculata*), white and purple prairie clovers (*Dalea* sp.), both prairie specialists; prairie pink (*Sabatia* sp., a type of gentian), bee balm or wild bergamont (*Monarda fistulosa*), slender mountain mint (*Pycnanthemum tenuifolium*), a wonderful nectaring plant for butterflies, maypops (*Passiflora incarnata*), the diminutive but always delightful American blue hearts (*Buchnera americana*), Culver's root (*Veronica virginicum*), and a number of others.

The prairie also had a diverse complement of invertebrates, including the Jackson Prairie Crayfish.

But, alas and alack, all of the above is now in the past tense. In recent years (the past three or four, apparently), the Mississippi Department of Transportation has changed its mowing schedule and, in its diligence to see that every plant along the highway grows no taller than carpet pile, has been mowing the prairie (and beyond) in spring, summer, and fall. A late fall mowing would suffice! The spectacular displays of *Silphium*, *Rudbeckia*, *Ratibida*, *Eryngium*, and *Sabatia*, etc. which one could observe from the highway, and which made the little prairie such a pleasure to behold in summer, are now a thing of the past, at least if the current mowing regimen continues.

Even before the summer mowing began, the fall clip was too early from a botanizer's point of view as it eliminated at least one species of *Liatris* in full bloom, not to mention several species of native grasses at the peak of their autumnal glory.

This prairie was tiny to begin with, but, in 1994 (and apparently again three or four years later), a road was constructed across the west end of the tract to accommodate log trucks and other timbering equipment going for the pine trees south of the prairie. That road bed is now a virtual Bermuda grass monoculture. Even before the road was built, the prairie suffered encroachment of wood vegetation* on three sides (a result of the perpetual absence of fire?); and the construction of Highway 80 itself (and its accompanying parallel drainage ditches) which makes the prairie so accessible and which forms the north boundary of the remnant, no doubt eliminated a large area of the original prairie.

A sliver of prairie on apparently private land just south of an ole fence line remained unmowed as of July, 2002. Here, compass-plant, prairie pink and scattered clumps of rattlesnake master were in full bloom amid a few grey-head coneflowers going to seed, revealing the beauty of a prairie that once was and could be again with a little restoration and a lot less mowing!

*But keep those machetes in their scabbards! A mystery plant— a small tree or large shrub in the Rose family (Rosaceae) is growing along that old fence row. Could it be one of our native crab apples or something else?

Editor's Note: The small prairie remnant was first recognized as a conservation site by the Mississippi Natural Heritage Program in 1979. The prairie contains two species of special concern – prairie parsley, *Polytaenia nuttalli*, and small-toothed sedge, *Carex microdonta*. It is one of only three known locations of prairie parsley in the Jackson Prairie region. All occur within 4 miles of each other.

Field Trip!!!!!!

The Side Oats Grama-Rama! Join the Mississippi Native Plant Society on a field trip to Osborne Prairie near Starkville, Mississippi. We'll visit a volunteer-managed Black Belt Prairie remnant to view the dominant late summer grass, side oats grama grass in peak inflorescence, among other things. Meet Saturday, September 14 at 9:00 a.m. at the Winn Dixie parking lot at the corner of Highway 12 and Russell Street and we'll caravan from there. Our stay should be as brief as an hour or so. Contact Marc Pastorek @ 601-799-1808 ddarla@datastar.net

Mississippi Native Plants The Newsletter of the Mississippi Native Plant Society

Mississippi Native Plants is the quarterly publication of the Mississippi Native Plant Society.

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 Winter Issue are as follows:
Articles—Oct 15 Calendar of Events— Oct 30

Deadlines for the Spring Issue are as follows:
Articles—Jan 15 Calendar of Events—Jan 30

Articles of all types submitted to the Editor are welcome.

NATIVE PLANT PLACES AND ORGANIZATIONS IN MISSISSIPPI

Where can you learn more about native plants and wildlife in Mississippi? How can you do more to help with conservation efforts in our state? Here is a list of interpreted nature trails, arboretums, gardens, museums, and organizations that are there to help you learn. For more information see Helen McGinnis's book, "Hiking Mississippi, A Guide to Trails and Natural Areas," University Press of Mississippi, 1994.

Botanic Gardens, Arboreta, Nature Centers, and Museums:

Mississippi Museum of Natural Science
2148 Riverside Dr., Jackson, MS
601-354-7303

Gloster Arboretum
1334 Arboretum Lane, Gloster, MS
601-225-4132

Mynelle Gardens
4736 Clinton Boulevard, Jackson, MS
601-922-5759

The Crosby Arboretum, MSU
370 Ridge Road, Picayune, MS
601-799-2311

Strawberry Plains Audubon Center
285 Plains Road, Holly Springs, MS
662-252-1155

Clinton Nature Center
Clinton, MS
601-982-0385

Seabee Base Nature Trail
NCBC, Gulfport, MS
228-871-3169

J.L. Scott Marine Education Center
Point Cadet Biloxi, USM/GCRL

Mississippi Coastal Preserves Program
Ms. Dept. Marine Resources, Biloxi MS.

Nature Education Center at Noxubee Refuge
Noxubee Refuge

Scranton Nature Center
City of Pascagoula, MS

NERR (National Estuarine Research Reserve)
Grand Bay Savannah Office
City of Gulfport
Lynn Meadows Nature Center

State and National Parks with Interpreted Trails:

Gulf Islands National Seashore
3500 Park Rd., Ocean Springs, MS 39564
601-875-0821

Natchez Trace Parkway (twelve interpreted trails)
601-680-4025

Big Oak Nature Trail, Arkabutla Lake
Rt. 1 Box 572, Coldwater, MS 38618
601-562-6261

Beech Hollow Nature Trail, Enid Lake
P.O. Box 10, Enid, MS 38927
601-563-4571 Sandstone Interpretive Trail, Sardis Lake
P.O. Drawer 186, Sardis, MS 38666
601-563-4531

Bienville Pines Scenic Area, Bienville National Forest
Rt. 2 Box 1239, Forest, MS 39074
601-469-3811

Puskus Lake, Holly Springs National Forest
Hwy 78 E, Box 400,
Holly Springs, MS 38635
601-252-2633

Mississippi Sandhill Crane National Wildlife Refuge
7200 Crane Lane, Gautier, MS 39553
601-497-6322

Old River Interpretive Trail, Grenada Lake
P.O. Box 725, Grenada, MS 38902
662-226-4934

Great River Road State Park
P.O. Box 292, Rosedale, MS 38769
601-759-6762

Lake Lowndes State Park
3319 Lake Lowndes Rd.,
Columbus, MS 39702
601-328-2110

Shepard State Park
1034 Graveline Rd., Gautier, MS 39553
228-497-2244

Tombigbee State Park
Rt. 2, Box 336E, Tupelo, MS 38801
662-842-7669

Jason Stewart Nature Trail, Trace State Park
Rt. 1, Box 254, Belden, MS 38826
601-489-2958

LeFlore Trail Network, Malmaison Wildlife Management Area
628 Malmaison Headquarters Rd.,
Holcomb, MS 38490 601-453-5409

Historic Jefferson College
PO Box 700, Washington, MS 39190,
601-442-2901

Dorman Lake Nature Trail, John Starr Memorial Forest
P.O. Box 9680, Mississippi State, MS 39762
662-325-2191

Mississippi Petrified Forest
PO Box 37, Flora, MS 39071
601-879-8189

Conservation Organizations:

Mississippi Environmental Education Alliance
P.O. Box 508, Gulfport, MS 39502
228-388-4710

Keep Mississippi Beautiful
4785 I-55 N Suite 103, Jackson, MS 39206
800-545-3764

Gulf Islands Conservancy
P.O. Box 1086, Gulfport, MS 39502

Mississippi Audubon Society
285 Plains Road, Holly Springs, MS
662-252-1155

The Nature Conservancy
P.O. Box 1028, Jackson, MS 39215
601-355-5357

Pascagoula River Alliance
Bruce Reid, Audubon MS,
601-629-6621

Save the Pascagoula
Dr. Tom Singley, Physician- Pascagoula, Ms
Mississippi 2020

Box 13506, Jackson, MS 39236

Water Resources Research Institute
Box AD, Mississippi State, MS 39762
662-325-3295

Sierra Club, Mississippi Chapter
P.O. Box 4335, Jackson, MS 39296
601-352-1026

Wolf River Conservation Society
Joe Feil,
228-452-7666

Delta Land Trust
www.deltalandtrust.org

Wildlife Mississippi- Mississippi Land Trust
P.O. Box 10, Stoneville, MS 38776
(662) 686-3375
web address: www.misslandtrust.org

Escatawpa River Society, Dr. Rip Pfeiffer
171 Louiselle St., Mobile, AL 36607

Basin Team Coordinators, Office of Pollution Control,
DEQ
www.deq.state.ms.us

Pat Harrison Waterway District
800-748-9403

Pearl River Development District
2304 Riverside Dr., Jackson, MS 39202
601-354-6301

Mississippi Scenic Streams Stewardship Program
2148 Riverside Dr., Jackson, MS
601-354-7303

Natural Heritage Natural Areas Program
2148 Riverside Dr., Jackson, MS
601-354-7303

Land Trust for the Mississippi Coastal Plain
P.O. Box 245, 360 Beach Blvd.,
Biloxi, MS 39533
228-435-9191

Mississippi Wildlife Federation
855 So. Pear Orchard Rd. Ste 500,
Ridgeland, MS 39157
601-206-5703
www.mswildlife.org

Urban Forestry, Mississippi Forestry Commission
301 North Lamar. St., Suite 300,
Jackson, MS 39201
601-359-1386

Delta Wildlife
PO Box 276, Stoneville, MS 38776
662-686-3370

MS Soil and Water Conservation Commission
www.mswcc.state.ms.us

Educational Opportunities:

Mississippi State University Extension Service
see your local extension office or www.msu.cares

Mississippi Master Naturalists
2710 Beach Blvd., Suite 1E, Biloxi, MS 39531

Garden Clubs of Mississippi
169 D'Evereau Dr., Natchez, MS 39120
601-446-9716

The Earth Lab, Duncan Gray Center
1530 Way Road, Canton, MS 39046
601-859-1517

Adopt-a-Stream, Volunteer Stream Monitoring Training
Miss DEQ, Office of Pollution Control
P.O. Box 10385, Jackson, Ms 39289-0385
601-961-5171

Project WET, Project WILD, training seminars for
teachers, MS Museum of Natural Science,
2148 Riverside Drive, Jackson, MS 39202
601-354-7303

Naturalist Lecture Series (in Jackson)
MS Museum of Natural Science, Library
601-354-7303

Hunter Education/Boating Safety Courses
MDWFP, Enforcement Section
1501 Eastover Drive, Jackson, MS 39211
601-432-2400

Publications:

Mississippi Wildlife Viewing Guide
Miss. Dept. of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks
Published 2001

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION OR RENEWAL FORM

Join the organization devoted to the study and appreciation of wildflowers, grasses, shrubs, and trees native to the state of Mississippi. Members receive Mississippi Native Plants, a publication that addresses scientific and gardening issues relevant to the recognition, enjoyment, and conservation of our native plants and natural habitats.

JOIN TODAY

___ New Member ___ Renewal

- ___ Student \$7.50
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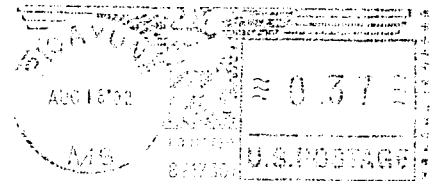
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Return this form and Check to: **MNPS**
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 Clinton, MS 39056-6002

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