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NEWSLETTER

WINTER 1990

volume 8, number 4

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LNPS WINTER MEETING - SATURDAY, JANUARY 26, 1991

Take time now to boldly mark your calendar for January 26, 1991. The winter meeting of the LNPS will start that day at 9:30 AM. The meeting will be held at the campus of LSU - Alexandria in Coughlin Auditorium (across the street from where we met last year). The campus is located on HWY 71, about 10 miles south of Alexandria - you can't miss it! Attendance was excellent in 1990, and we expect an even bigger turnout this time! We'll have a native plant sale, so if you have native plants to sell or trade, bring all you can! The agenda is as follows:

- 9:30 AM to 10:00 AM - Registratioon, coffee (\$2 donation, please).
- 10:00 AM to 10:30 AM - Wildflowers of the Big Thicket and Western Louisiana, the speaker is Mrs. Geraldine Watson of Silsbee, Texas.
- 10:30 AM to 11:00 AM - Identifying Butterflies and Establishing Butterfly Habitats, the speaker is Dr. Malcolm Vidrine of LSU - Eunice.
- 11:00 AM to 11:30 AM - Culinary Uses of Native Species of Louisiana, the speaker is Dr. Charles Allen of LSU - Eunice.
- 11:30 AM to 12:30 PM - Brown bag lunch and native plant sale.
- 12:30 PM to 1:30 PM - LNPS business meeting. On the agenda:
  1. Election of officers and board memebers.
  2. LNPS t-shirts.
  3. other business.

A LETTER FROM OUR PRESIDENT, TERRY ERWIN

This will be my last letter to you as your LNPS President. It has been a fun-filled adventure for me and I have had nothing but good memories of representing you. The new friends I have made reminds me of the special people that make up the LNPS.

We'll elect our officers for the coming year at our winter meeting, so I hope as many members as possible will come. The board has nominated John Mayronne for president, and if he's elected, I'm sure he'll do a fine job. Hope to see you at the meeting!

## DUES REMINDER

Do you know anyone who would like to join the LNPS? Tell them to send their dues (\$5) to our Treasurer:

Mary Moseley  
122 Justin  
Shreveport, Louisiana 71105

## DEADLINES FOR NEXT 4 NEWSLETTERS:

Don't forget! In an effort to better coordinate the distribution of information concerning field trips as well as other dated information the newsletter uses the following deadline policy. Any information received after the deadline will be included in the next newsletter. Deadlines for the next four newsletters are as follows:

Spring Newsletter:	March 1, 1991
Summer Newsletter:	June 1, 1991
Fall Newsletter:	September 1, 1991
Winter Newsletter:	December 1, 1991

## A NOTE ON THE VIBURNUM ARTICLE IN FALL '90 NEWSLETTER

Please note that Dr. R. Dale Thomas should have been listed as an author of the "The Native Viburnums of Louisiana" article in our Fall, 1990 Newsletter.

## THE STYRACACEAE (SILVERBELL AND SNOWBELLS) OF LOUISIANA

by Charles Allen & R. Dale Thomas

The Styracaceae is a family of woody plants made up of 12 genera and 165 species, mostly shrubs (Mobberly: The Plant-Book, 1987). Two genera and three species (Halesia diptera, Styrax americana, and Styrax grandiflora) occur in Louisiana. Silverbells (Halesia) and Snowbells (Styrax) both produce showy white flowers. Halesia has four petals and the fruits are winged with the sepals completely fused to the fruits. Styrax has five (sometimes six or seven) petals and the fruits are woods subglobose capsules that have the sepals fused to the fruit only at the base. Both genera have superimposed axillary buds (two buds above each alternate leaf). The upper bud in Styrax is thumblike in shape, in Halesia it is ovoid (Godfrey and Wooten: Aquatic Plants of Southeastern United States, 1981) or triangular (Clewell: Guide to the Vascular Plants of the Florida Panhandle, 1985). The pith of Styrax is continuous and homogeneous while the pith of Halesia is diaphragmed and chambered between the diaphragms (Godfrey: Trees, Shrubs, and Woody Vines of Northern Florida and Adjacent Georgia and Alabama, 1990). All three species have alternate, deciduous leaves with pinnate major veins. They are usually shrubs but Halesia diptera can be a small tree.

Halesia diptera is called silverbell, two-winged silverbell, snowdrop-tree, opossumwood, and cow-licks. It is one of several plants (including Viburnum nudum and Ilex decidua) called "possum haw" because of its edible fruits. Its green, two-winged fruits are sour with a faint cucumber taste and somewhat resemble the taste of the tropical star fruit.

It is an excellent masticatory when rolled in the mouth for their lemony, sour taste. Silverbell is usually a large shrub in Louisiana but the national champion is four feet one inch in circumference and is 55 feet tall with a crown spread of 38 feet. It occurs along streams in sandy, alluvial soils. It grows well under a canopy of taller hardwoods much as do dogwoods. Its showy white flowers appear just as the leaves appear making it a choice ornamental for home plantings. It has few if any pests. Its fruits are cherished by squirrels. Young fruits can be pickled in vinegar for home use.

Styrax americana is called snowbell, American snowbell, downy snowbell, and little snowbell. This shrub inhabits the wet places commonly where water stands some or most of the time. It is common on lowland clay (gumbo) soils and in lowland wet woods, but is also occurs in the wetter areas of the pine woods and upland woods. The amount of hairs on the leaves and stems vary greatly and the fuzziest individuals can be separated as Styrax americana var. pulverulenta (downy snowbell). In open, wet areas plants are heavily laden with numerous white hanging flowers. It is commonly associated with alders, button bushes, and sweet-spire. It is easily shaped by pruning to a very desirable cultivated shrub.

Styrax grandiflora is called big-leaf snowbell or large-flowered snowbell. It is more commonly found in the sandy soil of pine woods and upland hardwood forests. It is commonly associated with sweetleaf, red bay, sourwood, arrowwood, and magnolias. Its large flowers tend to be partially hidden by the larger leaves and thus is not as showy as the other species. Large-flowered snowbell is a larger shrub than American snowbell and will tolerate more shade. The fruits of both species are sought out by birds and squirrels.

European species of Styrax, especially Styrax benzoin and Styrax officinalis, contain resins (Storax and Balsam) which is extracted from wounded bark and used medicinally to treat coughs, dermatitis, toothache, and as an antiseptic and a flavoring agent in cigarettes. The woody globose fruits of most species have been used to make ornamental beads.

All three species of Styracaceae in Louisiana are becoming less common because of forest management practices and commercial development of wooded areas. Their use as browse for deer and as food for other wildlife (birds and squirrels) should be emphasized. The showy white flowers of all three species make them worthy of ornamental use in home plantings. They are especially showy in open areas along streams and roadsides. They are easily propagated by seeds and by layering, but can be propagated by cuttings only with difficulty.

## THE SUNFLOWERS (HELIANTHUS) OF THE CAJUN PRAIRIE

by Charles Allen & Malcolm Vidrine

In the Cajun Prairie, there are two species of the genus Helianthus. They are Helianthus angustifolius and Helianthus mollis. Both species are perennials and produce flowers with yellow rays.

Helianthus mollis (Hairy Sunflower) is a rhizomatous plant with wide, opposite leaves with clasping bases. The above-ground stems are usually unbranched and shorter than three feet. The leaves and stems are covered with a gray, blue, or white pubescence. The number of heads produced per stem is usually less than five. The disc flowers are yellow. This species flowers from July to November.

Helianthus angustifolius (Common Sunflower) is a nonrhizomatous plant with narrow, mostly alternate leaves with a short petiole. The above-ground stems are usually branched and taller than three feet. The leaves and stems are glabrous or sparsely pubescent with colorless pubescence. The number of

heads produced per stem is numerous, almost always more than ten. The disc flowers are purple tipped. This species flowers from September to November.

We have grown the Hairy Sunflower from seeds and the plants flower the first year. It can also be propagated from rhizome cuttings. We have been unsuccessful with above-ground stem cuttings. The Common Sunflower roots readily from above-ground stem cuttings, we have not tried the seeds of this species.

#### FOOD FOR THOUGHT

A suggestion has been made that the LNPS compile a source list for native plant material (preferably in-state) detailing what is available from each source. There's a definite need for this service, what's needed is a volunteer to compile the list and make it available to interested individuals. Certainly this is something we should have been doing already. Anyone who's willing to take on this task should write to the LNPS Newsletter and let me know so the society can get started on this!

#### FLORE LOUISIANE AVAILABLE

Flore Louisiane, a book by Walter C. Holmes is now available. An information packet received in the mail describes the book as "...the first of a planned series of books on the natural history of French-speaking Louisiana. This book results from seven years of work, researching and collecting ethno-botanical information concerning French-speaking Louisiana".

The book, 6" X 9", 145 pages, is available at \$19.95 per copy (make checks payable to CENTER FOR LOUISIANA STUDIES) by writing to:

The Center for Louisiana Studies  
USL  
P.O. Box 40831  
Lafayette, Louisiana 70504