



Mississippi Native Plants and Environmental Education



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

Volume 27 Number 1 *The trees know when the sun crosses the equator, just watch them and they will tell you... JWG* Spring 2009

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

MNPS Board of Directors

President: Gail Barton
Tel: 601-483-3588
e-mail lgarton@comcast.net

Vice-President: Dr. Tim Schauwecker
Tel: 662-325-7895
tjs2@msstate.edu

Secretary/Treasurer: Dr. Debora Mann
mann1@millsaps.edu

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

Trips Chairs: Hilary Shughart
shughart@watervalley.net
Tel: 662-816-3459
Pat Drackett
drackett@ext.msstate.edu
601-799-2311

The **Mississippi Environmental Education Alliance** promotes EE, 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

Interim President: Cynthia Harrell
cbharrell@nemcc.edu

President Elect: Open

Past President: John DeFillipo

MEEA Mini-Grants Coordinator:
Matthew Miller
matthew_miller@tnc.org

Secretary: Angel Rohnke
angel.rohnke@mmns.state.ms.us

Treasurer: Pam Williams
pamshopwilliams@netscape.net

MNPS & MEEA Newsletter Editors:
Peggy & John Guyton; Peggy's cell
228-324 3136; John's work 662-325-
3482, cell 228-324-4233

From "A Winter Walk" by Henry David Thoreau

In winter, nature is a cabinet of curiosities, full of dried specimens, in their natural order and position. The meadows and forests are a *hortus siccus*. The leaves and grasses stand perfectly pressed by the air without screw or gum, and the birds' nests are not hung on an artificial twig, but where they built them. We go about dry-shod to inspect the summer's work in the rank swamp, and see what a growth have got the alders, the willows, and the maples; testifying to how many warm suns, and fertilizing dews and showers. See what strides their boughs took in the luxuriant summer, – and anon these dormant buds will carry them onward and upward another span into the heavens.

2008 MEEA Award Winners

Individual Award: - John DeFillipo - For leadership with MEEA and professional work in hands-on environmental education. **Organizational Awards:**

Long time MEEA member and supporter Keep Corinth Beautiful (KCB), leading the Corinth community towards improvement in waste reduction, litter prevention, beautification and recycling. KCB was represented by

Andrea Rose. The Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality was recognized for long-time leadership and active involvement with environmental education throughout Mississippi. The award was presented to Laura Beiser. The Natural Resources Initiative of North Mississippi was recognized for creatively addressing natural resource protection and sustainable economic development. Represented by Larry Jarrett.



MDEQ Receives EE Award by Laura Cook Beiser

The Mississippi Environmental Education Alliance (MEEA) honored MDEQ with the "2008 Organization Award for Outstanding Service to Environmental Education" during a key-note speaker banquet at Eagle Ridge Conference Center in Raymond on November 14, 2008.

MDEQ was recognized for their outstanding leadership role and sponsorship of environmental education programs which are active throughout Mississippi.

New River Boat Tours for Students among Successful MDEQ Education Programs. The MDEQ Nonpoint Source Pollution Program is now sponsoring a new educational program called "Mississippi River Tours." Students take a boat ride from the Vicksburg waterfront into the Mississippi and Yazoo Rivers while a speaker uses maps of the two watersheds to inform students about land and water use, polluted runoff, terrestrial and aquatic wildlife ecology, and water quality. Other successful MDEQ programs include: Adopt A Stream; *Watershed Harmony Musical Puppet Theater*, which reached over 8,000 students in 2008; Marking storm drains with the message "Dump No Waste, Drains to River;" and statewide water model distribution for school and event presentations.

MNPS 2009 Annual Meeting in the Estuary by John Guyton

We are returning to the coast for our annual meeting. The completion of the Grand Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve's center presents a great opportunity to get into the pitcher plant bogs, the Pascagoula River, etc. We are planning a two-day event with great field trips, a bonfire on the beach and entertaining speakers. What we need are some numbers to work with. Please contact me ASAP if you think you may be attending. We hope to organize some caravans, rent some vans and arrange for field trips on the way to the conference!

Field Trips and Other Events

- January 24 - May 24, 2009 - **Sustainable Choices** exhibit at the MS Museum of Natural Science
- February 14 - **Native Plant Sale at the Crosby Arboretum and the Clinton Community Nature Center**
Squirrel hunt for children who have not hunted before and a parent. Registration required. Contact John Guyton 665-325-3482
- Late March - **Buttahatchie River Bluffs** Hike with Matthew Miller, The Nature Conservancy*
<http://www.nature.org/wherewework/northamerica/states/mississippi/preserves/art17272.html>
- Early April - **Coldwater River Nature Trail System** (Arkabutla) with Larry Jarrett* www.desotogreenways.org.
- April 4th Robin Whitfield will be doing a *Nature Journaling Workshop* at the Noxubee National Wildlife Refuge.
- Early May - **Baker's Pond**, the source of the Wolf River, Holly Springs National Forest with Larry Jarrett*
<http://www.flickr.com/photos/62198702@N00/403560262>
- May 9 - Lucas Majure to lead Chunky River Canoe Trip a 2-3 hours float Contact Gail Barton 601-483-3588, lgbarton@comcast.net
- May 16 - **Strawberry Plains Audubon Center Native Plant Sale**
- May 31 - June 4 - MSU Wildlife and Fisheries **Wetland Ecosystems Intergenerational Camp** (adults and youth)**
- June 14 - 19 - MSU **Entomology and Plant Intergenerational Camp****
- June 28 - July 2 - MSU Wildlife and Fisheries Dept. **Uplands Ecosystems Intergenerational Camp****

* For more information on these field trips, contact: Hilary Shughart 662 816-3459, shughart@watervalley.net

** For more information contact, Dr. John Guyton, jguyton@cfr.msstate.edu or 662-325-3482

Watch the EEinMississippi, <http://bigcypressoutdoorclub.wikispaces.com>, www.clintonnaturecenter.org,
<http://www.crosbyarboretum.msstate.edu/calendars> for additional field trips and other events.

Dear MNPS, As I write we are barely a month into the new year. It is still the dormant season, but even on the harshest Mississippi winter day, we are never far from the cusp of spring. Winter is my favorite time to woods-walk. I don't have to watch for ticks or snakes. I enjoy the subtle bark textures, the garnet partridge berries and chartreuse mosses. The low slanting winter sun sparkles off the magnolia leaves. When I walk beneath the bare arching branches, a sense of peace descends on me. I hope that you too are enjoying a wonderful Mississippi winter.

I regret to have missed the early January field trip to South Mississippi. From all reports, it was a good one, thanks to Marc Pastorek's ability to devise a "Plan B." We have several field trip offerings in the coming months. We are sending this newsletter out early so that you have time to make plans. After all – Spring is also an entertaining time to wander around and commune with nature. I do love to watch the buds break!

- Our organization seems to have broken dormancy as well. Membership has grown and we have some exciting projects cooking.
- Marc Pastorek is working on the content of the **MNPS Web Site**. The url will be www.MSnativeplants.org. We will send out an e-mail alert when the site is up and running. Our goals are to have a newsletter archive, a current events listing, a photo gallery with images of field trips and native plants. We will also have links to our sister organizations and other appropriate sites. If anyone has photos of field trips, native plants, etc., forward them to me at lgbarton@gmail.com. I am compiling and editing some images.
- Dr. John Guyton is busy planning our **MNPS Fall 2009 Annual Meeting**. John describes our early thoughts in this newsletter. We will meet in the extreme southeastern corner of Mississippi. This will be quite a drive, so John will try to arrange lodgings for those who register early for the 2-day event. I have coordinated the last two meetings, and I ask you kindly to register early so that we can better plan this meeting. If anyone has ideas regarding speakers, topics or field trip sites, please drop me an e-mail.

As for your Pres, I am happy to assist the talented and capable Mr. Pastorek and Dr. Guyton in these endeavors. I look forward to another month of winter woods walking. I'm frantically trying to get those last few nursery plants in the ground. But... I will take a break for a field trip. I hope to see you there in the near future. – **Sincerely, Gail Barton, MNPS President**

I'm inspired!!! I woke up at 2:30 this morning. Thoughts were swirling around in my head, and I knew I wouldn't be going back to sleep any time soon. I wanted to get things down on paper, so I got up and came on into Crow's Neck. This place, the important work we do and the people I share my professional life with inspire me!

Take Ken Finch... our keynote speaker at the 2008 MEEA Conference in November. He believes that mentoring kids in nature – early and often – will help create an outdoor ethic in young people who have become less and less attached to the natural world. Aren't we lucky, as environmental educators, that we are in just the right place, at just the right time, to be this kind of mentor? It's easy! It's our business! It's WHAT we do!

And then there's the RELC... a bi-annual gathering of the Residential Environmental Learning Center directors. It was held at beautiful Camp McDowell (AL) a week ago. For five days we went on field trips, attended tailor-made 'Open Space' educational sessions, played music and sang, and shared so many, many experiences, ideas and 'tricks of the trade.' I always return from these gatherings totally pumped up with my batteries re-charged.

And, of course, there's MEEA... our own environmental education alliance teaming with people from across the state with various backgrounds and from multiple agencies, associations and educational institutions. MEEA members bring years of experience to the organization. What a plethora of talent, skills and abilities!

So, Colleagues, kids need us. We need each other. Let us continue to inspire each other so we can inspire them!

Cynthia Harrell MEEA president; Cynthia currently serves on the ANCA Board of Directors and has been the executive director of Crow's Neck Environmental Education Center since 2002.

The Most Successful Conservation Program in the History of the World

by Dr. John Guyton, MSU Dept. of Wildlife and Fisheries (based on the writings and talks of S. Mahoney and V. Geist)

Colonial Americans thought wildlife was an endless bounty to be taken at will, and wildlife was severely depleted for survival and profit, eventually resulting in the extinction of several species. The restoration of wildlife in North America is a phenomenal environmental success story that united hunting and conservation in a unique and very successful model.

Early visionaries in the wildlife conservation movement - Roosevelt, Grinnell, Pinchot, Muir and others - crafted a unique hunting regulation program, a key tenet of which was that wildlife belongs to the people, not land owners, as in Europe. The North American Model, that harbors wildlife as a scientifically managed, sustainable public resource, is unique on the planet. License fees and excise taxes, paid by hunters and anglers, are used to support law enforcement, research, habitat restoration and hunter education. Hunters and wildlife enthusiasts became our first environmental activists. Today, many species have recovered including white-tailed deer, wild turkeys, bald eagles and peregrine falcons. Many other species have also benefitted from habitat improvements. Hunting is not common in most countries due to their lack of a sustainable conservation program.

The collection of laws, regulations and policies known as ***The North American Model of Wildlife Conservation*** is a source of pride for all North Americans who value and enjoy hunting or watching wildlife, and wildlife is much more abundant today than it was a hundred years ago. However, the model requires continuing maintenance to sustain and protect it and keep it functioning properly. Hunters, naturalists, outdoor enthusiasts and academicians by their vote, participation and research support ethical hunting and the scientific management of wildlife, thus insuring the survival and sustainability of the resource. The model contains the following seven key tenets or pillars referred to as the Seven Sisters for Conservation.

1. **Wildlife is a Public Trust** - Wildlife is regarded as public property managed by the government. Domestication of wildlife would threaten its genetic diversity, increase the transportation of pathogens and parasites, increase the chance of diseases bridging to humans and livestock, reduce anti-predator adaptations and increase problems associated with domestic-wild interbreeding. By maintaining wildlife in the public commons, the national system of wildlife refuges, sanctuaries and treaties remain viable management tools with state and federal professionals managing and conserving them under public scrutiny. The concept of wildlife being a public resource dates at least back to Roman times and is referenced in the Bible.
2. **Game Cannot be Sold** - Selling dead game animals or parts and products is illegal. This has been an effective wildlife conservation policy. This eliminated the financial incentive for illegally killing and selling the public's wildlife and encouraged the enjoyment of wildlife for wildlife's sake. Hunting became a sport encouraging the more ethical treatment and conservation of wildlife.
3. **Allocation of Wildlife by Law** - The allocation of "surplus" wildlife to all citizens, regardless of land ownership, wealth and social standing, is regarded as a fundamental right. Every citizen is able to hunt within conservation guidelines. The rights of aboriginal people are governed by treaty. Wildlife is in the commons and therefore owned by the people. This has encouraged the formation of innumerable non-governmental organizations dedicated to the conservation of one or more species. Often these organizations have generated capital and volunteers to assist in conservation and research efforts.
4. **Wildlife Can Only be Killed for Legitimate Purposes** - Non-frivolous purposes include its use for food or fur, in self-defense or for the protection of property. The wanton waste of wildlife is often a felony. Limits and regulation reduce the efficiency of killing wildlife thereby creating a conservation economy. The harvesting of wildlife generates employment and income, and each hunter spends money buying weapons and ammunition, clothing, transporting and processing and storage.
5. **Wildlife is an International Resource** - Wildlife is ubiquitous and not subject to political borders, therefore international treaty law is necessary for its conservation. This places wildlife conservation in the highest political realm. Co-operation and coordination among and between international professional, conservation and education organizations is a natural precursor to political action.
6. **Science is the Proper Management Tool for Maintaining Wildlife Policy** - Science is based on the nonbiased, nonpolitical, disinterested, self-correcting and continually-scrutinized pursuit and interpretation of observations and experiments.
7. **The Democracy of Hunting** - Wildlife was allocated to the wealthy land owners in the European model creating class conflict, poaching and the extinction of many species whereas in the North American Model wildlife is allocated to all of the people.

The most successful conservation program in the history of the world is always under attack. The threats include efforts to commercialize wildlife, trophy scoring, habitat degradation, educational deficits concerning hunter ethics and wildlife values and the loss of rural traditions that foster wildlife appreciation. Many organizations dedicated to conservation or conserving single or multiple species of wildlife, such as Orion, the Hunter's Institute, the Boone & Crockett Club, Ducks Unlimited, the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, Wild Turkey Foundation, The Wildlife Society, the Audubon Society, and more have done the yeoman's job defending wildlife and maintaining the various tenets of the North American Model.

Too many people today are unaware of our history, and the most serious threat to the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation is aptly described by Santayana's famous chide - "Those who don't remember their history are doomed to repeat it!" The North American Model needs strong defenders. Hunters, naturalists, scientists and educators should familiarize themselves with this model and tell the story to succeeding generations around campfires and in the classroom. To paraphrase Dr Seuss, "we speak for wildlife."

I can't get away. I'm going deer hunting!

- William Faulkner's response when invited to Sweden to receive the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1949

A native plant success story...

Notes on Wellspring Toyota Plant's Conservation Efforts by Sherra Owen

Mississippians were elated when Blue Springs, Mississippi was selected to be the site of the new Wellspring Toyota facility. The site, located between New Albany and Tupelo, about 10 miles from either city (in Union County). Unfortunately the land selected for the project consisted of about 1700 acres of Pontotoc Ridge sandy red clay hills and valleys with rich plant diversity. Pristine colonies of many Heritage listed native species could be found there.

Fall 2007 - The Mississippi Native Plant Society voted to authorize Sherra Owen to approach the Toyota management and express our desire to preserve some of the natural areas at the construction site. Our hope was that at least 5 acres of the Pontotoc Ridge could be preserved for future study.

Before construction began, the PUL County Alliance (a coalition of Pontotoc, Union and Lee County citizens) had allowed Sherra and several other MNPS members to rescue plants from the site.

Sherra made a presentation to the Union County Board of Supervisors about the diversity and uniqueness of the Pontotoc Ridge. At the meeting she made contact with Lacy Luckett, External Affairs Specialist for the Wellspring Facility. Luckett agreed to contact Sherra and ask for her input when decisions about the site were being made.

Spring 2008 – Luckett contacted Sherra and asked her to meet with Sean McCarthy, Toyota's Environmental Engineer, at the site. Sherra asked the Toyota executives to consider granting three things:

- Consider native plants for sustainability when relandscaping the grounds.
- Preserve at least 5 acres of the tract undisturbed in its natural state. She asked that the area be made accessible for educational purposes due to its rich diversity of flora and fossils of the late Cretaceous period. She specifically wanted a particular north facing slope to be preserved.
- Permission to rescue plants before any other destruction if possible.

Summer 2008 - Sherra attended a meeting with Japanese consultants for Toyota. Toyota intends to plant a buffer zone consisting of 500,000 native plants around the facility. The plants (mostly trees) are already being grown by a Mississippi nurseryman from seed collected in Northern Mississippi. The seedling trees will be planted about one foot apart beginning in Fall 2009. The public will be invited to help with the planting project.

In keeping with the goal that during construction, Toyota should "always save a shrine," officials have decided to designate approximately 20 acres of north-facing Pontotoc Hills slope that will be preserved. In addition, the officials have no more plans to demolish other existing flora on the site.

Fall 2008 – Toyota received a directive from Japan stating that the Blue Springs Plant was one of four global Toyota plants that have been designated as sustainable plants. To this end, the plant will incorporate innovative technology, including renewable energy like wind and solar power, to help the local community conserve the environment. Earlier in the summer, executives decided that instead of producing Toyota Highlander SUVs, the product will be the environmentally friendly Prius.

MEEA Officer Nominations are Open

MEEA is seeking nominations for the positions of President Elect, Secretary, Treasurer and at-large board members. Please send your nominations to Matthew Miller as soon as possible at matthew_miller@tnc.org. In fact, just go ahead and do it right now!

So, Just How do You Live Sustainably?

Larry Jarrett, Chair of the Natural Resources Initiative (NRI) of North Mississippi has announced the NRI's sponsorship of a new exhibit opening at the Mississippi Museum of Natural Science. The exhibit will run from January 24 -May 24, 2009. **Sustainable Choices** is a 1,500 square foot traveling exhibit that demonstrates some of the choices people can make everyday to live sustainably. Choices made today can have a lasting effect. Which kind of bags do you use for groceries and how do you wash your clothes? This exhibit will clarify some of these simple choices. Often there is not a clearly correct choice. All available choices have environmental trade-offs. This exhibit will help you make informed decisions with interactive exhibits including:

- What's That Smell? Off Gassing! – New carpet & vinyl smell
- Light Bulbs: test different types of bulbs
- Carbon Footprint calculator
- Compost Outpost—Plant a seed in peat
- Quiz Board- How much water goes down the drain?
- Cardboard Box Land—Recycling
- Pedal Power--What is energy and how do we use it?
- Sort Objects for Recycling—What can be and what can't?
- What Does That Mean?—Deciphering labels: free range, organic, etc.

The Conservation Reserve Program in Mississippi:

Enhancing Native Plant and Butterfly Communities by: Jolie A. Goldenetz

The Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) is a voluntary program for agricultural producers offered through the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). Through CRP, farmers and ranchers can receive annual rental payments and cost-share assistance to establish long-term, resource-conserving vegetative covers on eligible farmland. According to the USDA Farm Service Agency, CRP protects millions of acres of topsoil from erosion and is designed to safeguard a multitude of natural resources including water quality, wildlife populations, native plant populations, and beneficial insects.

Currently, I am working on a doctoral research project in the MSU Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, and I am learning first-hand about CRP and its benefits to native plant and butterfly communities. The project focuses on a specific conservation practice titled CP33: Habitat Buffers for Upland Birds. Along with my advisors, Dr. Wes Burger and Dr. Sam Riffell, and a handful of other graduate students making up "Team Buffer," I am researching how CP33 buffers impact native plant and butterfly communities.

Part of my research involves collecting vegetation and butterfly data in CP33 buffers on a 5,000 acre farm in West Point, Mississippi. The landowner participates in a number of CRP programs because he is interested in creating more habitat for wildlife populations on his land. With the CP33 practice, he plants the edges of his soybean and corn fields with native grasses and wildflowers. Thus, the native plants create a "buffer" around the crop fields. Native prairie grasses, including big bluestem (*Andropogon gerardii*), little bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*), and Indiangrass (*Sorghastrum nutans*) along with forbs such as partridge pea (*Chamaecrista fasciculata*), blackeyed Susan (*Rudbeckia hirta*), and sunflower are the major species included in the CP33 seeding mix.

Each summer I conduct butterfly counts on the CP33 buffers. The native grasses and wildflowers attract a number of butterfly species, and we have seen an increase in both the abundance and species diversity of butterflies since the buffers were first planted in 2005. Many of the newly observed species are considered prairie specialists which are not commonly found on cropland. In addition, I collect data on the plant composition of the CP33 buffers from late spring to early fall. Many of the observed native plant species such as *Rubus* sp., sunflower species, and legumes provide food and/or cover for a number of wildlife species (e.g., butterflies and birds).

The CRP was initially established under The Farm Bill of 1985. Since its inception, the program has undergone many changes. Whenever a new Farm Bill is enacted (about every 5-6 years), there is an increase in public awareness because the CRP program is a large focus of each Farm Bill. Therefore, it is important for the general public, particularly agricultural landowners and folks interested in natural resource conservation, to stay informed about the Farm Bill and CRP. You can read more about CRP and its benefits to native plants and beneficial insects at the following websites:

<http://www.xerces.org> (See PDF titled "2008 Farm Bill Benefits to Crop Pollinators")

<http://www.fsa.usda.org> (Farm Service Agency)

<http://msucares.com> (MSU Extension Service)

<http://www.nrcs.usda.org> (Natural Resource Conservation Service)

<http://www.privatelandownernetwork.org> (Private Landowner Network)

<http://www.qu.org> (Quail Unlimited)

With the large amount of land in the United States devoted to agricultural production, federal programs such as CRP are crucial for conserving native wildlife and plant populations. Hopefully, as the benefits of CRP are publicized, more agricultural producers and the general public will realize that food production and wildlife habitat are compatible land-use objectives.

MEEA Post-Conference Notes

Welcome new members! The first thing you may notice is the Mississippi Environmental Education Alliance and the Mississippi Native Plant Society share a newsletter. You are welcome to join the MNPS members on field trips. You most likely would enjoy getting to know the native plants and might want to join that group, as well.

MISSISSIPPI ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATORS



Marion Sansing reported the silent auction raised \$279.00 and that donations to the auction were made by: Harold Anderson, Jennifer Buchanan, Clay Burns, Janet Chapman, Crow's Neck, John DeFillipo, Dr. John Guyton, Flinda Hill, Terri Jacobson, Jenny Jones, Marion Sansing, John Stark, Strawberry Plains Audubon Center, The Nature Conservancy, Tupelo High, USFWS, Robbie Ward and Wildbird Unlimited. Remember, funds raised by the silent auction go into a minigrant fund for MEEA members. Contact Matt Miller for a grant application! We have a few of these outstanding t-shirts designed by Marion Sansing left for \$16 plus \$1.00 shipping.

We are glad past president John DeFillipo has the opportunity to advance his career by joining a museum staff in Texas. He has done much to sustain and grow MEEA. Cynthia Harrell, Executive Director of Crows Neck EE center will serve as interim president. We need to immediately begin the search for a president-elect who will take office for a 2-year term at the fall conference next year.

"Nature Play" Instills Lasting Conservation Values in Youngsters by Laura Beiser

MDEQ recently sponsored renowned environmental educator, Ken Finch, from Omaha, Nebraska to speak at the Mississippi Environmental Education Alliance Conference. Mr. Finch emphasized the importance of allowing children frequent "Nature Play" beginning at a very young age to instill lasting conservation values in them. He laments that just as we are learning the value of "Nature Play." This is vanishing from American childhoods, creating a looming crisis for the conservation movement. One option is establishing "nature play" nursery schools where children dress to play in natural areas outdoors, even in cold weather.

He insists that children learn to adjust to nature-- how to dress for cold weather and avoid fire ants, etc. I have been inspired by the speaker and the book "Last Child in the Woods—Saving Our Children from Nature Deficit Disorder" by Richard Louv. While visiting

my three granddaughters in Roanoke, Virginia this Winter, we played on the mountain behind their house, an extension of the backyard covered with holly trees, oaks, spruce and other neat trees. We made a teepee fort out of poles that had fallen from the trees by leaning them against the shell of a hollow, standing oak-tree which was scalloped at the top and perfect for wedging the poles. I got a king-sized sheet, which we use for camping, out of our vehicle and laid it on the pole frame to complete the fort. We played inside the fort all afternoon and used dishes to serve up “prickly spinach” (holly leaves) and “a spot of tea” (detritus soil) as my oldest grandchild spoke with a British accent.

Our adjustment to nature on the mountainside included yellow jackets and/or giant hornets. In Sept 2008, the dog and I were attacked and stung. During fort construction in November, a cold, sluggish giant hornet crawled on top of my granddaughter’s pants leg. We are searching the internet to learn how to adjust to this insect problem.

Speaker Ken Finch told of building a soil pit similar to a sand box in his back yard for his son. He mixed sand with the resident soil and soon children from the neighborhood wanted to play in the dirt also. On a cold day during the Thanksgiving holidays, I took my 2-year-old granddaughter to a vacant lot where we found some loose dirt already dug by another child. We took the double dog-bowl with us, along with a large metal kitchen spoon, and scooped dirt into the bowls. She wanted to scoop the dirt all by herself and was able to fill the bowl. We took the dirt back to the house and she played with it all afternoon.

Laura Beiser, Environmental Administrator in the Nonpoint Source Pollution Education Program, Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality, can be reached at: 601-961-5373 or Laura_Beiser@deq.state.ms.us

***Old Cove, New Plants With Which to Garden!* by Hilary Shughart**

The North Mississippi Native Plant Society and Big Cypress Outdoor Club explored Weyerhaeuser’s Old Cove in Bellefontaine, Mississippi, on a November 2008 interpretive hike led by engaging host, Matt Miller of the Nature Conservancy.

This beech-magnolia hardwood forest boasts a rare colony of maple-leaf viburnum (*Viburnum acerifolium*), and fascinating plants such as the multi-stemmed, chlorophyll-free stalks of the parasitic beech drops (*Epifagus virginiana*). The crane-fly orchid’s (*Tipularia discolor*) striking dark green leaves with purple splotches and purple undersides promising an intriguing bloom in late summer or early fall. But from a gardener’s eye, there’s a striking composition of plants available through the nursery trade, including dwarf-crested iris, to be enjoyed in late March.

The oak tree (*Quercus sp.*) canopy branches shelter a secret woodland garden world with rich emerald mosses, evergreen Christmas fern (*Polystichum acrostichoides*), and even the old standby, poison ivy (*Toxicodendron radicans*), which boasts tremendous wildlife value as winter food.

The tan beech (*Fagus grandifolia*) leaves rustle and whisper through the winter, and I wonder just how many of them really are planted at twenty to twenty five foot sorties of squirrels on cache-hording missions. And how many oak trees are planted by blue jays burying acorns for a rainy day?

The big leaf magnolia (*Magnolia macrophylla*) is a striking understory tree, boasting the largest simple leaf for trees of Mississippi (20-30 inches long, 10 inches wide, according to Mississippi Trees, by John Hodges for the Mississippi Forestry Commission). Not only does it contribute an elaborate anchor of networking branches, curving as though to hug the sky, but it gives the summer garden a tropical feel and the fall garden a shock of yellow.

Oakleaf hydrangea (*Hydrangea quercifolia*) find their niche in the shrub stratum of this plant community, but we were equally intrigued by the puffball fungi, and wondered how some ancient yellow foam became embedded in the duff layer of this forest floor.

We were wowed by the fallen big leaf magnolia leaves – angel wings for Robin; wooed by the bright-red twin berries of partridgeberry (*Mitchella repens*), an evergreen groundcover vine and a superb substitute for alien invasive English Ivy in our gardens! We were underwhelmed by the taste of farkleberries, while marveling at the sight of a stout bush laden with sparkleberries - which is to say that this same bush, *Vaccinium arboreum*, looks a lot better than it grits - I mean tastes.

On a serious note, I highly recommend the *Berry Finder, A Guide to Native Plants with Fleshy Fruits for Eastern North America*, by Dorcas S. Miller. Truly pocket-sized (4x6 inches), this handy plant identification guide walks you through a key to identify a variety of fleshy fruits encountered on hikes. The notation of poisonous or edible is, of course, most valuable! It is, after all the poisonous alien invasive Chinese privet (*Ligustrum sinense*) that resembles these native blueberries, out-competes them, crowds them out and leaves native wildlife with less host-plant material for native insects, less nutritious berries and a branch structure which leads to fewer successful bird clutches because predators are more likely to access the nests. Hence, it is better to plant blueberries than privet.

The Prairie Mole Cricket: An Extirpated Species in Mississippi?

by JoVonn G. Hill, Mississippi Entomological Museum

The prairie mole cricket, *Grylotalpa major* Sallure, is the largest native cricket in the United States. This species is dependant on remnants of tall grass prairie for survival, whereas all other mole crickets found in the United States are typically found in sandy or wet situations. Before the 1980's little information was known about this species; however, in the late 1980's it was noticed that few recent collections of this species had been made. Researchers began searching for this insect in areas where it was likely to occur, namely in the prairie states of Arkansas, Illinois, Kansas, Mississippi, Missouri, Oklahoma, and Texas. Yes, Mississippi. At the time of European settlement, prairies covered at least 225,323 acres in two main regions of Mississippi, the Black Belt and the Jackson Prairie. Today, it is estimated that 99% of these prairies have been lost due to the conversion of prairie to agricultural fields and urban development. Remaining prairies are also threatened by erosion and the encroachment of the eastern red cedar, *Juniperus virginiana* L. These prairies are quite unique in Mississippi and are inhabited by many plants and animals not found elsewhere in the state, and in some cases are known to occur only on these prairies and those in the Great Plains. The prairie mole cricket is one such example, as most of the records of this species are from the Great Plains; However, there are two historic records from Mississippi, one from each prairie region. Surveys in the late 1980's documented relatively stable populations in most of the plains states, but no populations were found in Mississippi.

This species is currently considered extirpated from the state. The prairie mole cricket is not an easy species to locate. Most of the year it lives underground where it eats roots of grasses and forbs and occasionally smaller insects. However, for a couple of weeks in early spring, male prairie mole crickets aggregate and build individual burrows near the surface of the soil. The male stands with his head in a small bulb-like chamber within the burrow and sings. This burrow opens to the surface at ground level with a relatively large, (in comparison to the cricket's body), opening, resulting in the burrow being shaped like a horn that acts as an acoustic amplifier. Males call for about 30 minutes to an hour at sunset when climate conditions are right, thus exploiting an empty sound window after birdsong dies down and before amphibians, katydids, and other crickets begin to sing. Female prairie mole crickets emerge from the soil and fly just above the grass, and upon locating an aggregation of singing males, drop to the ground and enter a suitable male's burrow for mating.

The best way to locate populations of prairie mole crickets is to be at a prairie remnant around sunset, from mid April- early May, on a warm night, with little wind and no rain, and listen for the call of the male mole cricket. A remnant should be surveyed for two years as prairie mole crickets have a two-year life cycle and only a few known populations in the Mid-West have populations that have adults every year. For the last few years I have been surveying prairie remnants in the Black Belt of Mississippi, both those surveyed in the late '80s and many that were not. Thus far, my listening efforts have only been met with silence. However, I still hold out hope that this insect will be rediscovered in Mississippi. Just recently, the Florida harvester ant, a species thought to be extirpated from the state, was rediscovered, and has since been found in a number of locales in the state. The prairie mole cricket is a much more elusive insect than the Florida harvester ant, so it is still likely that a population may still exist somewhere in the state. I encourage anyone who may find themselves on a prairie this spring to take time to listen for the call of the prairie mole cricket. Pictures and sound clips of their call can be found on the Singing Insects of North America Webpage (<http://buzz.ifas.ufl.edu/>). Information on the Mississippi specimens may be found at the Mississippi Entomological Museum's mole cricket web page (<http://mississippientomologicalmuseum.org.msstate.edu/Researchtaxapages/Grylotalpidae.home.htm>,). The prairie mole cricket is a protected species in Mississippi, making collection of specimens illegal. If you believe you have located a population of the prairie mole cricket, please email me at jgh4@entomology.msstate.edu.

The North Mississippi Land Trust is Open for Business

The North Mississippi Land Trust is organized and receiving conservation easements and land donations. The land trust was organized for the conservation, promotion, and protection of open spaces and green places of ecological, cultural, or scientific significance in North Mississippi with plans to acquire, own, control, maintain, and improve lands for the purpose of greenways, parks, wildlife sanctuaries, maintenance of a cultural heritage, and to hold the same in trust for these purposes. The land trust recently received a land donation that added approximately one mile of green space to the Desoto County Greenways program (www.desotogreenways.org) and received another ecologically significant 50-acre donation in Marshall County. For more information about how to donate land or make a conservation easement, call Larry Jarrett at 662-489-9708 or go the North Mississippi Land Trust web site (www.nmslandtrust.org).

Help Us Save the Black Prairie

The payment for the lease of the Osborn Black Prairie site, used by MSU and public schools for research and education, will be due again in a few months. Please help keep this important initiative going with your donations. Contact JoVonn Hill for more information at jgh@entomology.msstate.edu.

Editor's note: MEEA and MNPS have been long time supporters of the Friends of the Black Prairie and this initiative. It is an inspiring partnership between the university, public schools our organizations and other prairie enthusiasts.

Then I discovered the prairie, and a slow healing began – Stephen R. Jones, *The Last Prairie* (2000), Ragged Mountain Press

MS Native Plant Society 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. **Join Today!**

_____ New Member _____ Renewal Name _____
 _____ Student: \$7.50 County _____
 _____ Individual or Family: \$10.00 Address _____
 _____ Sustaining: \$15.00 _____
 _____ Contributing: \$35.00 Telephone _____
 _____ Life: \$125.00 email _____

Please return this form with check to: MNPS, Inc., C/O Dr. Debora Mann, 114 Auburn Drive, Clinton, MS 39056-6002

Mississippi Environmental Education Alliance Membership Application

The state alliance devoted to environmental education and the affiliate of the North American Association for Environmental Education. **Join Today!**

Name: _____ New _____ Renewal _____

School or Organization: _____

Address: _____ City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone:(day) _____ (evening) _____

e-mail: _____ Fax: _____

Membership Category	Committee Interests:	with your check or money order,
<input type="checkbox"/> Individual (\$10.00)	<input type="checkbox"/> Strategic Planning	to MEEA, C/O Angel Rohnke, MS
<input type="checkbox"/> Student (\$5.00)	<input type="checkbox"/> Nomination	Museum of Natural Science, 4391
<input type="checkbox"/> Family (\$25.00)	<input type="checkbox"/> Conference	South Frontage Rd., Columbus,
<input type="checkbox"/> Institution/Business (\$50)	<input type="checkbox"/> Awards	MS 39701
<input type="checkbox"/> Life (\$150.00)	<input type="checkbox"/> Communications	
<input type="checkbox"/> Patron (\$150 - \$1,000+)	<input type="checkbox"/> MEEA Board	
	Return this application,	

MS Native Plant Society Chapters

Coastal Plains MNPS Meets every 4th Monday in Gulfport. Contact president, Edie Dreher at 228-864-2775 or mail to 100 24th St., Gulfport, MS 39507.

Starkville MNPS Contact Bob Brzuszek at rbrzuszek@lalc.msstate.edu or phone 662-325-7896.

Northeast MNPS Contact Margaret Gratz at 662-844-5640 or gratz@redmagnet.com

North MNPS Contact Hilary Shughart at 662-816-3459 or shughart@watervalley.net

Join MNPS, MEEA or Both!

The Mississippi Environmental Education Alliance conducts an annual fall conference and occasional workshops. For information on upcoming activities and who is doing environmental education, check the EEinMississippi website or contact Interim President Cynthia Harrell.

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

Deadlines for Articles

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

Mark your Calendars! The MNPS annual meeting will be at the Grand Bay NERR, Moss Point, Sept 26 & 27, 2009 and the MEEA conference will be at the Eagle Ridge Conference Center, Raymond, MS, Nov. 6 & 7, 2009

The MISSISSIPPI NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

c/o Dr. Debora Mann

Millsaps College

Box 150307

Jackson, MS 39210