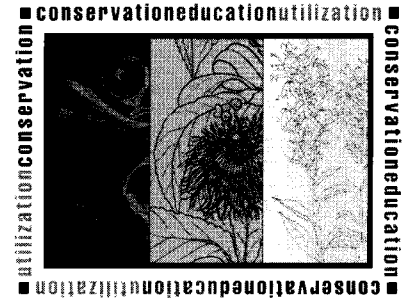


MISSISSIPPI NATIVE P.L.A.N.T.S

The Newsletter of the Mississippi Native Plant Society, Inc.

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Winter, 2003/04



The Mississippi Native Plant Society, Inc. 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.

MNPS BOARD OF DIRECTORS

ELECTIVE POSITIONS

•President

Bob Brzuszek
Dept. of Landscape Architecture
Box 9725
Mississippi State, MS 39762
662-325-7896 (D)
662-325-7893 (E)
RBrzuszek@LALC.msstate.edu

•Vice-President

Joseph McGee
19496 Highway 80
Hickory, MS 39332-3133
601-646-5402 (D)

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Debora Mann
114 Auburn Drive
Clinton, MS 39056-6002
601-974-1415 (D)
601-924-4966 (E)
mannndl@millsaps.edu

•Newsletter Editor

Lynn Ashford
138 West Way Road
Florence, MS 39073
601-845-7535 (D)
weedbyhand@aol.com

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Dr. John Guyton
2710 Beach Blvd., Suite 1-E
Biloxi, MS 39531
228-388-4710 (D)
jguyton@ext.msstate.edu

•Trips Chair

John Hays
2148 Riverside Dr.
Jackson, MS 39202
601-354-7303 (D)
601-354-7227 (E)
john.hays@mmns.state.ms.us

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Starkville Area Forms Native Plant Group

If you are in the Starkville/Columbus area and want to learn more about our native plants, you are cordially invited to join our group. We meet every month for a fun field trip or evening lecture. Last month, twenty or so native plant enthusiasts met at the Botanic Garden of the South in Starkville. Owned by former MNPS President and noted biologist, Dr. Sidney McDaniel, the group toured the remnant prairies, cedar glades and transitional woodlands of this 300 acre site. A hearty barbeque followed the guided tour and was enjoyed by all. For meeting times and information, contact Bob Brzuszek at rbrzuszek@lalc.msstate.edu or call him at 662-325-7896.



TRIPS CHAIR'S NOTES

by John Hays

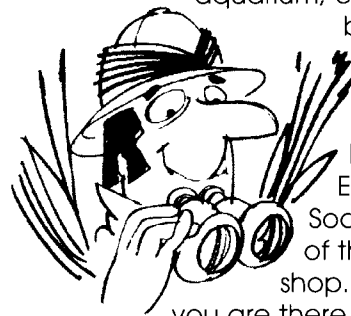
Just a quick reminder that on **Saturday, December 6th** the Native Plant Society will have a "field" trip to the **Mississippi Museum of Natural Science**. This will give everyone an opportunity to see the Museum as the public sees it, as well as a behind-the-scenes look to include: the aquarium, other living collections, research collections -

both animal and plant - the terrarium, and the outside grounds. There are a number of hiking trails that traverse the forest that surrounds the Museum including a trail that leads to the Pearl River.

Entry is **free to members** of the Native Plant Society and we will **meet at 10:00am in the lobby** of the Museum next to the information desk/gift shop. Tell the guard at the Museum entrance that you are there for the Mississippi Native Plant Society field trip. If you plan to hike the trails, just dress according to the fickle winters here in central Mississippi.

For more information, e-mail john.hays@mmns.state.ms.us. For directions to the Museum, visit the Museum's website at: www.mdwfp.com/museum.asp

It is important that I know how many people will attend no later than November 28th so that I can make arrangements with security and the various curators and exhibit managers. Once I have all the information necessary I'll post a message on the Native Plant Society's website (<http://groups.msn.com/mississippinativeplantsociety>) finalizing the trip.



EDUCATION CHAIR'S NOTES

by John Guyton, Ed. D.

Settle Down for a Long Winter's Read *Invasion Biology: Critique of a Pseudoscience*

I began reading this book with an attitude and finished with a lot of questions. Then, I remembered Bill Fontenot's reference to birds' extensive use of the tallow tree during an exotic plants conference at the MSU Crosby Arboretum. He has also stated that, "Tallow is incapable of taking over a native forest; on the other hand a native can take over a tallow forest." Reminding us that tallow is not shade tolerant like the swamp maple, green ash and water oak. Felder's retort, "When *Lythrum* is outlawed, only outlaws will have *Lythrum*" came to mind! I grimaced when Ed Blake, designer of the MSU Crosby Arboretum, commented he didn't think we should restrict ourselves to natives in landscaping the Lynn Meadows Discovery Center!

I have been a native plant proponent for a long time and even reluctantly turned down the offer of a great collection of coneflower seeds during a visit to Australia. I have encouraged schools to use natives in landscaping as an example for the community, pulled up more than my share of privet and Chinese tallow trees, written an activity manual for children on non-indigenous species, funded a 4-H Environmental Club's project of designating a native plant of the month, and only admired purple loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*) from afar.

MSU Horticulturalist, Dr. Cecil Pounders reminds me non-indigenous plants are, by nature, opportunistic and take advantage

of locations where natives have been destroyed, or will no longer grow, reminding me they are just looking for their place in the sun! Further, he pointed out that a little competition may be healthy for natives when we consider their long term health, climate changes, etc. Then he loaned me his copy of *Invasion Biology: Critique of a Pseudoscience*.

In this insightful little book, David Theodoropoulos made some interesting points – many that struck home. His essential premise is: Are invaders truly an environmental threat causing irreparable harm? Is bioinvasion a real problem or an illusion corporations and government agencies are cynically exploiting to further their own agendas? Hmmm...

I had a little difficulty with some of the racism and xenophobic references, but they were well thought out and certainly supported the message. It was interesting to see Theodoropoulos trace the origin of the anti-exotic species movement to the Third Reich cleansing of the German landscape of foreign plants!

Invader hysteria or good science? That is the question. If it is good science, we need to remember to use valueless language, necessary in objective reporting of the results. Caution is warranted where loaded words such as: "irruptive, alien, disruptive,

contaminating, noxious, aggressive, invasive, choking, stealing, harmful, destructive, corrupting, polluting, villains and sawtooth *Satin* spawn" (page 113) are used describing anthropogenically-dispersed species. Theodoropoulos did an admirable job of reviewing research supporting his premise and placed it in the text of time, a luxury not always available to researchers chasing deadlines.

In the field of Environmental Education we strive to give balanced treatment to all sides of a topic and I remember being cautioned by my director to remember the origin of what was on my dinner plate. I am

encouraging you read this book and give some consideration to Theodoropoulos' tenets. I am afraid that in the immortal, yet paraphrased words of Pogo: We have met the enemy and he is an anthropogenic exotic.

The Exotic Pest Plant Council's encouragement of a federal law that prohibits any movement of any species unless the government determines it will 'cause no harm' scared me greatly. England has some experience with a "Clean list" restricting the importation and/or distribution of species.

England's Forbidden Fruit: The crop is 'White Princess', and no, it is not a variety of cannabis – it is a tomato – a "meltingly, sumptuously tasty" variety. Turns out, The Plant



Varieties and Seeds Act (1964) prevents English connoisseurs from enjoying this fruit. Anyone know where I can score some of these seeds?

Now, where are Flora and Bill Tollar? I feel the need growing for some of Flora's deep fried kudzu leaves and kudzu fudge and some of Bill's fine kudzu wine to go with these 'White Princess' tomatoes!

Invasion Biology: Critique of a Pseudoscience, By David Theodoropoulos. Published by Avvar Books, Blythe, California. ISBN: 0-9708504-1-7, Soft cover, 6 x 9", 237+xiv pp, \$14.50.

If ordering directly from Theodoropoulos, mail payment to: David Theodoropoulos, Star Route 2, Box 337, La Honda, CA 94020. All orders within the United States add \$1.75 for postage and packing for delivery by media mail.



Landscaping on the Cheap – But Be Careful What You Wish For

by Vic Rudis



Having stretched my budget to buy a 10-year old house on a 1/2 acre lot, I wanted a low-cost landscape. The soil on the hill behind my home was 6 inches of clay over Selma chalk – too poor to grow much of anything without a lot of added soil and store-bought shrubs. So I pruned an existing Privet (*Ligustrum spp.*) into tree-form and moved a few other smaller ones to better screen out my view of the neighbor's yard – and give me a little privacy.

On the top of the hill was a low spot that kept the water from running down onto my patio. I made the low spot deeper and used a broad-spectrum herbicide to kill the lawn grasses. Then I did what Roger Danley called "negative landscaping," which was letting nature take over then removing what I didn't want. This laid-back attitude provided quick screening and an array of native species at what I thought was minimal cost. Among nature's introductions were Eastern red cedar (*Juniperus virginiana*), lots of butterfly-friendly wildflowers, e.g., aster – and privet. The Eastern red cedars grew fast and gave me privacy, and privets screened the view for part of the year.

Often seen in forest gaps, roadsides, and other disturbed and poorly-drained areas, Privet is a group of shade-tolerant nonnative shrubs that are impacting native species in forested wetland communities. Privets likely appeared early in U.S. history with the introduction of European privet (*L. vulgare*) in Colonial times. Reference books say glossy privet (*L. lucidulum* Ait. f.) was introduced in 1794, Chinese privet (*L. sinense*) in 1852, Japanese privet (*L. japonicum*) in 1845, and amur privet (*L. amurens*) and border privet (*L. obtusifolium*) in 1860. Privet is sold widely for hedges, with variegated privet as one of the more popular varieties in the nursery trade. In natural areas, privet is spread by vegetative root and stump sprouts and forms new population cells by bird-dispersed seeds.

Regionally, privet and other nonnative and potentially invasive species are being monitored to determine their impact on southern forests (<http://www.msstate.edu/dept/forstry/nnis/FIAnvasive.pdf>). In my day job, I learned that the Privet genus is more than 10 times more common than Kudzu (*Pueraria*)

and occupies more than 2.5 million acres (3.5%) of Southeastern U.S. forests. The odds are good that forests in this region's nonforest-dominated landscapes will contain privet. Elsewhere, privet is often seen along low-lying areas along tree-lined highway right-of-ways, particularly near populated areas.

Over the ensuing years, privet grew like a cancer along my backyard ditch and threatened the native flora that I was trying to promote. Removing unwanted stems became an annual chore, then a periodic growing-season battle. Six years ago, fences went up and I removed all parent privets from my yard. But to this day, new seedlings appear. I learned from Jim Miller's 2003 book *Nonnative Invasive Plants of Southern Forests** that one effective way to prevent re-sprouting of existing root systems is to spray freshly-cut stems with a 20% solution of glyphosate. My neighbors, afflicted with this same curse, right now think these "free" privets are a blessing. Like fast food, privets *do* satisfy certain needs, but unless one is careful, they can get out of hand.

*GTR-SRS-62 and available while supplies last from:
http://www.srs.fs.usda.gov/about/newsrelease/nr_2003-05-29-nonnative.htm

The Weed Wrench – A Testimonial

by Gail Barton

In 1995, my husband bought *The Millennium Whole Earth Catalog* for me as a present. Being a reader, I perused the giant book from start to finish. In the process, I found a small section in the "Sustainability" chapter devoted to the Weed Wrench.

We had recently purchased 2 acres of abused urban land adjacent to our house. The property was plagued by common privet and an excess of pioneer species. We used a riding mower to create trails through the thicket – carefully dodging the large specimens that might break our mower. Our plan was to work from the path. We wanted to clear invasive exotics and thin pioneer species without making excessive use of herbicides. We didn't want to bush-hog the entire place for fear of losing desirable vegetation that was struggling to re-establish. We also wanted to leave some forage and shelter for birds.

I phoned the company (New Tribe in Oregon) that manufactures the Weed Wrench and spoke for quite some time with the person who answered the phone and asked him if the tool would pull privet and Chinese wisteria. He was not familiar with privet but did tell me that the Weed Wrench worked on the other *Ligustrum* spp., exotic weeds in the Northwest. He said that the Weed Wrench worked best on species with taproots and explained how it worked. I ordered the medium sized model that is designed to pull stems up to 2 inches across.

When the Weed Wrench arrived, I was impressed with its quality. It was all metal coated with an incredibly durable orange paint. I am really hard on tools and for the better part of the 8 years I've owned a Weed Wrench, I have left it in the weather. It is easiest for me to pull privet until I

tire, leave it at the site and start again another day (or another week or month). I can easily find it again due to the bright orange color. Occasionally, when the gripping jaws lock, I spritz them with WD-40 and start pulling again! My Weed Wrench has survived these 8 years with no other maintenance and it is practically rust free.

I'm not in great shape but I can still pull a really large woody plant by myself. The tool is a fancy lever and fulcrum. It has a set of jaws at ground level and a handle that extends up to chest height (or shoulder height on me). I position the jaws around the base of the offending plant, step on the jaws to hold them and the fulcrum beneath to the ground. When I pull the handle toward me, the jaws clamp around the stem. I can usually wrench small trees from the ground on the first try. With larger ones, the tool may have to be repositioned and pulled from several angles.

I've used the Weed Wrench for most of the clearing on our (now 6-acre) homeplace. Over the years I've turned many friends on to this wonderful tool. Just a few days ago, my friend Steve Strong stopped for a visit. I pointed to an 8-foot black gum growing in a flower bed near the house. Steve's loaner Weed Wrench (the large model) was latched to the tree's base like a rabid pit bull. I had left it there the day before after trying in vain to pull the tree. Steve pulled for a couple of minutes before he wrenched the tree (complete with a taproot over 3 feet long) from the earth. As he wiped the sweat from his brow, he said, "I love this tool!" I have to agree.

So you see, the possibilities are endless. If the Weed Wrench is ready and waiting, you can entice

younger, stronger friends to use it.

Another friend, Larry Wilson, led a volunteer group at Lichterman Nature Center in Memphis whose goal was to clear about a half-acre of privet and wisteria. He had several Weed Wrenches and divided the volunteers into groups. The event became a competition as each group tried to out-do the other.

When I bought my Weed Wrench, I paid about \$120.00. That averages to around \$15.00 per year. I see no sign that the Weed Wrench will break in my lifetime.

The same medium-sized tool now costs about \$155.00. I recommend it if the primary user is a woman. Several of my male friends (like Steve) swear by the large size that is a little more expensive. If working with volunteers, I'd get one of each size to start. It's a great buy whether you are organizing volunteers or just clearing your own spot of land.

For more information check the web for New Tribe at: www.Newtribe.com or phone 866-223-3371.

Gail Barton is Program Coordinator for Horticulture at Meridian Community College. She lives and gardens on a 6-acre nature preserve with her husband, Richard Lowery, and many four-legged friends.

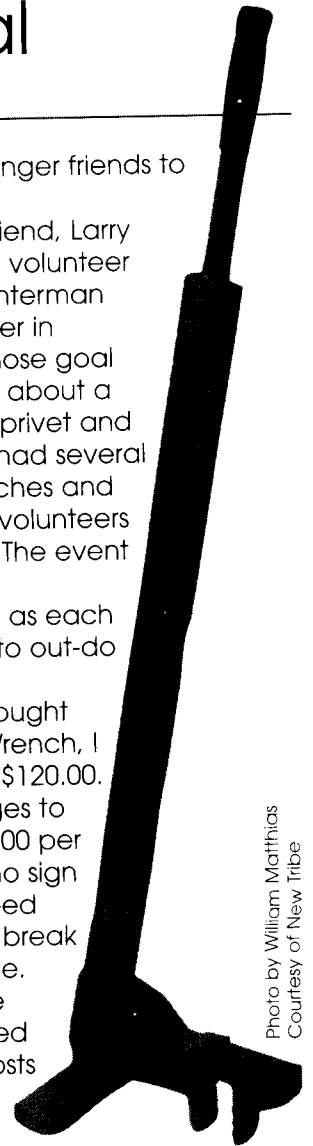


Photo by William Matthias
Courtesy of New Tribe

Hollies for the Holidays

by Robert Brzuszek

According to Cherokee legend, winter arrives when the Old Man Wind from the north comes to visit his Southern bride. As the cool autumnal wind blows through our gardens, golden leaves begin their downward dance from the summer-tired trees, and swirl and eddy into our neglected porch corners. There is a rare crispness to the Mississippi sky at this time of year – so vividly blue that height-altitude flocks of egrets catch the sun like facets on a well-turned gemstone. The garden is finished for the year and ready to sleep under a deep, earthy carpet of leaves.

But there is another Cherokee legend, one that speaks of the rewards of vigilance while others slumber. It seems that when plants were first made, they were told by the Creator to stay awake for seven nights. If they did not sleep they would be given a special power. The nights wore on and only the pine, spruce, hemlock, cedar, laurel, and holly stayed awake. Because they were faithful, they were given the power to remain green all year around, and their leaves would hold great medicine.

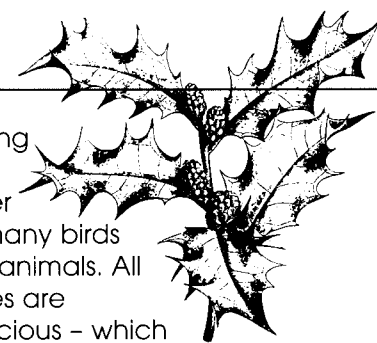
While other plants sleep

peacefully in our gardens, hollies offer a bright addition to the winter landscape. They are perfectly suited to Mississippi's soils and climate, and offer an easy solution for just about any garden situation. There are few serious diseases or insects that attack hollies, and many species are highly adaptable to droughts, floods, fire, freezes, heat, pollution, compacted soils and even weed-eaters. Born from a fire landscape in our acidic Piney Woods region, there are at least 11 species of holly native to Mississippi. Hollies from around the world grow easily in our climate, and there are literally hundreds of cultivars that can be selected from and utilized in the garden. Additionally, hollies can grow to just about any height range, from the 3-foot tall dwarf yaupon holly (*Ilex vomitoria* 'Nana') to the majestic forest giant, American holly (*Ilex opaca*), which can reach 50 feet in height.

If you are interested in attracting birds and other wildlife to your backyard garden, hollies offer the perfect foods and habitat. Keeping a few shrubby thickets of holly along the fencerows or tucked along the back of the property makes for excellent

nesting and cover for many birds and animals. All hollies are dioecious – which means that each plant will either be a male or a female. Only female hollies will bear fruit, so if you have a holly that doesn't produce berries – it never will. Remember of course, that male hollies are necessary in the garden to produce fruit for the females. It is best to tell which gender a holly is when it flowers in April. Look to see if there are yellow stamens in the center for a male. But if you are buying a plant from a nursery and are concerned of it not having berries, don't worry, most nursery-sold hollies are propagated from female plants.

Hollies are an important part of the winter landscape since they are one of the few plants that produce berries in late fall, and provide food for birds when other sources have disappeared. Holly berries are also important nutrient sources and full of carbohydrates – the perfect food for returning migrating birds.



Upcoming Field Trips for 2003/04

• **Saturday, Dec. 6 2003 – Museum of Natural Science in Jackson.** A "field" trip through our exhibit on the Pascagoula River. Hike surrounding nature trails. (See page one for more info.)

• **Mid to late April (depending on the weather) – The "Cove" in Webster County** (about 2 hours north-northeast of Jackson), a wonderful example of the once extensive beech-magnolia forests in Mississippi. Plenty of great plants and scenery, including the only known site in the state for *Viburnum acerifolium*, maple leaf viburnum and plenty of seldom seen goodies.

• **Mid to late June – A trip to one of the prairies in the**

Jackson area (Bienville National Forest). Easy to access prairies with a nice display in early summer.

• **Tentative – Next fall ('04) a trip to Delta National Forest** and the natural areas there to see the changing of the leaves.

Please let John Hays know how you feel about these and get back to him via the website message board, or e-mail, phone or write him. He's shooting in the dark without some input from our members, so please contact him. More information on these will be posted on the website message board and in the newsletter as dates grow nearer.

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**
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MISSISSIPPI NATIVE PLANTS is the quarterly publication of the **Mississippi Native Plant Society, Inc.**

Issue 1–Winter: Dec/Jan/Feb
 Issue 2–Spring: March/Ap/May
 Issue 3–Summer: June/Jly/Aug
 Issue 4–Fall: Sept/Oct/Nov

Deadlines for all* copy are:

Winter – October 15th
 Spring – January 15th
 Summer – April 15th
 Fall – July 15th

**Final deadline for Events is the 30th of the month listed.*

Any interested parties may send articles, photos, drawings, etc. to the editor with the knowledge that materials may not be returned.

All are welcomed.

• **Gulf Coast Chapter:** Meets every 4th Monday at various locations near Gulfport. For more information contact president, Edie Dreher at 228-864-2775 or mail to 100 24th St., Gulfport, MS 39507.

• **Starkville Area Chapter:** For meeting times and information, contact Bob Brzuszek at rbrzuszek@alc.msstate.edu or phone 662-325-7896.

Visit the MNPS, Inc. web site at: groups.msn.com/mississippinativeplantsociety

The Holidays are approaching – give the gift of Nature and sign up a friend to the MNPS.

Don't forget! If you're interested in participating in the Museum of Natural Science field trip on December 6th, 2003 to make reservations with John Hays by November 21st.

JACKSON, MS 39210
 Box 150307
 Millsaps College
 c/o Dr. Debora Mann
 MISSISSIPPI NATIVE
 PLANT SOCIETY, INC.

