



The purpose of the Oklahoma Native Plant Society is to encourage the study, protection, propagation, appreciation and use of Oklahoma's native plants.

**Volume 30, Number 2
Summer 2015**

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FOR NEXT ISSUE IS**

10 August 2015

Gaillardia

The Oklahoma Native Plant Society Newsletter

Upcoming Events/Activities

(check the ONPS website for more details)

Sept. 25-27. 2015 ONPS Annual Meeting, @
University of Oklahoma Biological Station, Lake
Texoma. Join meeting with Friends of the
University of Oklahoma Biological Station.

Fabulous Wildflower Fridays, at 5:30 the third
Friday of each month at Panera at 41st Street and
Hudson Avenue.

**Note: all members are invited to all meetings, including
board meetings, and are encouraged to bring guests.**

WELCOME THESE NEW MEMBERS

Carolyn Fairless, Sand Springs

Joi Taylor, Weleetka

Craig Waldron, Tulsa

ONPS THANKS THE FOLLOWING DONORS

Patricia Stamper, Color Oklahoma

Berry Redlinger, Color Oklahoma



Calopogon oklahomensis taken by Adam Sarmiento
at the 37th Wildflower Workshop. See page for
details of this year's event.

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

Joe Roberts

Hello, everybody. We just got back from the 2015 Wildflower Workshop in Durant, OK. What a weekend! Details are in the related article in this issue, but many thanks to Connie Taylor for organizing a great workshop. This event, jointly sponsored by the ONPS and the Oklahoma Garden Clubs, Inc., is held at a different location in the state every year. This allows for folks to attend who may not be able to make other events. It also allows us to check out some new scenery and, of course, plants which we may not always have an opportunity to see. Check out the article and our Facebook page for information and photos.

Many ONPS members enjoy gardening with native plants, and put a lot of time into your beautiful landscapes. If you would like to share pictures and stories of your garden and/or larger projects, we are starting a new blog that will be linked to our website. There, members can show off all their hard work, and share their knowledge. I'd like to encourage anyone who has worked with native gardening/planting to share their experiences, including failures. Native plant gardening and planting is becoming more popular each year, as people start to realize the benefits to native landscapes. Our organization is uniquely positioned to provide leadership and guidance in this area, where there may not be much of any available to the beginner. We'd like for the blog to be a resource for knowledge. As such, it is important to provide details which might make the difference between success and failure, such as where you purchased seed/plants, soil type, what kind of preparation, time of year planted, etc. I have written an article in this issue about a project of my own where I set the bar for failure quite high, and dare anyone to do worse. It did turn out ok, after a few years. The details are too numerous to put in the Gaillardia, but I will have them on the blog. Anyway, keep an eye on the website for the new blog, and start taking pictures and keeping records of your projects now!

Don't forget, our annual meeting at the University of Oklahoma Biological Station is set for September 25-27th. This year will be a joint meeting with the Friends of the UOBS, and promises to be a winner. We will have registration information on the website soon. Mark your calendars, and be sure to make it to this great event!

There are several informal outings in the works also. Look to the Listserve and Facebook page for more

information about how you can get outside on some botanizing trips. The rains have been good to us this year, and there is lots to see. As always, bring a friend, and bring a kid!

CHAPTER ACTIVITIES

Southwest Chapter

A wildflower tour of the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge is scheduled for Saturday, May 30. The event starts at 8:00 a.m. at the Wildlife Refuge Visitors' Center with an introduction. Then teams go to their assigned areas for an hour or two. Tools and gloves will be provided, but you may also bring your own. Garden trowels work great on the little stems. Oklahoma Native Plant Society has been assigned to pull up sericea lespedeza along the shores of Elmer Thomas Lake.

The location is a 10 minute drive from the Visitors' Center and then a twenty minute walk on rough ground over a small hill. Hiking boots are recommended, also tick and chigger repellent, and bring water. We will work for about an hour, then walk back and look at wildflowers. The hillside and lake shore we traverse will have wildflowers and we can drive to Quetone Point or Jed Johnson Lake, which are on the way back, for more. For those who do not want to walk so far there are probably some sericea patches on the lake shore closer to where the vehicles will be parked.

Hamburgers and hot dogs are provided at the air-conditioned environmental education center at noon. After that, we can take an optional tour of the Medicine Park Aquarium and Natural Sciences Center.

Cross-Timbers Chapter

Elaine Lynch

On April 10th, we co-sponsored the 7th annual Library-Botany Lecture Series: Plants, People and Beyond. The speaker this year was Kelly Kindscher of the Kansas Biological Survey at the University of Kansas. He spoke on the "Native Medicinal Plant Research Program". The program is compiling a list of plants Native Americans used for medicinal purposes and how they were used. We hosted a potluck dinner that evening. Dr. Kindscher talked to us on "Echinacea – Herbal Medicine with a Wild History," where he described the uses of the *Echinacea* genus and its harvesting for private and commercial use.

On April 25th, we took a field trip to property owned by Randy Ledford near Pawnee. As well as botanizing, we heard about the management efforts Mr. Ledford has taken to remove invasive species and promote the original tallgrass prairie and crosstimbers species of the area. There was also discussion about the Pawnee tribe's use of many of the plants we saw.

Our current chapter chair, Mark Fishbein, is stepping down no later than this fall, as he is going on sabbatical. So far we have been unable to find any chapter member willing to step into the chair position. We have been without a vice-chair for a number of years. The search continues for one or two people willing to help lead the chapter.

Northeast Chapter

Connie Murray

During our March 2nd Meeting we were treated to a view of plants from the perspective of animals other than ourselves. Bryan Coppedge, Associate Dean of TCC Science and Math West Campus spoke to us on 'Bird Nests as Ecological Indicators,' complete with specimen nests. And at our May 4th Meeting our own Sue and Dale Amstutz enthralled us with 'Wildflowers of Southern Montana.'

We had three field trips this spring: March 29th to the north woods at Oxley Nature Center; April 11th to Red Bud Valley; and April 18th to the Nature Preserve at Rogers College in Claremore. We, like most of the state, have benefited from all the rain this spring and the wildflowers were appreciative and appreciated!

Northeast Chapter also participated in two events at the Tulsa Garden Center, representing ONPS at large. February 21st several members hosted a booth at the Annual Info-Fair sponsored every year to promote awareness in northeast Oklahoma regarding the affiliate organizations of the Tulsa Garden Center, of which we are one. On May 10th Sue Amstutz hosted an ONPS booth at the Tulsa Garden Club's adjudicated Spring Flower Show. Our booth was awarded 3rd Prize in the Educational Division.

Our summer and fall meeting speakers and field trips are still in the planning stages. Look for notices on Facebook, on our website and in your email inbox. We continue our Fabulous Wildflower Fridays, at 5:30 the third Friday of each month at Panera at 41st Street and Hudson Avenue. We plan field trips and events, identify wildflowers and share fellowship between quarterly speaker meetings. Regardless of your Chapter, please feel free to join us!

2015 WILDFLOWER WORKSHOP

Joe Roberts

The 37th Wildflower Workshop, jointly sponsored by the ONPS and OK Garden Clubs, Inc., consisted of presentations indoors on Friday, followed by a botanizing field trip on Saturday. We were fortunate that it was not the other way around. Friday we met at the Donald W. Reynolds Library and Community Center in Durant, and kicked off the event at 9am. The rains soon came, and were heavy. We didn't mind, however, because we were high and dry inside watching excellent presentations.

Adam Ryburn and Joe Roberts started off talking about recent and upcoming events with the ONPS. They were followed by Gingerlei Waddall who presented *Good Bugs for Better Garden*. She showed how the insect predators that lurk in our garden may be more beneficial than we think, keeping in check populations of aphids, caterpillars, and other harmful insects.

Adam Sarmiento of Eco Landscaping in Norman spoke next about landscaping with Oklahoma's native plants, appropriately titled *Landscaping 2.0*. He shared much practical knowledge about plants he has had success with, as well as tips on general design and pictures projects with which he has been associated that used environmentally-friendly techniques and native plants.

Dick Carson, a local rancher, photographer, and native plant lover, captured everyone's attention with a slide show of his best *Wildflower Photography*. The photos were of exceptional quality, and Dick shared secrets about equipment, techniques, how to set up the best shots and how to make them look their best.

After lunch, Dr. Stan Rice gave a presentation on the sea side alder (*Alnus maritime*), probably Oklahoma's rarest tree, and one of the rarest in the U.S. This tree has a fascinating story, and Dr. Rice



Looking for pistillate flowers of buffalo grass. Photo by Lynn Michael at Ft. Washita National Historic Site.

got everyone interested in the tree, which we were able to go see the next day. Additionally, he gave away seedlings of the species.

Since we were near Lake Texoma, and our annual meeting in September is at Lake Texoma, it was appropriate that we heard a presentation about *The Corps of Engineers and Denison Dam: The Story of Lake Texoma from Conception to Today* by Paul Balkenbush with the Corps of Engineers. This was a fascinating subject about the people and circumstances behind the creation of one of America's largest lakes.

Lastly, Adam Ryburn whet our appetites for Saturday's field trip with a presentation on the *Native Spring Flora of South Central Oklahoma*. In addition a brief history of native plant exploration in this region, Adam highlighted many of the species we would see the next day.

We adjourned for dinner at the KC Roadhouse Bar and Grill.

Saturday morning the weather looked terrible. After breakfast it even started raining again, with no sign of clearing, and several people started botanizing with umbrellas or raincoats. But within 10 minutes of starting, it cleared up, and for the rest of the day the rain stayed away. What luck! We started off with a 60% chance, and aside from the first few minutes had dry and comfortable weather for our field trip.

We spent a while scouring a field adjacent to the First United Methodist Church of Durant and found many native plants, including *Calopogon oklahomensis*, a native Oklahoma orchid which achieved near rockstar status among our group. After that great start, we boarded a bus for Ft. Washita, a historical site with an interesting history and many native plants. We finished up at the Blue River, where we were able to see the sea side alder at last, as well as abundant wildflowers everywhere.

Check out the Oklahoma Native Plant Society Facebook page to see a collection of photos from this event.



Friday lectures. Photo by Lynn Michael at Donald W. Reynolds Library and Community Center in Durant.



Saturday Field Trip. Photo by Lynn Michael at Blue River Wildlife Management Area

BOTANIST'S CORNER

Native Plants For Edible Landscaping

Adam Sarmiento

As food prices rise ever higher and food production becomes increasingly removed from local communities, there has never been a better time to consider incorporating some edible plants into your landscape. Peaches, pears, figs and other exotics are good options for Oklahoma landscapes but there are many native edibles that could be used as well. Using native edibles adds the benefits of better adaptability to our climate/soils, increased benefit for wildlife and pollinators and increased resilience to our food systems by bringing much needed biodiversity to food production.

The following is a brief list of easy and reliable native edible plants that have good landscape potential.

Amelanchier spp.

Serviceberries or Juneberries as they are commonly called, are one of my absolute favorite native edibles. These large shrubs or small trees have it all. Beautiful flowers and form, fall color and of course, delicious blueberry like fruits. The flavor of the fruits can vary. Some of the species fruit has more or less bitterness but cultivars like 'Autumn Brilliance' produce dependably delicious fruit. The only problem is beating the birds to them.

Ribes odoratum (clove currant)

This is another multi-purpose native edible. In spring they have beautiful exotic looking yellow flowers, in summer tasty black berries and in fall the foliage develops striking color towards season's end. Remove suckers to keep the habit more compact and bushy.

Helianthus tuberosus (jerusalem artichoke, sunroots)

This perennial sunflower produces pretty yellow flowers on mid-sized to towering upright foliage. Native Americans cultivated this plant and enjoyed its edible tubers eaten raw or cooked. It makes a nice addition to a vegetable garden border but it can also be incorporated into perennial beds and meadow gardens. Many cultivars are available that provide different characteristics. They can spread, so give them room. Harvesting the roots will help keep it in check.

Fragaria virginiana (wild strawberry)

This edible wild strawberry can be confused with the more invasive exotic *Duchesnea indica* (false wild strawberry), but unlike said imposter, our native

strawberries make for good eating and are much easier to control. The flavor can vary some but generally it is sweet and complex. *F. virginiana* is an easy to grow ground cover that does well in moderately moist, sun to part shade situations.

Opuntia spp. (prickly pear cactus)

Despite being somewhat frequently used in landscaping, the prickly pear's fruit is woefully under-appreciated. These fruits are one of my favorite fall delicacies. Some care has to be taken in harvesting and preparing them (generally leather gloves suffice) but the extra effort is well worth it. The pads are also edible and often used in the southwest and Mexico. The species *O. lindheimeri* is a reliable and good choice and the cultivar 'Elisiana' of *Opuntia cacanapa* is a reliable "thornless" type.

There are many other native edibles and unique ways to use them. Some other to consider are *Asimina triloba* (pawpaw), *Prunus angustifolia* (chickasaw plum), *Vaccinium* spp. (blueberry and huckleberry), *Sambucus* spp. (elderberry), *Astragalus crassicaarpus* (ground plum), *Cercis canadensis* (redbud), and *Morus rubra* (red mulberry).

Adam Sarmiento has been gardening professionally for seventeen years and runs the environmentally focused landscaping design/build firm Eco Landscaping. Email: adam@ecogardenok.com, (405) 802-5922, ecogardenok.com.

Joe's Folly

Joe Roberts

George Bernard Shaw once said "Folly is the direct pursuit of happiness and beauty". Nikos Kazantzakis said "Every man has his folly, but the greatest folly of all, in my view, is not to have one".

My folly began in fall of 2008. My family has a farm near El Reno in Canadian County, along the North Canadian River. It is intensively farmed and has little cover or food for wildlife. On this typical monoculture farm, there was in a small corner of the property along the river. A very large native pecan tree stopped the pivot irrigation system's path short of a half-circle, leaving about a 10-acre wedge of land in one corner of the field bordered by the river. In the sandy soil there grew nothing but a solid, nearly impenetrable stand of 6-foot tall Johnson Grass. My original motivation was to plant trees. I contacted the district forester, who came out and looked over the area and gave his advice. I ordered seedlings through the Forestry Department for Black Walnut, Sand Plum, Persimmon, Pecan, Shumard and

Bur Oak, Red Mulberry, Hackberry, Roughleaf Dogwood, and Black Locust (for erosion control along the riverbank). He also suggested I contact the local Conservation District for more assistance. I borrowed a tractor, and brush-hogged the whole thing. Then, with a tree planter rented from the forestry department, I bribed a buddy with lunch and beer, and set to work. The tree planter made for quick work.

The problem, I was to find out, was that there was no water there for the seedlings, and foolishly (I use this word a lot when talking about this endeavor) I thought that the spring and summer rains would fall gently upon my fields, resulting in a verdant landscape. Right. The only thing that grew lush in my field of dreams was Johnson Grass. It choked out all but the hardiest of my trees. Worse yet, the drought ensured that any trees that had survived the initial year died. Back to the drawing board, and back to the Conservation District office for more advice.

By this time I had decided that maybe I would plant native grasses in the spaces between the rows of trees. The Conservation District officer gave me a prescription for seed, and even found a cost-sharing program with the goal of establishing natural “filters” along the river to improve the quality of the runoff from agricultural lands into the Canadian River. With their help, I was able to buy a mix of Big Bluestem, Indiangrass, Switchgrass, Little Bluestem, Sideoats Grama, Blue Grama, Illinois Bundleflower, Leadplant, Maximillian Sunflower, and Gayfeather. The Conservation District again came through for me. They not only loaned me a native seed drill, but even delivered it to the farm and showed me how to work it.

I planted and waited. Foolishly (there it is again) I thought that the seed would simply sprout into a prairie overnight, and my little 10-acre slice of paradise would erupt into a prairie preserve. Next spring, the Johnson Grass again completely choked out everything, with the notable exception of sand burs, which now were everywhere. I spent the next year in despair, then decided to mow the whole thing down and see what happened. It may have been the mowing, or perhaps the higher rainfall, but in the summer of 2012 many different sized patches of native grasses appeared throughout the Johnson Grass, making a patchwork of native grass stands, and Johnson Grass stands. This looked promising. I thought that maybe, by continuously mowing down the Johnson Grass patches, they would be weakened and the conditions would favor the native grasses. When finished, the place looked like it had been

given a bad haircut. But the next spring it seemed, at least, that the native patches were increasing and the Johnson grass patches were being “invaded” (HA! Sweet revenge on an invasive!) by the little clumps of natives. I have continued this very unscientific management method for three years now, and this last year the results have been the best so far. With the exception of a few persistent patches of Johnson Grass, there are native grasses well established throughout the area.

I would encourage anyone trying to establish native plants to study my methods in the above article carefully, and then do something – anything – else. Think of what I did as a very good, bad example. But I have, for the most part, gotten close to my goal, as much by serendipity as anything else. It may be just wishful thinking on my part, but it seems the insect, bird, reptile, and mammal communities there have diversified. There is now a treehouse overlooking this little patch of prairie, and the kids can look out over something other than Johnson Grass. The next step in this folly will be to increase the forbs for pollinators and butterflies. I’ll let you know how THAT turns out in a future article!

PHOTO CONTEST REMINDER

This year’s deadline for submission is July 1. Photo Contest information, including entry forms and rules, can be found on the ONPS website. The following picture was submitted by Becki Sheets-Klinger and won 3rd place in the “close-up” category of the 2014 ONPS Photo Contest.



FOR JOINING OR RENEWING USE THIS FORM

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Oklahoma Native Plant Society
P. O. Box 14274
Tulsa, OK 74159
oknativeplants@yahoo.com

For *Gaillardia* material only, use the editor's address:

Adam Ryburn
12909 SW 24th Street
Yukon, OK 73099
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