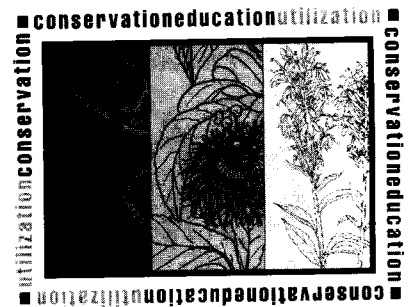


MISSISSIPPI NATIVE P.L.A.N.T.S

The Newsletter of the Mississippi Native Plant Society, Inc.

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Fall, 2003



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.

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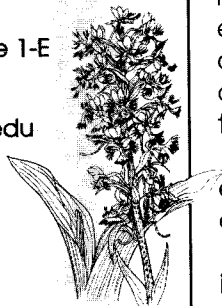
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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Mississippi Native Plant Society, Inc.

After 23 years of being organized, the Mississippi Native Plant Society has finally received incorporated status from the Mississippi Secretary of State. Hopefully, this will pave the way for the Society to become a 501-C-3 organization with the Internal Revenue Service. With this tax status, MNPS will then be able to solicit funds through grants to be able to support worthy environmental programs in the state.

Bob Brzuszek, Fearless Leader

Meet the New Editor!

Hello fellow weedwatchers! I'm Lynn Ashford and I'll be the newsletter editor until ya'll get sick of me and overthrow my reign! Some of you may already know me: I am former editor and publisher of *Loose Dirt* newsletter, and former associate editor of *Mississippi Gardener* magazine.

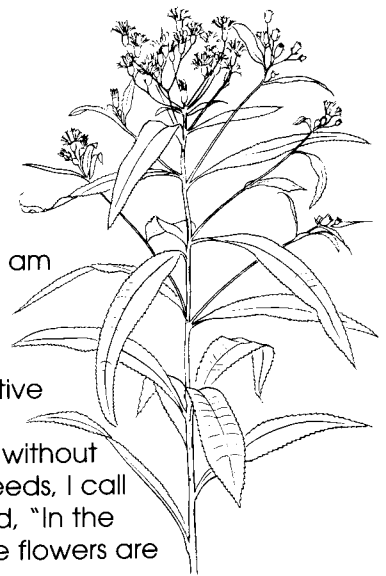
I have been a long-time advocate of native plants from the minute I noticed all the beauty that blooms in our roadside ditches without any pampering. Some people call them weeds, I call them wildflowers. Look for my column called, "In the Ditch" each issue to find out which roadside flowers are blooming that season.

With the participation of the knowledgeable board members, and all the society members who want to be heard, we can make our newsletter a valuable educational tool for those who are interested in learning more about the plants that make up our everyday lives.

I invite any and all of you to submit articles, topic ideas, events information, drawings, jokes, photographs, and personal stories to me at either of my addresses posted on the left. Of course, if you could see my desk you'd know that you run the risk of never seeing these materials again. But please, don't let that stop you! I want to hear what you have to say, and what type of information you want in your newsletter.

Existing and future State Chapter presidents and members are especially encouraged to send any information about their meetings or events of interest in their areas.

I'd like to mention that to date, there is only one State Chapter which is located on the Coast. If anyone is interested in starting one in their corner of the state, please contact Bob for more information.



Perennials to Beautify Wetland Gardens

by Bob Brzuszek

Do crawfish mounds dot your lawn like a miniature Stonehenge? Do you have to wear boots just to go to the garage? Can you fish from your back deck? Then you, my friend, live in a wetland.

In the old days, people would bring in truckloads of soil just to get their yards above sea level. Not only does this interrupt the drainage patterns, it doesn't help shrubs and trees to grow better.

One way to garden in a wetland is to go with the flow and plant a wealth of beautiful wetland perennials. These hardy natives can sail through droughts

and floods and provide a bouquet of blooms. Most prefer wet, boggy sites and full sun, and perform best in acidic, pineland soils.

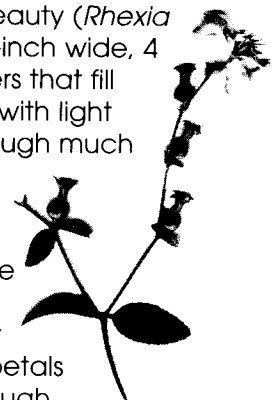
Stokesia laevis (Stoke's Aster) is an excellent small evergreen perennial with long, elliptical, dark-green leaves that reach 12 inches long. Bright, sky-blue flowers reach 3 inches across and bloom heavily for periods in early summer. Stoke's Aster tolerates wet soils, even standing water, although it grows well in drier conditions. It does best in sun but also grows in filtered shade. Like most plants of our region, it has few problems with insects or disease.

Stoke's readily lends itself as a clean looking groundcover since it self-sows and divides easily, and is an excellent border plant. Stoke's Aster combines well with many perennials including Meadow Beauty (*Rhexia sp.*), Tickseed (*Coreopsis sp.*) and Louisiana Iris (*Iris sp.*). *Stokesia* cultivars include the white 'Silver Moon', dark-blue 'Blue Danube', and the upright and long-blooming 'Peachie Saxon'.



Another summer-blooming perennial that is found in bog soils is *Balduina uniflora*. This plant performs best in moist soils and can be planted in wet meadows. Tall, showy, butter-yellow daisy flowers (up to 3 inches across) sit atop stems that reach 4 feet high in August and September. One of the interesting features of this plant is the hard, honey-combed seed stalks that persist through the winter and are used in dried flower arrangements. *Balduina* combines well with the lavenders of Blazing Star (*Liatris sp.*) and Swamp Thistle (*Cirsium sp.*).

Meadow Beauty (*Rhexia sp.*) displays 2-inch wide, 4 petalled flowers that fill the roadsides with light pink color through much of summer. Bright yellow stamens are elbowed at the end and contrast nicely with the pink petals from June through October. Meadow Beauty exhibits delicate, slender square stems that



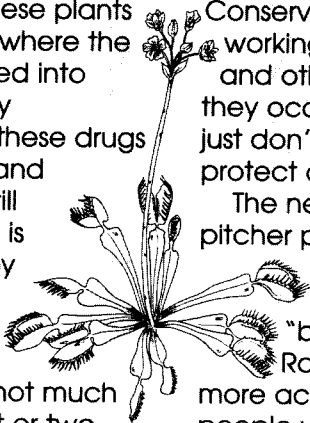
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Villains and Criminals...

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Finally, preserve managers throughout the USA report incidents of illegal plant poaching. We do not know just who is doing this poaching. Much of this might be by companies that are smuggling these plants overseas to factories where the rhizomes are converted into human and veterinary medicines. Although these drugs are mostly untested, and unproven, sales are still high! Some poaching is probably also done by hobbyists who usually take "just a plant or two." Unfortunately, there are sometimes not much more than just a plant or two left at many of our sites!

I doubt pitcher plants will ever go extinct - there is too much horticultural interest for that to happen. Even if every wetland in the USA were ditched, many plants would still be in public and



private collections around the world. But the beauty of our nation's natural riches are being drained. We need more work like that done by organizations such as Crosby Arboretum, The Nature Conservancy, and others that are working to protect pitcher plants and other rare organisms where they occur. Zoos and greenhouses just don't have the room to protect all we must save.

The next time you see those pitcher plants, ruthlessly hunting their prey in the wild, remember they are not "botanical criminals." Rather, that title could be more accurately used for those people who continue to ditch our few remaining wetlands.

Barry Rice is the Director of Conservation Programs for the International Carnivorous Plant Society (ICPS). Their web site is www.carnivorousplants.org

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reach up to 2 feet in height and provide a bright accent to meadow gardens. Another interesting feature of this plant is the hard, brown, vase-shaped ovaries that persist through the winter. It is susceptible to leaf spot, but it doesn't injure the plant. For best effect, plant Meadow Beauty with Swamp Sunflower (*Helianthus angustifolius*) and St. John's wort (*Hypericum sp.*).

The odd-shaped flowers of pipewort (*Eriocaulon decangulare*) look exactly like an old-fashioned ladies' hat pin with a hard, white, button flower on a single long stem. The flower heads are produced in early summer and remain on the plant until late fall. This bog species has narrow, linear foliage that only reaches several inches in length and emerges from a basal rosette. Pipewort combines well with plants such as scouring rush (*Equisetum hyemale*) and carnivorous pitcher plants (*Sarracenia alata*).

A perennial that does not fail to produce a pleasing cluster of blooms from April to October, even in the most severe summer heat, is 'Profusion' Daisy Fleabane (*Erigeron sp.*). Yes, this plant is known for its frequent roadside appearances and should not be underestimated. A mat-forming plant that only reaches 10 inches in height. Small white petals with yellow centers cover the plant and mature to a rich pink blush. An individual plant will spread to 18 inches wide. 'Profusion' Fleabane is particularly effective as a groundcover when planted with moss verbena (*Verbena tenuisecta*) or Stoke's Aster.

Another perennial that blooms for most of the year is *Guara lindheimeri*. This dainty, lace-like wildflower only stops blooming during freezes. Airy white flowers float above thin stems that reach 5



Can you fish from your back deck? Then you, my friend, live in a wetland.

feet high. The flowers open in the morning and close by mid-afternoon. This plant will attract butterflies and bees, and should be planted in full sun. Good cultivars include, 'Dauphine', 'The Bride', and 'Siskyu Pink'. The detailed flowers of *Guara* stand out when planted next to black-eyed Susan (*Rudbeckia fulgida*), red salvia (*Salvia coccinea*), and Blazing Star.

For unique foliage color, consider the silver sheen of Silk Grass (*Pityopsis graminifolia*). This grassy perennial reaches only 6 inches tall and looks best when planted en masse. With the short height of the foliage and flowers, it should be planted toward the front of garden beds in sun. Small, yellow, daisy flowers appear on Silk Grass in October and last until mid-November. The silver foliage stands out nicely against ferns and native ginger (*Hexastylis sp.*), and display nicely through the year until the first hard frost.

Many wetland grasses offer attractive ornamental qualities through the year. One of these is Blue Sedge (*Carex glaucescens*), a wetland grass with an attractive blue cast to the leaves. Its spiky blue foliage is evergreen and reaches 3 feet in height in a fountain-like form. Interesting flower spikes appear in mid-June with male flowers forming above dangling female ovaries. The large seeds persist through the winter and offer an intriguing display. It performs best in wet soils and sun. The fine, blue, linear foliage of Blue Sedge combines well with plants in the Compositae, such as *Balduina*, tickseed and black-eyed Susan.

A more diminutive wetland grass is Spikerush (*Eleocharis equisetoides*). This tufted perennial grass reaches only 6 inches in height and has fine, wiry, dark-green leaves. It adapts to wet soils and is effective as a groundcover, or accent plant in shallow pools. This combines well with other small plants, such as Parrot's Pitcher Plant (*Sarracenia psittacina*), Sundews (*Drosera brevifolia*), or Butterworts (*Pinquicula sp.*).

If you don't have a wet, soggy, sunny area for these plants - try them in roadside ditches, at the base of gutter drains, or in shallow pool areas. As usual, they are nearly impossible to obtain from most garden centers, so look for them on the web.



In the Ditch by Lynn Ashford

The ditch is a great place to see wildflowers and fall is a great season to look for them. Here are some clues for a quick look at 70 mph:

- Ironweed (tall, purple)
Vernonia gigantea
- Cardinal Flower (medium, red)
Lobelia cardinalis
- Narrow-leaf Sunflower (tall, yellow)
Helianthus angustifolius
- Joe Pye Weed (tall, lavender)
Eupatoriadelphus fistulosus
- Meadow Beauty (short, pink)
Rhexia mariana or *altifanus*
- Gerardia (short, pink)
Agalinis sp.
- Beggar Ticks (medium, yellow)
Bidens aristosa
- Salt Bush (tall, frothy white)
Baccharis halimifolia
- Bolton's Aster (medium, white)
Boltonia diffusa
- Mullein (tall, yellow)
Verbascum thapsus

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
- Individual or Family: \$10.00
- Sustaining: \$15
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- Life: \$125.00
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Please return this form with check to:
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 c/o Dr. Debora Mann
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The **Gulf Coast Chapter of the Mississippi Native Plant Society, Inc.** meets every 4th Monday at various locations near Gulfport. For more information contact president, Edle Dreher at 228-864-2775 or mail to 100 24th St., Gulfport, MS 39507.

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



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