



# Mississippi Native Plants and Environmental Education

Newsletter of The Mississippi Native Plant Society and the Mississippi Environmental Education Alliance



Volume 24 Issue 3

Autumn is a second spring when every leaf is a flower. ~Albert Camus

Fall, 2006

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

## MNPS Board of Directors

President: Marc Pastorek  
marcpastorek@bellsouth.net  
Tel: 504-296-8162

Vice-President: Joe McGee  
19496 Highway 80  
Hickory, MS 39332

Secretary/Treasurer:  
Dr. Debora Mann  
mandl@millsaps.edu

Education Chair:  
Dr. John Guyton  
jguyton@cfr.msstate.edu

Trips Chair: Gail Barton  
lgbarton@gmail.com

The Mississippi Environmental Education Alliance promotes environmental education, supports the work of environmental educators and encourages the adoption of earth-friendly lifestyles leading to the sustainability of natural resources.

## MEEA Board of Directors

President: Matthew Miller  
matthew\_miller@tnc.org

Past President: Barbara Dorr  
b\_dorr@bellsouth.net

Secretary: John DeFillipo  
lizardking700@yahoo.com

Treasurer: Pam Williams  
pamshopwilliams@netscape.net

Newsletter Editors: Peggy & John Guyton, pegguyton@bellsouth.net  
Peggy 662-327-6761, cell 228-324-3136; John work 662-325-3482, cell 228-324-4233

## MS Native Plant Society to Meet October 7 in Jackson

### THE SPEAKERS:

**Dr. Charles Allen** will share many samples of the Gulf Coast's most delectable delicacies. Charles is cofounder with Malcom Vidrine of the Cajun Prairie Habitat Preservation Society, a nonprofit group that has been actively preserving the diversity of the Louisiana Coastal Prairie. He has written or assisted in writing *The Grasses of Louisiana, Trees, Shrubs, and Woody Vines of Louisiana, Edible Plants of the Gulf South, Mamou* (Acadian Folklore, Natural History, and Botany of the Mamou Plant, *Erythrina herbacea* L. Fabaceae), and most recently the *Wildflowers of Louisiana*.

**Gail Barton** of Meridian, Mississippi and **Peter Loos** of Cherino, Texas will discuss propagating good natives. Gail Barton has spent over twenty years as Horticulture instructor at the Meridian Community College. She and husband Richard Lowery operated Flowerplace Plant Farm in the 1990's because they liked to grow good plants. Gail teaches propagation of some of the more desirable natives. She has also authored a must-have book called *Basic Gardening, A Guide for the South*. Peter and his wife Cassandra operate Ecovirons, a native plant nursery and landscape construction business. Ecovirons designs and installs wetland and prairie projects as well as urban specialty gardens. Peter is an avid highway botanist and his truck makes frequent stops. He is past president of the Native Plant Society of Texas.

**Bob Brzuszek** will share with us some techniques for using Mississippi natives in our landscapes. Bob, a former president of MNPS and senior curator of the Crosby Arboretum is currently teaching Landscape Design at Mississippi State University. Bob has that rare combination of academic and practical hands-on knowledge and the ability to convey it.

**Dr. John Guyton**, with the MSU Dept of Wildlife and Fisheries, will offer a session he describes as Fun With Plants where he will share a plethora of uses, fun facts and interesting tidbits. John is on a quest for useful and fun facts about plants stating he believes this knowledge is key to engaging youth and adults in the outdoors.

**WHEN:** We will start registration at 8:30, Speakers will begin at 9:00 and go to noon. After lunch we will have two speakers, a business meeting and probably a field trip.

**ABOUT LUNCH,** you can get a full meal at the campus cafeteria (\$8.40), head to a nearby restaurant or bring your own and mingle with the speakers and members. We will have coffee and pastries. We will be plant swapping in margins (before, during lunch & later).

### PLANT SWAP ELECTIONS AUTHOR'S TABLE PLANT SWAP

**DIRECTIONS:** The meeting will be held in the Leggett Special Events Center located in the Boyd Campbell College Center at Millsaps College.

**Directions to Millsaps:** From I-55, take Woodrow Wilson Drive, Exit 98A, to the second light and turn left on North State Street. Millsaps College is on the right at 1701 North State Street. There are three wheelchair-accessible entrances to the College from State Street. In order on your right as you head south they are: 1) Riverside Drive. Park near Olin Hall. From the walkway between Olin Hall and the Hall Activities Center, the Campbell College Center will be ahead to the left of the fountain. 2) Whitworth Circle (limited number of parking spaces) The Campbell Center will be straight ahead through "the bowl." 3) Park Avenue. Park under the Ford Academic Complex on your right. Ascend the outdoor stairs or take the elevator to the first floor of the Academic Complex and exit through the glass doors. The Campbell Center will be ahead and to your left. For a map of the College, go to: [http://www.millsaps.edu/get\\_to\\_know/map.shtml](http://www.millsaps.edu/get_to_know/map.shtml)

## ***Dear MEEA Members,***

I hope everyone has been enjoying summertime activities. While things have been quiet on the surface, work has been ongoing in several areas. Several applications have been received for the MEEA grants program. Decisions on these applications will be made at the upcoming Board meeting on August 22<sup>nd</sup>.

Work has begun on the planning for this year's MEEA conference. More details will follow in the weeks to come. A conference theme focused on water quality has been proposed along with a potential site, Plymouth Bluff Center in Columbus.

There are also opportunities to nominate teachers, administrators, EE professionals and volunteers for MEEA's environmental education awards. With the upcoming conference and annual meeting it's time to nominate new Board members and officers. Joining the Board is a great way to become more involved with MEEA.

MEEA has been working with the other southeastern states and now has a web site. Check it out at [www.southeastee.org](http://www.southeastee.org). Best regards, Matthew

## ***What's a Prairie? by MNPS President Marc Pastorek***

A prairie is a grassland habitat made up of a mix of grasses and native wildflowers with a sparse representation of trees and shrubs. Prairies are usually located in specific soil types that turn mucky-gooey when wet and crumbly-clumpy when dry. The soils generally have a high consistency of clay. Prairie plants are perfectly adapted to these soils. Many prairie remnants exist in Mississippi. There are bits and pieces of Blackland Prairies in the northeast corner of the state and there are remnant prairies in the midsection of the state (Jackson Prairie). South of Hattiesburg the soils change to very poor red clay, supporting another grassland habitat commonly called the pine savanna. Webster describes savanna as "a grassland region with scattered trees grading into either open plain or woodland." A major historical influence common to these grass systems was fire. Fire occurred every few years either through intentional means (Native Americans) or through natural means (lightning). Woody plants are suppressed by this fire regimen while the herbaceous plants are stimulated to grow lushly. Farming and the lack of fire dealt the prairies a poor hand. They are now one of the most threatened ecosystems in North America.

Prairie remnants are not hard to locate. They are usually found at the edge of roadways and railroad rights of ways or on slopes that were for whatever reason not plowed or grazed. Indicator plants such as *Liatris*, *Baptisias*, *Rattlesnake Buttonroot*, *Silphiums*, *Eastern Gamma grass*, *Switch grass*, *Indian grass*, *Big Bluestem grass*, *Little Bluestem grass* and *Thin Leafed Bluestem grass* make finding remnants easy once the visual image is programmed into the eye of the remnant hunter. Usually when you find a few of these species, you've found remnants of a high quality grassland. In my experience when a tiny identifiable remnant is found, another, with slightly different species make-up might be found nearby. And the search goes on.

I live in the piney woods of Pearl River County where savannas are common and prairies are not. But there is a site not far from my house where prairie plants grow along with savanna plants. It's possibly a blend of both ecosystems and it's been a good seed bank for me in my propagation efforts. Most late succession wildflowers and grasses are highly desirable garden ornamentals. Locally collected seed is the only way to proceed if one's interest is native wildflowers. A rule of thumb for collecting native seed is to collect no more than twenty percent of the seed in an area. Most desirable native wildflowers and grasses are easy to grow. Collect the seed when ripe and sow in a well drained growing medium immediately after harvest. Transplant these into small nursery cups (I use four inch size). Then transplant these into the wildflower patch when they have filled out the container. This is a way of managing your seed per plant ratio better. Or, simply harvest seed and sow in a well tilled site in November. Seedlings will winter over just fine. Leave threatened or endangered species to the more experienced propagator or just enjoy those plants in their natural habitat. You may want to save a grassland habitat like Dr. Richard Brown is doing in Starkville. He acted on an opportunity to prevent the Osborne prairie from further destruction. He actively solicits donations to pay the lease so that his entomology students have a place to conduct research.

MNP&EE is the newsletter of the Mississippi Native Plant Society and the Mississippi Environmental Education Alliance. MNP EE is a quarterly publication.

### **Deadlines for Articles**

Winter (Dec - Feb) - November 15  
Spring (March - May) - February 15  
Summer (June - August) - May 15

## ***Interested in Seeing a Prairie?***

On November 4, the Mississippi Native Plant Society will host a field trip to see prairie remnants in Bienville National Forest. The largest of these remnants is Harrell Prairie located near I-20 in Forest, Mississippi. The 150 acre Harrell Prairie Hill Botanical Area has been described as "an island of natural grassland surrounded by forest". Harrell Prairie is the largest example of Jackson Prairie (a type of Black Belt Prairie) in Bienville National Forest. Additional details can be obtained at the MNPS October meeting or by contacting Gail Barton at 601-481-5440 (cell) or [gail@gailbarton.com](mailto:gail@gailbarton.com).

## ***Propagation Quiz by Gail Barton, Horticulture Faculty at MCC***

You have discovered a rare yellow berried possumhaw holly. Possumhaw (*Ilex decidua*) is a deciduous dioecious shrub that normally bears red fruit. Pick the true statements from the list below concerning methods you could use to propagate this plant while maintaining the yellow berried trait.

1. If you collected seed from the yellow berried holly, processed and planted them, the seedlings would all bear yellow berries.
2. If you collected seed from the yellow berried holly, processed and planted them, the seedlings would all bear fruit – some yellow and some red.
3. If you rooted a cutting or took a division of the yellow berried holly, all the plants could bear yellow fruit.

*Deciduous plants lose leaves in the winter. Dioecious plants have staminate (“male”) and pistillate (“female”) flowers on separate plants. In other words, there are girl hollies and boy hollies. Only a girl holly with a boyfriend close by can produce berries.*

Statement 1 is false. Most seed collected in the wild have 2 genetically different parents. Since yellow fruit is a rare (recessive) trait, the gene for that trait would probably be masked by the common (dominant) trait for red fruit. It is not likely that even a large seed lot would produce any yellow berried hollies.

Statement 2 is false. Since the seeds have 2 genetically different parents, some seedlings will be pistillate and capable of bearing fruit. Others will be staminate with flowers that simply donate pollen and fall off without maturing into berries. Roughly half the seedlings would bear fruit and it would probably all be red in color.

Statement 3 is true. Rooting cuttings or taking divisions are low-tech cloning methods. Every cutting you make or division you take will be a carbon copy of the parent. So, since the parent is pistillate and bears yellow fruit, all the seedlings will do the same IF a staminate holly is around to pollinate.

***Join Gail for her Propagation talk at the fall MNPS Meeting.  
Be sure to e-mail her suggestions for natives you would like to propagate!***

## ***Weeds & Wildflowers in Our Yard Part 2 by John and Peggy Guyton***

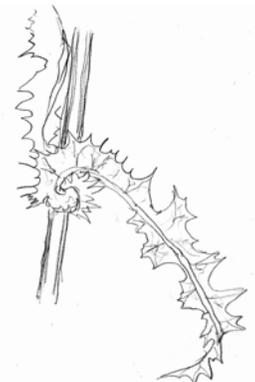
*“I spent the summer traveling. I got halfway across my backyard.” – Louis Agassiz*

Just after sending last edition of this newsletter to the printer we received notice I was being transferred to the Wildlife and Fisheries Department on Mississippi State’s campus, so we don’t live here anymore. However, since we have a number of stories worked up on our Ocean Springs yard we will continue to run them, for a while.

If you searched wildflower and weed books for the most unusual leaves your selections would certainly include the **Spiny Leaf Sow Thistle** (*Sonchus asper*). Now what possibly could have encouraged that twisted thorny adaptation? The, now herbicide resistant, plant has leaves and tops that can be eaten raw in a salad or cooked like spinach. The stems are edible, peeled and bruised with the bitter milky juice washed out. This plant was growing under our mail box and we are looking forward to seeing it again next year. Our neighbors are quite tolerant and do not complain while we are waiting for our unidentified wildflowers to bloom so we can identify them. When we pointed out the sow thistle’s leaves they were suitably impressed and agreed it was an interesting twist of nature!

The **Common Elderberry** (*Sambucus canadensis*) growing behind our compost pile in the shade of a water oak also has an interesting leaf. The leaves are opposite, pinnately compound, with 5 to 11 elliptical, serrate, 4 to 8 inches long leaflets. On many leaves the leaflets closest to where the petiole attaches to the stem have a piece of their blade missing and another small, but fully formed, leaflet occupying the gap! And, thanks to our avian planters we often have to remove elderberry from our flower beds!

MNPS member, Dr. Lelia Kelly, makes a wild salad for Bug Camp every year and often adds elderberry flowers, when she can find them. Eating flowers dates back to Roman times and they were used by the Chinese and Native Americans. Well, they are coming into vogue, again. The dried flowers make a pleasing tea. When we beat the birds to the fruit we will make some elderberry wine. Elderberry root activity is said to enhance the fermentation of a compost pile so I guess ours are located in a good place. The leaves and inner bark have been used as an insect repellent. A decoction made with 3 to 4 handfuls of leaves boiled in a quart of water then strained and allowed to cool is said to be effective against insects, leaf rot and powdery mildew. Having said that, I must quickly add that when we have brought elderberry inside it always has ants on it. It’s nectaries that secrete a sweet substance to attract ants that apparently comprise part of the elderberries defense strategy. The bark has been used to obtain a black dye. The easily hollowed out stems have been used as sap taps for sugar maple trees as well as for flutes and pea shooters. We often make whistles for neighbors - being careful to spray them with a polyurethane, just in case they are toxic, as has been reported. *To be continued...*



## A Naturalist's Guide to Weather Forecasting Part 2 by John Guyton, Ed.D.

We can increase the precision of our forecast by using barometric pressure and a chart developed by the National Weather Service. Digital weather stations that display a graph of the barometric pressure for the past 12 to 18+ hours, are very useful. Cold dry air is more dense, or heavier, and hugs the ground. Warm moist air is lighter. The barometer measures subtle changes in air pressure or the weight of the air. When the barometric pressure is falling (low pressure) warm moist air is moving into the area and when the barometer is rising (high pressure) cooler dryer air is foretold. High pressure can be thought of as a hill and low pressure as a trough or valley. Air, in general, flows from high pressure to low, as water would do. Rain is more often forecasted with the arrival of low pressure and high pressure is associated with clear days. To use the Forecaster Chart read the forecast where the wind direction (direction wind is coming from) and the barometric pressures and trend (rising or falling) intersect. Now we have two forecasting tools, changes in wind direction and barometric pressure.

Weather Forecaster Chart									
Minimum of 2 observations/day	N	NE	E	SE	S	SW	W	NW	
Barometer Falling	Above 30.2 falling slowly	Unsettled probably cloudy	Summer - light winds; Winter rain		Cloudy & warmer	Increasing clouds	Fair & warmer	Rising temp. & fair	
	Above 30.2 falling rapidly	Cloudy rain probably warmer	Rain, increasing winds		Cloudy & rain	Rain	Cloudy & warmer	Increasing clouds	Unsettled, rain if winds continue
	30.0 to 30.2 falling slowly	Unsettled probably cloudy	Rain or Snow		Rain & warmer		Unsettled warmer	Fair & warmer	Unsettled
	30.0 to 30.2 falling rapidly	Rain & colder	Increasing wind & rain		Increasing wind, rain & warmer	Increasing wind & rain	Rain & colder	Rain	Increasing cloudiness
	Below 30.0 falling slowly	Unsettled	Rain & cooler	Rain			Unsettled & cloudy	Unsettled	
	Below 30.0 falling rapidly	Severe gale, heavy rains; in winter cold wave		Severe storm, rain	Severe storm imminent	Stormy; in winter colder	Rain		Unsettled
Barometer Rising or Steady	Above 30.2 steady	No change or Continued Fair							
	Above 30.2 rising	Fair & cooler	Fair	Fair & cooler	Fair			Fair, much colder	
	30.0 - 30.2 steady	No change						Fair	
	30.0 - 30.2 Rising	Fair & cooler	Fair	Fair; colder in winter	Fair & warmer	Fair		Fair & cooler	
	Below 30.0 steady	No change							
	Below 30.0 Rising	Fair & cooler		Clearing then Fair				Fair & colder	

Pressure change in 12 hours: 0.2" and above is a rapid change; 0.05" to 0.2" is a slow change; 0" to .05" is considered steady.  
 Forecast begins 12 to 24 hours after observation. Barometric Pressure in inches of Hg.  
 Table from the National Weather Service

Winds are the product of the uneven heating of earth's surface and atmosphere. Air above areas heated by the sun, rises and spreads out causing areas of low pressure. This is like stepping onto a chair from the bathroom scales. Air is sucked into low pressure areas to replace the air that has risen causing wind. Air pulled into the low pressure area from the southwest is typically warm and moist and called a warm front. Air pulled in from the northwest is typically colder and dry and is referred to as a cold front. The ascending air twists in a counterclockwise direction as it rises, the result of the earth's spin on its axis. The jet stream, a band of high speed winds in the upper atmosphere moving from west to east, pulls low pressure areas along its path. What goes up must come down and when air has given up enough of its heat it begins to descend, spiraling down clockwise creating high pressure areas (stepping back down onto the bathroom scales). Barometers are useful in determining the approach of high and low pressure areas.

**Try This!**

Place a small glass jar of hot water with red food coloring in the bottom of an aquarium. A piece of plastic with a few holes in it secured over the top of the bottle with a rubber band will allow the warm red water to rise to the surface spreading out just as warm air rises and spreads out.

Record Keeping – By now, you should be making good forecasts and it is time to start keeping records. Use a weather chart, similar to the one included. In the note box record the accuracy of each forecast and think about how you can improve your accuracy. As your skill in forecasting improves, compare your forecasts with a local meteorologist's.

A weather unit should be started early in the school year so there will be numerous warm fronts and cold fronts to study and a year to reinforce the learning. Encourage students to continually watch for shifts in the wind direction and barometric pressure changes. The direction of barometric pressure changes and the magnitude of the change are very important; how much did it rise, or fall, and how quickly.

Fronts form at the boundary of warm and cold air masses. Fronts usually arrive in pairs with the warm front preceding the cold. Fronts typically bring wet weather. As you monitor the passage of fronts watch for trends in temperature, pressure, wind direction, rain and cloud type and height.

Hot humid air is less dense, or lighter, than cold dry air. Hot air rises and flows over cooler dry more dense, or heavier, air. If you are reading carefully that likely sounds wrong, but it isn't. Humid air is lighter than dry air because the water molecule has a lower molecular weight than the nitrogen and oxygen in dry air. Further, hot air is also made less dense through thermal expansion (heated air rises, expands and spreads out).

#### Warm Fronts

- Warm air advances from the southwest rising over the cooler air in a wedge shape and pushing out the cooler air. As the warm air is forced up it expands, cools and moisture condenses into a liquid that often freezes into ice crystals forming cirrus clouds.
- As a warm front approaches the first clouds are very high cirrus, followed by lower altocumulus and altostratus. Rain comes from dark nimbostratus clouds. A warm front usually passes with light rain of long duration, often bringing a few warm days.

#### Cold Fronts

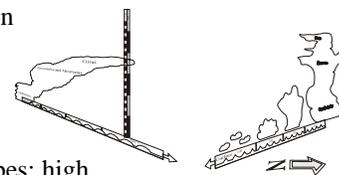
- Cold fronts move rapidly and warning is frequently only a few hours. Cumulus clouds rapidly grow in number and height becoming altocumulus, and are followed by dark bottomed cumulonimbus and thunderstorms.
- Cold fronts typically arrive from the northwest every 5 to 7 days during the winter.
- Cold fronts have greater energy and momentum due to their greater density.
- As the dense cold air pushes the warm moist air up the warm air expands, cools, moisture condenses, and precipitation occurs.

*Long Foretold Long Last, Short Notice Soon Will Pass*

#### Clouds

Watch the local weather forecast to determine when the next cold or warm front will be arriving – this is the time to begin teaching about clouds. Before the first tell-tale clouds arrive find a chart illustrating the clouds associated with the different fronts. Charts showing the clouds associated with warm and cold fronts are available in text books or on the Internet. Teachers should consider asking a handy parent to build models of cold and warm fronts for the outdoor classroom. Pictures and patterns are available from the author. Models of the fronts in the school garden serve as ongoing reinforcement as students monitor the weather. The warm and cold fronts are best arranged in the direction from which they typically arrive (warm fronts from the southwest and cold fronts from the northwest). Scale sticks for estimating cloud height and frontal speed across the ground and incorporating appropriate front symbols make the models more useful.

The high cirrus clouds preceding the warm front can be 4 days and 600 miles ahead of a slow, drizzly rain. Mounting cumulus clouds can foretell the rapid (1 to 4 hours) approach of a cold front and a hard, but short duration, rain. The old adage, "Long foretold, long last; short notice, soon will pass" is useful in remembering the type of precipitation associated with each front. Incorporating clouds observations into your forecasts gives you a third forecast technique.



Minimize the number of cloud names and master the basic forms (stratus, cumulus, cirrus and nimbus)

and the weather associated with each. Combinations of these terms result in more descriptive cloud types: high cirrus clouds - cirrus, cirrocumulus and cirrostratus; middle level clouds - altocumulus and altostratus; and low clouds - cumulus, stratocumulus, nimbostratus and stratus. The Internet contains many excellent photos and descriptions of cloud types so I have not elaborated on them here.

Lets Make a Cloud. Try these two demonstrations of cloud formation. The first involves a drop in pressure, the second cooling of warm moist air. Note, water vapor is invisible and liquid water is visible. Therefore, clouds are composed of liquid water.

- Pour a few ounces of water into a 5 gallon water bottle and shake to create a humid atmosphere. Drop a lighted match into the bottle to simulate the dust or smoke particles in the atmosphere. Clouds require water vapor and dust or smoke particles to form, hence the small dust spots on the car top after light showers. These small particles of dust are cooler than the surrounding atmosphere and cool the air around them condensing the moisture. Rain removes a lot of dust from the atmosphere. Drill a hole in the water bottle top and insert an air pump nozzle. Hold the top on the bottle to prevent it from popping off too quickly and pump it up, using a bicycle pump. When the top pops off, note the cloud that quickly fills the bottle. Replacing the top and increasing the pressure will cause the cloud to dissipate, typical of an approaching high pressure area.

- Drop a lighted match in a glass containing a half inch of hot water and quickly cover it with a bowl of ice. The bowl of ice will cool the air below causing the water vapor to condense into a cloud. Continue watching and water will collect on the bottom of the bowl and soon drip (rain). *To be continued.*

Weather Observations and Forecasts Chart											
Date/Day	Time	Temperature	Relative Humidity	Barometric Pressure & Trend	Wind Speed & Direction	Cloud Type	% Cloud Cover	Rainfall	Dew Point	Forecast	Notes

### ***Natives For Fall Color by Gail Barton, Horticulture Faculty at MCC***

Mississippi’s fall color can run the gamut from vivid and gaudy to downright drab. Coincidentally our autumn weather can vary from cool and dry to sweltering and rainy. You may hear a prediction that foliage color will be exceptionally brilliant, but the seer who makes such a prediction is likely nothing more than a weather watcher who knows that the most intense fall foliage colors develop in cool, dry, sunny weather.

To understand why fall color occurs, you should be aware that many of the colors such as the orange, yellow, and bronze shades that surface in fall are present year round. This is true for the orange pigment, carotene, which colors sugar maples and persimmons and the yellow or brown xanthophyll which tints tulip poplar and American beech. These colors are masked until the diminishing day length in autumn triggers the breakdown of chlorophyll, the green pigment seen during the growing season.

Another set of pigments, the anthocyanins, are formed in fall. These pigments are responsible for the red fall colors of black gum, flowering dogwood, and white oak. Anthocyanin intensity varies with the brightest colors forming in cool dry years. In warm climates like Mississippi some white oaks develop only tinges of red instead of turning solid red like their relatives in the north.

Careful plant selection can improve the odds for a colorful fall in your own yard. Medium or large trees like red maple, sugar maple, black gum, sassafras and hickory provide shade and fall color. Of the two maples, red maple (*Acer rubrum*) has a faster growth rate and fewer pest problems. Fall foliage of red maple can be yellow or red while sugar maple (*Acer saccharum*) changes to a vivid orange. Black gum (*Nyssa sylvatica*) is predictably red. Along with the orange persimmon, black gum is among the first to show fall color. Bright orange sassafras (*Sassafras albidum*) and shimmering gold hickories never fail to produce glowing colors in Mississippi’s natural areas.

In limited spaces, avoid planting large shade trees and add to your palette using colorful small trees or native shrubs. Granthuss graybeard (*Chionanthus virginicus*) is a small tree with drooping lacy white flower panicles in late spring. During autumn, leaves turn a beautiful golden yellow. Flowering dogwood (*Cornus florida*) is generally planted for its white spring flowers. In the fall the tree also tints the landscape with its red, orange and yellow leaves. I am lucky to have an abundance of Devil’s Walking-stick (*Aralia spinosa*) on my property. As the name might indicate, Devil’s Walking-stick has wicked thorns on the trunk. Because of these thorns, Devil’s Walking-stick should be sited away from garden paths and other high traffic areas. In spite of the thorns, I enjoy the large fluffy white clouds of late summer flowers. The flowers mature into dark purple berry-like fruit that contrasts well with the golden fall foliage.

If you’re creating a new planting, Devil’s Walking-stick is not likely to be found in your local garden center. You will be likely to find Virginia willow (*Itea virginica*) and oakleaf hydrangea (*Hydrangea quercifolia*) for sale. Both of these native shrubs add an unusual wine red shade to the October landscape and contribute white flowers to late spring gardens.

The prize for best fall fruit display goes to another pair of native shrubs. I take great delight in beautyberry’s iridescent magenta berries and glowing yellow leaves. Beautyberry (*Callicarpa americana*) is scattered through my back shade garden but its pioneer nature also allows it to grow in sunny spots at the edge of the woods. Our native euonymus (*Euonymus americanus*) is known by many names such as Hearts A’ Busting, Wahoo, Brook Euonymus or Strawberry Bush. Wahoo has a hot pink warty fruit that splits to expose orange berry-like seed. Fall leaves are an unusual strawberry pink.

Fall color can be planned into a landscape despite Mississippi's penchant for Indian summers. If you feel deprived when you see pictures of a lustrous New England autumn, consider that European native trees seldom have fall color. In fact, Europeans overlook the litter problems and frequently plant one of our least cherished native trees, the sweet gum.

## ***MNPS MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL AND OFFICER ELECTIONS***

Look at the expiration date on your address label to see when your membership expires, and please renew. Of course, life members can skip over these notices and never worry about missing a newsletter, notices of meetings or our famous plant swaps. It is time for officer elections so send your nominations to Bob Brzuszek, nominations committee chair, rbrzuszek@lalc.msstate.edu or give him a call at 662-325-7896. The positions include: President, Vice President, Secretary-Treasurer and Newsletter Editor.

## ***Authors Table at October Meeting***

Members, bring your check books. Mississippi is blessed with a plethora of truly outstanding garden writers and we are hoping they will bring their most recent and favorite oldies to autograph and sell during our October meeting.

## ***Fall 2006 Native Plant Events*** **Note: MNPS Events Highlighted.** Please send us a reports if you attend one.

- Aug. 19-20** Day of Lily and Orchid, Fort Polk, Louisiana (cajunprairie.org)
- Aug. 26** Cajun Prairie Remnant and Restoration Site Tours (cajunprairie.org)
- Sept. 9** Butterflies with Vitaly Charny at Coleman Lake, Talledega National Forest (Alabama Wildflower Society)
- Sept. 16** Tour of Talladega Nat Forest Shoal Creek District (Alabama Wildflower Society)
- Sept 29-Oct 1** Fall Meeting of the Alabama Wildflower Society, Contact Becky Graham bcg@uwa.edu or 205-652-3804.
- Sept. 30** Little River Canyon Hike (Alabama Wildflower Society)
- Oct. 7** **Mississippi Native Plant Society meeting - Jackson, Mississippi**
- Oct. 10-13** 5<sup>th</sup> Eastern Native Grass Symposium - Harrisburg, Pa. Tel:717-237-2210
- Oct. 19** Native Plant Society of Texas meeting - San Antonio, Texas
- Oct. 21** Little River Canyon Nature Walk: Native American Medicine (Alabama Wildflower Society)
- Nov. 4** **MNPS Tour of Bienville National Forest Prairies (30 minutes east of Jackson @ Forest, Ms)**

## ***Alabama Wildlife Society Meeting Close to Mississippi, in the Prairie***

Just over the state line from Meridian, the newly established Sumter County Chapter of the Alabama Wildflower Society will host its fall meeting on September 29 - October 1 in Livingston. Interested MNPS or MEEA members are invited to attend. Registration for the meeting will be at the President's House on The University of West Alabama (UWA) campus Friday evening. On Saturday participants will travel to Old Bluffport to see a natural prairie habitat. For more information contact Becky Graham at bcg@uwa.edu or 205-652-3804.

The UWA and the City of Livingston are working to establish a Black Belt Regional Museum that will focus on the cultural and natural history of the Black Belt Prairie. If you attend the meeting, you'll probably have a chance to check out UWA's 17 acre Blackland Prairie Restoration Project. The Restoration Project will serve as an exhibit and will feature prominently in the natural history programs of the Black Belt Regional museum. According to Dr. Richard Holland, Botanist and President of UWA, The Nature Conservancy has plans to establish a large Blackland Prairie Heritage area in Western Alabama as well.

## ***MEEA is on the World Wide Web... at last... Congratulations!***

Through the efforts of John DeFillipo, John Guyton and Kim Bailey with the Georgia Department of Natural Resources and an EPA grant MEEA has a presence on the Internet. The southern states affiliated with NAAEE have been discussing how to better work together and this web presence was our first project. Kim is due a special "thank you" for her vision and leadership role in the southeast EE community. **Now, we need your ideas on how to make this site useful.** Check out the Internet sites of the southeastern states, including Mississippi's, at [www.southeaste.org](http://www.southeaste.org) and the types of information available on their sites. Give Matthew Miller, John DeFillipo or John Guyton a shout and let them know what they can put on our website that you would use on a regularly.

