

Volume 31 Number 3 Wild is the music of autumnal winds among the faded woods Wordsworth Fall Winter 2013

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

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## Editors' Christmas Wish Would You Believe in Santa Claus if I Showed You the Paths of Invisible Subatomic Particles?

Like Santa Claus, who is difficult to see and invisible most of the year, subatomic particles cannot be observed directly. But like high flying jets that are difficult to see, their vapor trails are evidence of their existence and provide information about the invisible winds effects on them. If you are looking for an incredible holiday activity, consider making a cloud chamber. A cloud chamber provides a window into an



invisible and magical world. I have often wondered how many itches are caused by subatomic particles streaking through our hair or through our bodies!

There are many plans on the internet as well as videos on You Tube you will enjoy checking out before building a cloud chamber. Begin by placing some absorbent material, such as blotter paper, paper towel or thin sponge in the bottom of a jar. Bend

paperclips to hold it in place when it is inverted.

Paint the inside of the jar lid black and place a piece of black felt or velvet in the top. Saturate the blotter paper with isopropyl alcohol and place a radioactive source such as a piece of uranium or a piece of antique orange Fiestaware on the upside down lid (note the picture of a Fiestaware saltshaker). Screw the jar into the lid and set the apparatus on a block of dry ice. The dry ice will cool and supersaturate the air in the bottom of the cloud chamber. After 10 minutes or so, warm the top of the apparatus with your hand or a hot, moist but not wet washcloth. Turn off the room lights and shine a very bright flashlight through the jar. Subatomic particles streaming off the radioactive rock or Fiestaware will ionize the air and the alcohol will condense on these ions, leaving trails. A strong magnet will attract or deflect charged particles. A bigger chamber can be built in an aquarium!

To see cosmic rays, or radiation from outside earth, remove the Fiestaware and wrap black construction paper around the jar. On two adjacent "sides" cut 1 inch x 3 inch horizontal slits, the first one about an inch above the bottom of the apparatus and the bottom of the second even with the top

of the first but on an adjacent side. Shining a bright light through the lower slit, look through the upper one for the trails of cosmic radiation.

Now, trust me when I tell you true, Santa is real and not just for you. He and Jesus share a day To remind everyone of a better way. Alms for the needy, family gathering, A fire on the hearth, dinner happening, And, home for the children because You have found Santa Claus. JWG Blotter paper saturated with alcohol secured with bent paperclip in top of chamber Radioactive rock on black velvet Block of crushed dry ice wrapped in a towel so the jar lid is sitting directly on the dry ice. **Editor's Note:** 2013 was our busiest year in a very long time, and our regular feature writers have also been overworked. We really thought we would have this edition out before Christmas and here it is February. That said, we urgently need your help. We could use a few new feature writers or suggestions for articles you would like for us to write. Please send your articles and suggestions to John Guyton at jguyton@ext.msstate.edu.

# Greetings from Dave Thompson, MNPS President

Hello Friends,

As the newly elected president of the Mississippi Native Plant Society, I must admit, when it comes to natives, I am a babe in the woods. I know some plants and concepts, but there is still much to learn. That's why I'm a bit anxious about being president. Our meetings are always a treat where I meet new friends and see many old friends.

My first real exposure to native plants was with Arkansas State Parks, my first job out of school. A botanist named Larry Lowman worked at a nearby park on Crowley's Ridge, in the Arkansas Delta. My wife Connie and I spent many Saturday mornings walking in the woods with Larry, soaking up his knowledge of native plants.

Many thanks to our outgoing president, Lelia Kelly. She has left some big footprints and an enthusiastic membership! The two conferences during her administration were incredible. Heather Sullivan has proposed for MNPS to partner with the Mississippi Natural Science Museum to make their herbarium more



Lelia Kelly congratulates Dave Thompson.

representative of Mississippi's flora. This seems to have set the stage for some exciting member involvement statewide! All that said, a change at the helm offers the opportunity to ask ourselves some important questions.

I would like to suggest we look at our organization and ask ourselves, What do we want to do? What are our goals? Do we want to attract more members? Are we achieving our mission? Are we marketing our organization to all possible members? Do we need a stronger alliance with other organizations such as the Mississippi Garden Clubs, the Urban Forest Council, or neighborhood associations? Do we need to share newsletters with these groups? Can we do a better job of public education about native plants? What about a native plant photography contest? How about a workshop on converting traditional lawns to a native landscape? What are other states doing that we may partner with? Who is interested in a canoeing field trip during the hot summer (and most of us love to get on the water)? Could we start a seed exchange? I have a bunch of seeds from a native hibiscus, but I'm not sure I can get them to germinate, so maybe someone else can. Have you discovered a plant that is the perfect replacement for one of the introduced ornamentals? Please share it with us.

We really need your input and feedback. The more responses we have, the more we can serve our membership. I love field trips because they are opportunities to learn new things and meet new people (who have the same passion and concern about native plants that I have), plus I love to get outside! I am certainly interested in quarterly field trips so we can watch the seasons change up close, enjoy each other's company, and continue the discussions on the questions above.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

## Greetings, MEEA and Others by Jennifer Buchanan, MEEA President

#### Greetings of the Season!

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of you who attended the annual MEEA conference this past November down here on the coast. We had a great group of educators and speakers and some really great local food in addition to the treats brought by many of the attendees who obtained them from their own communities or backyards. It may be a little more difficult and a bit more expensive to eat locally, but it does not have to be—and think of the energy and resources that we save when we do not have to transport our food long distances. Additionally, when we know who grows our food and how they grow it, we can be assured that we are supporting environmentally friendly farmers, chefs, and businesses.

How can we encourage people to grow their own food or to buy food from local, sustainable sources? One way is to engage them early in life in gardening in schoolyard or community gardens. Because a garden can be used to teach

about food, the environment, clean water and air, health, exercise, and heritage, public gardens are great projects for local governments to invest in. Working hand in hand with students and community members, educators can instill the importance of conserving our local resources while teaching them a beneficial trade that will help them save money and eat healthier in the future. Another way is by visiting local farmers' markets that only sell locally grown or harvested food products. Combining a field trip to a sustainable farm or a farmers' market with a cooking activity will also help students understand the concepts of growing food sustainably and living sustainably or green.

In order to help teachers promote the concept of living sustainably in their schools, MEEA is partnering with Project Learning Tree, the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality, the Grand Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve, and the Mississippi Museum of Natural Science to host a professional development workshop for teachers on Project Learning Tree<sup>®</sup> (PLT) GreenSchools! program, which inspires students to take responsibility for improving the environment at their school, home, and in their community. MEEA will pilot this workshop on March 12, 2014, at the Clinton Nature Center in Clinton, MS. Make sure you check the MEEA website shortly after the start of the new year for registration information. Costs will be minimal and CEUs will be available.

Finally, MEEA is looking for some members who would be interested in serving on our Board. Board members of MEEA must be in good standing (paid up) with the organization and have been active with the organization for at least one year. If you meet these qualifications, please send me a brief bio and describe to me how you feel you could contribute to our organization. You may reach me at 228.475.7047 or jen.buchanan@dmr.ms.gov if you would like to know more about our organization.

I hope you all have a wonderful and safe holiday and I look forward to seeing many of you at our spring break workshop. Live Green and Prosper!

## 2013 Annual MNPS Conference Report

Our annual conference on October 18–19 at Strawberry Plains Audubon Center was a huge success. Thirty-five to forty folks, over the two-day period, enjoyed enthusiastic speakers, walking tours of the conservation areas of the Audubon Center and an off-site tour of the private land of Dr. Heineke, who has implemented prairie conservation practices on a large tract of his land. The resident native plant specialist and ecologist of the center, Kristen Lamberson and Chap Pope, respectively, provided presentations and tours of their wonderful center's grounds and facilities.

We had 8 presentations covering topics as diverse as a partnership between MNPS and the state herbarium, and biological ecosystems associated with our forested ecosystems. Marshall County Mississippi State University Extension Service agents Lemon Phelps and Janet Jolley coordinated meals and breaks and just generally were a tremendous help. We enjoyed a sumptuous home-cooked spaghetti supper one night prepared by Peggy Guyton. Desserts included homemade brownies and cupcakes. Some of us who like a glass of wine were able to enjoy this indulgence during the social hour.

Attendees enjoyed shopping the native plant sale and bidding on the silent auction items. Evaluations of the conference consistently rated the overall conference experience excellent. Speakers were also rated excellent, with participants particularly enjoying the conference being outside and incorporating several walking/talking tours. Thanks to those who attended and a very special thanks to those who worked so hard to make this a great conference. For those who could not attend, we missed you.

This conference concluded my tenure as your president. With your help we have achieved several accomplishments these two years. We have a new webmaster and a new updated society website. We developed a way to provide a stipend to our webmaster by using the funds generated by the plant sale and the silent auction to help compensate our new webmaster for her time and ongoing devotion to our website. We have a new society logo and promotional brochure. The conferences of 2012 and 2013 concluded in the black, with this year's conference adding a nice little nest egg to support a future conference or other activities of the society. I have enjoyed being your president and look forward to new ideas from our new president, Mr. Dave Thompson.

Respectfully submitted, Lelia Kelly, Immediate Past President, MNPS

# President Kelly Finishes an Incredible Two-Year Term

Early in her presidency Dr. Leila Kelly led an effort to the design a new logo incorporating a water-colored trillium painted by Margaret Gratz. Peggy Guyton then produced a banner for MNPS featuring the new logo. Lelia, the first president under the new two-year term structure, oversaw two outstanding two-day conferences that brought a number of new members into MNPA's ranks and much needed revenue. She also organized a field trip day at Tishomingo State Park with a number of botanists on each hike. The specimens found were documented and published in a checklist of native plants for each of several trails in Tishomingo State Park. The checklists are available at the park. Lelia's second conference was at Strawberry Plains Audubon Center and it too was an immediate sensation.

# *Groundsel Tree or Eastern Baccharis (Baccharis halimifolia)* by Dr. John Guyton

I get calls every fall about a prolific white blooming bush along the highways. First described by Carl Linnaeus in his *Species Plantarum* in 1753, this aster (Asteraceae) family member resembles cumulus clouds floating on the roadsides. It has been around long enough to have a lot of names including sea-myrtle, consumption weed (referring to its use for relief of consumption (TB) and cough), eastern baccharis, groundsel, groundsel bush or tree, salt marsh-elder, salt bush, and Florida groundsel bush.

Baccharis can be confused with the marsh-elder (*Iva frutescens*), which inhabits the same areas. However, Baccharis has alternate leaves and *Iva*'s are opposite.

Groundsel's short trunks with numerous branches and branchlets can grow to 12 feet or more. The gray-green,

slightly lobed, oval leaves are evergreen in the south but deciduous in the north. The white to green flowers in small, dense, terminal clusters give the groundsel its characteristic fall appearance. Baccharis are dioecious.

Groundsel is wind pollinated, and its seeds are wind dispersed. The pollen is thought to be allergenic. The small fruits are spread by their pappus, or modified calyx with featherlike hairs that catch the wind for a ride to new areas. Horticultural propagation may be easiest by softwood cuttings.

This native salt-tolerant shrub ranges from northern Mexico to Massachusetts along the southeastern Coastal Plain of the Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico. Groundsel is a woody invader of disturbed lowlands and

open forest throughout its range. This prolific plant is therefore ideal for rapid colonization, or rehabilitation, of disturbed areas. Its salt tolerance makes it especially useful for coastal areas where salt spray is common, such as on barrier islands and in estuaries or salt marshes. It is also common along right-of-ways in states that use road salt during the winters. An early successional plant, it is common on southeastern roadsides and in old fields, ditches, and open woods. Groundsel is slow to colonize burned areas and is intolerant of fire.

Groundsel leaves contain a cardiotoxic glucoside that is toxic to livestock. It is not considered a very good wildlife food and the seeds are poisonous if eaten. On the other hand, the flowers produce copious amounts of nectar that attract a variety of bees and butterflies including monarchs, and these attract birds. Imported into Australia as an ornamental in 1900, it soon became naturalized and a weed. On the positive side, it is a major honey flora for the Aussies.

Though often considered a weed, Thelma Glover of the Georgia Perimeter College Native Plant Botanical Garden described its usefulness in the garden. "Sea myrtle has virtually been ignored by professional plants men in Georgia while other native shrubs growing beside it in the same habitats, such as *Myrica cerifera* (wax myrtle), *llex vomitoria* (yaupon holly), and *llex glabra* (inkberry), have made a substantial splash in the commercial and residential landscape trade. Comparatively, I think sea myrtle has as much, if not more, to offer, considering that it is much more cold hardy and dependably evergreen than wax myrtle, grows much faster than yaupon and inkberry, tolerates (even thrives) in much more difficult situations than any of the above, not to mention that when in fruit, no shrub can compare to it."



President Lelia Kelly unveils new MNPS banner made by Peggy Guyton (in foreground).



She continues, "Use it as a screen, in the mixed shrub border for late fall color, or as a contrast with deep green, dense evergreen shrubs. Its rounded, airy habit makes it a natural to soften sharp angles of buildings and it works great planted on steep banks to control erosion. It's a perfect backdrop for fall blooming wildflowers such as goldenrods, asters, sunflowers, ironweed, turtleheads and blue lobelia."

We are well aware of invasive non-indigenous plants in our country that were brought in by the horticulture trade. Well, *Baccharis halimifolia* is an invasive species that was introduced in Europe during the 17th century as an ornamental plant and we have already mentioned its export to Australia. Its invasive nature has resulted in its becoming a serious problem in New Zealand, Spain, France, Italy, Belgium, England, Ireland, and Asia.

# **MSU Educational Gardens Expanded** by Lois Connington

The demonstration gardens at Clay Lyle Entomology Building benefited from a late-year Extension Service grant this past summer. In addition to improvements to the lobby displays and the new arthropod zoo, we were able to add a 160-plant garden to the side yard that features plants known for their attractiveness to butterflies and pollinators (see table below). The plants are steadily establishing, and it is our hope that the garden will be a beautiful and educational addition to our tours for school groups and other visitors. We will be adding a bee wall to provide nesting sites for native bees soon.

If you are in the Starkville area, stop by to visit the gardens. We welcome donations of native or pollinator plants and would be happy to give you a tour of the gardens, zoo, or entomology museum.

Bergamot (Monarda fistulosa) Butterflyweed (Asclepias tuberosa) Columbine (Aquilegia canadensis) Crooked stem aster (Aster prenanthoides) Culver's root (Veronicastrum virginicum) Dense blazingstar (Liatris spicata) Downy phlox (Phlox pilosa) Golden Alexanders (Zizia aurea) Ironweed (Vernonia fasciculata) Little bluestem (Schizachyrium scoparium) Meadow blazingstar (Liatris ligulistylis) New England aster (Aster novae-angliae) Ohio goldenrod (Solidago ohioensis) Ohio spiderwort (Tradescantia ohiensis) Orange coneflower (Rudbeckia fulgida) Pale purple coneflower (*Echinacea pallida*) Palm sedge (*Carex muskingumensis*) Prairie blazingstar (*Liatris pycnostachya*) Prairie dropseed (*Sporobolus heterolepis*) Prairie smoke (*Geum triflorum*) Purple coneflower (*Echinacea purpurea*) Purple prairie clover (*Dalea purpurea*) Smooth aster (*Aster laevis*) Smooth penstemon (*Penstemon digitalis*) Stiff coreopsis (*Coreopsis palmate*) Sullivant's milkweed (*Asclepias sullivantii*) Sweet joe pye weed (*Eupatorium purpureum*) Tall joe pye weed (*Eupatorium fistulosum*) Yellow coneflower (*Ratibida pinnata*)

# Oktibbeha County Heritage Museum Landscape Enhancement Project

#### by Brian Templeton

In 2009 the Oktibbeha County Heritage Museum (OCHM) asked the Department of Landscape Architecture at Mississippi State University to assist them with a drainage issue. Stormwater runoff was flowing and then ponding under the museum building, an old train depot relocated to 206 Fellowship Street in Starkville, MS. The ponding was compromising the structural footings for the building. The solution to the problem was actually quite simple: create a swale and divert the water away from the building. Faculty members Wayne Wilkerson and Cory Gallo suggested a more elaborate and elegant solution that would address the drainage issue as well as provide some exterior exhibits for the museum. Four years and five phases later, the result is an award-winning landscape that demonstrates stormwater management techniques like no other in the Southeast.

One of the techniques that we implemented to assist in managing the stormwater was to utilize native plants such as prairie perennials for seasonal interest. We recently finished installation of numerous species of these prairie plants as well as a small reforestation exhibit with not just native trees, but local trees. The trees were all harvested from MSU forests or from local landowners, with permission, of course. The majority of these were understory trees, but we also planted some canopy trees to grow as replacements for the existing mature trees. Students Michael Vampran and Thomas Stoudenmire, from MSU's Department of Landscape Architecture and College of Forest Resources, respectively, spearheaded both the design and the implementation of the recent plantings.

Existing	native	trees	on	site	include:
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Pecan Carya illinoinensis Elm Ulmus sp.\* Sweetgum Liquidambar styraciflua Baldcypress Taxodium distichum American Hophornbeam Carpinus caroliniana Sugarberry Celtis laevigata Red Maple Acer rubrum Green Ash Fraxinus pennsylvanica

### Tree species for the reforestation portion include:

Pawpaw Asimina triloba Roughleaf Dogwood Cornus Redbud Cercis canadensis Southern Red Oak Quercus falcata Mockernut Hickory Carya tomentosa Black Cherry Prunus serotina Red Buckeye Aesculus pavia

#### Native plants also on site:

Stoke's Aster Stokesia laevis Late Purple Aster Symphyotrichum patens nee Aster patens Heath Aster Symphyotrichum ericoides nee Aster ericoides Prostrate Heath Aster Symphyotrichum ericoides var. prostrate nee Aster ericoides var. prostrate Wood Fern Dryopteris sp. Oakleaf Hydrangea Hydrangea quercifolia Swamp Sunflower Helianthus angustifolius Purple Louisiana Iris Iris fulva Yellow Louisiana Iris Iris giganticaerulea Virginia Sweetspire Itea virginica Fringe Tree Chionanthus virginicus

Azalea Rhododendron sp.\* Daylily Hemerocalis sp.\* Canna Canna sp.\* Prickly pear cactus Opuntia sp. Purple Coneflower Echinacea purpurea Prairie Coneflower Ratibida sp. Black-eyed Susan Rudbeckia hirta Sunflower Helianthus sp. Big Bluestem Andropogon gerardii Little Bluestem Schizachyrium scoparium Pink Mulhy Grass Muhlenbergia capillaris Sea Oats Uniola paniculata

\* These plants were either existing or volunteered on site. Their provenance is unknown and we have not confirmed their species.

The plants on site are not all native. There are quite a few existing, mature plants with non-indigenous heritage performing very well. Many of them were donated to the museum as memorials or have been residents for time immemorial. Every phase of this project has been funded by the Friends of OCHM. In order to maximize resources and impact we sought and received numerous and generous donations from members of the Starkville and MSU communities. Many of the native plants were donated by members of the Oktibbeha County Master Gardeners, especially Charles Weatherly and Jim McKell, who also volunteered their time and vehicles. MNPS Vice President Dr. Tim Schauwecker graciously allowed us to use culls from his prairie restoration research plots and assisted with identification and cultural requirements.

For more information or to schedule a tour of the grounds of the museum contact: The Oktibbeha County Heritage Museum **Brian Templeton** http://oktibbehaheritagemuseum.com/wordpress/ 662.323.0211 662.325.3190

btempleton@lalc.msstate.edu

# Plantago, the Brown Recluse and First Aid by John Guyton

As state environmental education specialist I decided a great way to introduce people to non-indigenous species was to start in their own yards. One of the first plants we researched in our Ocean Springs yard was buckhorn (Plantago *lanceolata*) or English plantain. It was brought over from England by our ancestors as an important medicinal plant. When I realized it was edible, I tried a few leaves and found them bitter and a little stringy, but they added an interesting element to a bag of mixed salad greens.

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Fall-Winter 2013

*Plantago* has been used for centuries as a panacea (a medicinal cure-all) and as such it is steeped in medicine, history, and literature, making it an excellent interdisciplinary topic uniting science, history, and language arts. In science, the leaves can be used to treat insect bites and stings, blisters, cuts, scrapes, and even dry, itchy skin. It is a non-indigenous plant, brought to America by our ancestors, that has been used by humans for thousands of years. This plant was one of the nine sacred herbs in Anglo Saxon medicine texts and was used by Greek, Roman, and Persian physicians. The father of English literature, Chaucer, mentioned it in his writing (*Prologue of the Chanounes Yeman*) and Shakespeare's Romeo instructs Benvolio, "Your plantain-leaf is excellent for....your broken shin."

Environmental educators should know this plant and incorporate it into their programs. Children will enjoy knowing about such a useful 'weed' in their yards and will be fascinated to learn of its use during Chaucer and Shakespeare's time, increasing their interest in literature.

In recent times people in our country have come to depend entirely on pharmaceutical companies, abandoning the time-tested remedies that are available for free in their yards and applying herbicides to kill these incredible plants. Pharmacies do not sell "natural" products with the range of benefits

this plant delivers. Peggy and I use plantain primarily for cuts, scrapes, burns, bites, and stings. My first experience was with a cut. Chewed plantain stopped the flow of blood almost instantly and there was no residual pain. Peggy's first

experience involved a splinter that was broken off below the skin. I chewed a couple leaves and she secured the poultice over the splinter with a band aid. In 10 to 15 minutes the astringent leaves tightened up the muscle tissue to the point the splinter was sticking out and could be removed with forceps.

Fellow native plant enthusiast Shera Owen told me about her use of chewed plantain, alone, on a brown recluse bite her husband received and said it healed without any lasting scarring. Now there is a brown recluse first aid kit containing plantain. When I found the kit online I was naturally skeptical, but I read on. I was familiar with its four ingredients and already use buckhorn medicinally. The second ingredient is activated carbon—long used in medicine to absorb poisons that have been ingested. Echinacea is a well-known infection fighter and Lobelia has historically been used on insect bites. Plaintain is astringent and antibiotic. In an emergency without a first aid kit, my first decision would be to apply some plantain while heading to the hospital as quickly as possible.

If you work or play in an area where brown recluse spiders are common you may want to purchase one of these kits. If you are bitten, use it immediately and then head for the emergency room taking the kit and spider (preferably collected <u>without smashing it beyond recognition</u>) with you. If I did not have a kit and it was not possible to get to an emergency room, I would crush some aquarium (or any other available) charcoal to a very fine powder, pour it on the wound, then layer a large quantity of well chewed and saliva-rich plantain on top and secure it with a large band aid.

*Note:* A complementary article that focuses more on brown recluse spiders will appear in the February 2014 issue of *The Gloworm*. The newsletter is available online. Google "The Gloworm Newsletter" and you will be taken directly to our archives.



Brown recluse spiders (*Loxosceles reclusa*) are not aggressive and prefer to run and hide. Most bites occur accidentally when going through old boxes that were not adequately sealed or putting on work gloves or shoes. If these spiders can avoid you, they will. Note the violin on the dorsal side of a brown recluse's cephalothorax (upside down in the picture). They are very difficult to see, but there are six eyes in groups of two in a semicircular pattern around the chin end of the violin.



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#### MS Native Plant Society mississippinativeplantsociety.org

Coastal Plains MNPS meets every 4<sup>th</sup> Monday in Gulfport. Contact President Edie Dreher at 228-864-2775 or mail to 100 24<sup>th</sup> St., Gulfport, MS 39507.

### Join MNPS, MEEA or both!

# MS Environmental Education Alliance

#### eeinmississippi.org

The Mississippi Environmental Education Alliance conducts an annual fall conference and occasional workshops.

## **MNP&EE**

Mississippi Native Plants & Environmental Education is the quarterly newsletter of the Mississippi Native Plant Society & the Mississippi Environmental Education Alliance. Deadline for Articles Winter - November 10 Spring - February 10 Summer-May 10 Fall - August 10

### MEEA Website: *eeinmississippi.org* MNPS Website: *mississippinativeplantsociety.org*

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