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### Volume 33, Issue 2



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- To educate people on the value of native plants and the need to preserve and protect rare and endangered species
- To promote the propagation and use of native plants in the landscape
- To educate people on the relationship between our native flora and wildlife

### **LOUISIANA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY**



## Caroline Dormon, the Pioneer Woman

by Linda Barber Auld

Born in 1888 Caroline was a prolific writer, multimedia artist, an accomplished botanist, noteworthy archeologist, an esteemed forester, school teacher, and tireless conservationist. I think to myself, is there anything this woman can't do? Well, yes. She couldn't drive a car; however, she could handle a mule team that carried her to a teaching job and back home every day. Women living in that era were expected to marry, raise children and do the housework. Yet, from sunrise to sundown her feisty determination drove her to share her deep knowledge of nature's ecosystem of plants,

insects, and birds. In her world of the early 1900's simple pleasures of picnicking and strolling through a garden were



entertainment and forms of communications were very limited. Letter writing, newspapers, magazines, plus word of mouth at garden club meetings and church socials spread the news. I find it amazing that this woman from the little town of Saline, Louisiana, was able to amaze master gardeners from all over the world with her talents and wealth of wisdom presented in her many interesting articles and fabulous books of her exquisite artwork.

One of five children, Caroline spent her childhood years at Briarwood, their family's vacation home. Her father was a lawyer by trade but avid naturalist by hobby. Her family enjoyed nature walks together which helped her to develop a life-long interest in plants and wildlife.

NOTE FROM THE PRESIDENT: Hope you all are staying safe from COVID 19.

There have been many articles written about Caroline. She has been described as "the Audubon of wild flowers", " A female Thoreau", " a wild goose", " the Prima Donna of the Plant World", "A woman of many interests", "One of Louisiana's foremost educators", "Queen of the Forest Kingdom", and (my favorite) " A tiny doll-like woman of granite will". Pretty impressive!

In the April 13, 1997 Times Picayune article, Jeanette Hardy writes..." There would be a cocklebur caught on the hem of her skirt, bits of leaves and pine needles or wisps of cobwebs and cocoons stuck to her shoulders. Fair complexion. Her hair braided into a crown or pulled back severely into a bun. Straw colored. Eyes green as chlorophyll conditioned to detect the barest flicker of movement..."

Unheard of that a woman of that day and age would pursue a formal education, Caroline was educated at Judson College in Marion, Alabama with a Bachelor's degree in Literature and Art. She taught for several years in Louisiana schools and then reestablished her home at Briarwood in 1918 where she began to collect, catalog and preserve native trees and shrubs.

Her diversified career was filled with fascinating jobs that led her throughout the state. In 1922 she persuaded the U.S. Forest Service to establish a national forest in Louisiana. She also developed

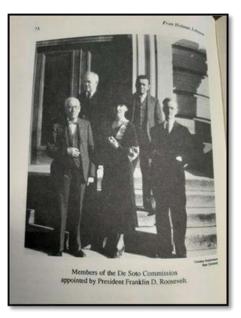
forestry education materials for schools and promoted forestry conservation that was supported by civic leaders. In 1930 during the administration of President Herbert Hoover, U.S. Representative James B. Aswell worked with Caroline to establish the Kisatchie National Forest. In 1941 she was hired as Beautification Consultant for the Louisiana Highway Department. Also in 1941 the board of Public Welfare employed her landscaping consulting talents to naturescape the Huey P. Long Charity Hos-



pital grounds in Pineville. In 1961 the 301 acre Louisiana State Arboretum that she had proposed was dedicated. In 1964 Caroline was consultant for the popular Hodges Gardens State Park and nearby Chicot State Park. The Caroline Dormon Lodge opened in 1965 at the arboretum which serves as visitor center, library, and native plants herbarium.

One of her assignments that piqued my curiosity was her involvement with

the DeSoto Expedition Commission. It was established to study



and provide a report to Congress that determined DeSoto's actual route discovering America along with recommendations for a celebration of the expedition's 400th anniversary. Caroline was the only woman selected to join this team of prominent men. After publication of the Commission's 349 page final report which included 11 maps, controversy regarding the DeSoto route subsided for a number of years.

Caroline was honored with many prestigious awards such as:

\* The Eloise Paine Luquer Medal by the Garden Club of America

\* The Honorary Doctorate of Science from Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge for Distinguished Scientific Achievement

\* Rapides Parish School board opened the Caroline Dormon Junior High School in Woodworth



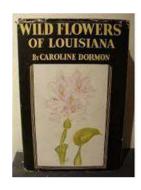
\* Parks are named for her in Louisiana and her home is now a visitor center

The collection of Caroline's letters attest to professional correspondence with notable national figures including the President's wife Lady Bird Johnson, inventor Thomas Edison, garden writer Elizabeth Lawrence, famed botanist Dr. J. K. Small, and Landscape architect Ellen Biddle Shipman.

Edith Stern, creator of Longue Vue Gardens of New Orleans, befriended Caroline through a Garden Club of America roadside wildflower project. Their working relationship grew as did their friendship to the point where Edith was inspired in 1934 to finance the publishing of Caroline's first book, "Wildflowers of Louisiana--Most of the Herbaceous Wild Flowers of the Gulf States with the Exception of Mountainous Regions, and the Sub-Tropical Ports of Florida and Texas". The first edition was

172 pages accompanied by 26 color plates plus 38 black and white text illustrations all drawn by the author. Subsequently, Edith commissioned Caroline as a consultant for Longue

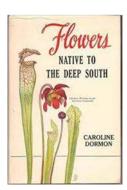
Vue- to suggest and supply native plant selections and place them in Longue Vue's Wild Garden. This relationship contin-



ued from 1947 until her death in 1971.

By the 1950's Caroline became good friends with Frank and Sara Gladney of Baton Rouge. In 1956 Frank and Sara, both avid gardeners, purchased

a 360-acre land parcel in Gloster, Mississippi. They began enhancing the already beautiful landscape of rolling hills and deep ravines by adding a wide



variety of native plants. Sara was deeply involved with the Garden Club Federation and was so intrigued by Caroline's fountain of plant knowledge and artistic talents that she financed Caroline's next book,

"Flowers Native to the Deep South". The first edition, containing 176 pages accompanied by 33 color plates and 102 text illustrations, was printed in April of 1958. Caroline's

words taken from the foreword:
"...it is hoped that this book will
help to arouse renewed interest in
the preservation of our rapidly
vanishing wild flowers. From too
frequent picking, misdirected efforts to move them to gardens,
forest fires and onslaughts of rabbits and insects, some species are
becoming very rare..." Some of
her best gardening advice was "...if
one attempts to grow native
plants, their natural environment,
soil, etc., must be studied and imitated..."

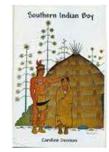
By 1965 Caroline published "Natives Preferred" containing 217 pages accompanied by 12 gar-

den pictures plus 44 text illustrations. Her words taken from the foreword say it all "...The question may be



asked, why use native plants? The logical answer to this is, why not? This book is not written for those who still cling to the Old World style of formal gardening, with stiff clipped hedges and beds of flowers in geometrical designs. It is for those who love the informality of Nature, with softly rounded

masses of foliage and flowers scattered freely by her hand."



Caroline advocated for educa-

tion and support for the Choctaw and Chitimacha tribes of Louisiana. In 1967, "Southern Indian Boy" was produced with 52 pages and 8 text illustrations. Red Boots and Deer-Runner, the story of Deer-Runner's People, the Chitimacha and Hi-Chah, a Caddo Indian Boy: The Story of Hi-Chah's People are Caroline's two stories describing the local Indian life.

"Bird Talk" was printed in 1969 containing 122 pages plus 42 text illustrations. "From the first, birds fascinated me, and my father--a very good naturalist -- taught me their common names. Around my home at Ar-

cadia, in the hills of North Louisiana, there were trees, shrubs, and vines; so the bird life was varied and delightful.



The term "bird-watcher" had not been invented then but nevertheless I became one as soon as I could walk about the yard. ... This book has little chats telling the things that I have learned by living intimately with birds throughout a long life."

"The Gift of the Wild Things--The Life of Caroline Dor*mon*" was written by Fran Holman Johnson and published in 1990 containing 166 pages. In

something--I call it 'the gift of the wild things'--and because I am simple myself, and have a sympathetic heart, I can understand animals and simple people to an unusual degree. I see, too, so much that others miss. When I know so many lovely things, I feel greedy in keeping them all to myself." Taken from the book jacket: "The fascinating and many-faceted career of this unconventional woman is outlined for the first time by Fran Holman Johnson, who examines Dormon's childhood environment; her love of nature; her education; her brief career as a teacher, her relationship with numerous scholars, writers and artists, and her success as a naturalist. The text is complemented by numerous photographs."

When I began reading this book, I didn't want to put it down. Wonder-

ing what she was going to do next held me intrigued and spellbound. Personally, I find her country sayings to be descriptive and endearing. Some of my favor-



ites are: "Trees are donning their green uniform", "Fall brings a riot of color", "Leafminers are villainous rabbits", "willynilly", "hybridizing = meddling with God's business", "humbly thankful", and "My fingers are tingling for the brush."

In 2010 Fran Holman published "Adventures in Wild Flowers: The Timeless Writings of Caroline

1942 Caroline wrote "I was born with *Dormon*" containing 227 pages. Words from the preface: "Caroline Coroneos Dormon (1888-1971) published horticultural and gardening books and articles more than 75 years ago, yet her writings are still timely, still potent. This work is a collection of fifty of those articles first published in botanical and gardening magazines, including The American Home, Hollands's Magazine, Home Gardening for the South, Flower Grower, and The Bulletin for the American Iris Society.

> I am hoping that this article will inspire you to read her books and to visit her beloved Briarwood Nature Preserve. Experience the beautiful rambling trails filled with new blooming surprises with each season and then you will know how nature inspired her to draw its splendor and preserve it for generations to come.

http://www.briarwood.org

Linda Barber Auld, better known as the NOLA BugLady, owns and operates Barber Laboratories, a 3-generation family retail store where homeowners and business owners can buy and apply professional strength pest control products on their own properties. Linda has raised butterflies for over forty years and has self-published her first book. "BugLady's Butterfly Summer". She sells butterfly nectar and caterpillar host plants at her store located at 6444 Jefferson Highway in Harahan. Open Monday through Friday. You can reach Linda at nolabuglady@gmail.com. Also, check out her Facebook pages and her websites @ www.barberlaboratories.com and www.nolabuglady.com to see the upcoming scheduled events, list of available plants, and pictures of her butterfly projects.

# Crested Coral-Root (Hexalectris spicata)

By Dave Moore

Hexalectris spicata (crested coral-root) in a dry-mesic pine-oak-hickory woodland on the Kisatchie National Forest near Gardner, LA. This Genus is comprised of species that are fully myco-heterotrophic, lifelong parasites that sequester carbon indirectly from nearby photosynthetic plants – usually pine, oak or hickory trees - via mycorrhizal fungi. In other words, they take energy from fungi that in turn get their energy from vascular plants. These particular plants were growing underneath hickory trees and were probably gaining nutrients from the roots of these trees. Thanks to Neal J Plauche for making this discovery. And no, I did not pull one up to see if the roots were indeed coral in color. Owing to its rarity in Louisiana, I also failed in my botanical duties to collect a herbarium specimen. There are simply too few from which to make a collection. Alas, a photovoucher will have to suffice.



# Wetland Plantings—Not Your Average Forbs

By Margaret Vincent

As an environmental scientist in the wetlands of coastal Louisiana, I consider myself very fortunate to have the opportunity to see many beautifully interesting plants flourishing in their natural environments. I can't help but think of their potential in native landscaped plantings.

Many of us, especially those with damp or low-lying areas on their property, are familiar with the more common 'stars' of native gardening, such as Hibiscus and *Iris.* But I find that lots of folks, myself included, tend to overlook wetland graminoids, both in the field as well as in cultivation. This group includes all of our grass-like plants, and are often aesthetically valuable for their foliage. As the botanical saying goes, "sedges have edges, rushes are round, and grasses have nodes from their tips to the ground," but they can really offer much more.

Lately, I've been taking note of the remarkable show that the whitetop sedge (*Rhynchospora colorata*) is currently putting on. If you've seen this perennial in full bloom, it can be easily confused for its more conspicuously flowering forb counterparts. The inflorescence is surrounded by a whorl of large flaring bracts, splotched white at their base and tapering green towards the tip. In this way, they almost resemble the petals of a daisy. Even

more flower-like, these bracts attract insect pollinators, including some of



Whitetop Sedge (Rhynchospora colorata) photo by Margaret Vincent

our native bees. This is not typical of the family, however, which is primarily wind pollinated.

I imagine the whitetop sedge providing excellent contrast as understudy, offset from other companion plantings such as cardinal flower (*Lobelia cardinalis*), swamp milkweed (*Asclepias incarnata*), or seaside goldenrod (*Solidago sempervirens*).

Another great graminoid worth mentioning is soft rush (*Juncus effusus*). Its cylindrical culms are leafless and often tightly bunched, forming attractive clumps. Summer blooms emerge from one side of the stem just below the tips of the culms. I find the dense spikes' firework-like appearance charming, especially as they turn golden by fall.

My ideal planting would include soft rush and its striking vertical to spreading habit as an evergreen structural element, either interspersed or used as a backdrop. Standing at a height of 2-4 ft, its medium green stems often feature darker colored basal sheaths and should draw the eye toward shorter herbaceous specimens planted in front.



Soft Rush (Juncus effuses) photo by Mike Glaspell

Conversely, it could also be used as a foundation to frame taller species behind it.

My favorite wetland grass is undoubtedly sugarcane plumegrass (*Saccharum giganteum*). Tall and robust, this grass may reach over 6 ft in a towering nature and creates a fountain of arching foliage. It is another spectacular bloomer. In early fall it bears a densely tufted bloom spike topped by ivory to warmpink feathery plumes.

# Wetland Plantings—Not Your Average Forbs cont.

By Margaret Vincent



Sugarcane Plume Grass (Saccaharis gigantia) Photo by Matt Conn

This grass would be well used layered behind soft rush or could make an excellent specimen piece placed closer to the foreground. Being a late bloomer, it can also help to extend a garden's season of interest, especially when used alongside fall flowering goldenrod.

Wetland plantings including these species are attractive as rain gardens, allowing excess rainwater a place to collect and percolate down into the water table. Too, they provide services to many backyard inhabitants such as frogs and dragonflies. They also function in soil retention and erosion control and can be used along ditches and other water features.

Consider some of our underused graminoids and other wetland natives as this tropical weather rolls in.

Margaret Vincent is a recent graduate of University of Louisiana at Lafayette and a native to South Louisiana. She has been a member and volunteer with the Louisiana Native Plant Society, the Acadiana Native Plant Project, and the Cajun Prairie Habitat Preservation Society for the last 3 years. Currently, an environmental scientist with the Coastwide Reference Monitoring System, she is always looking for additional ways to serve and learn more about our plant communities.

## In Defense of Bear's-Foot in the Garden

by Charlotte Seidenberg

What's going to happen to Smallanthus uvedalia (AKA Smallanthus uvedalius, formerly Polymnia uvedalia, AKA Hairy Leafcup, Bearpaw, Bear's-Foot, ...) when creeping suburbia reaches the wildest places in Louisiana and the whole state is concreted and sodded over? When the only native plants are found in the yards of gardeners who like the idea of growing natives, but read in wildflower ID books that this plant is "rank" and "coarse"? When they read Gil Nelson's Best Native Plants for Southern Gardens or Sally Wasowski's Gardening with Native Plants of the South, which don't even mention it? When they fail to find it in lists of host plants of showy butterflies and other charismatic pollinators? Will it disappear from the moist to dry, lightly shaded to open woodland, savanna, thickets, fields, and bottomland where it occurs in much of Louisiana and across the eastern United States? You may think I'm overreacting, but It's already threatened in Michigan, endan-



gered in New Jersey and New York. If more people broadened their reading to include Bill Fontenot's *Native Gardening in the South*, they would know all about Bear's-Foot. Maybe

if we Louisiana Native Plant Society members grow it and recommend it, more non-members will take another look. Why should they? First of all, it's a beautiful plant, a member of the Asteraceae, Sunflower family.

Bill Fontenot calls it one of his "personal favorites." He describes Bear's-Foot's huge leaves as "sycamore-like" and likes the way it looks "in dappled light locales – sort



of a gleaming, Oak-leaved Hydrangea look."

I like it rangy, reaching for the sky through the blueberry bushes in my back yard, or peeking through turkscap at the base of the water-oak in the driveway - its golden-yellow blooms against deep green foliage really do pop in the shade. It competes well and looks pretty with blooming-then-fruiting elderberries and French mulberries that form a bird and bug cafeteria in my side yard.



If rangy is not for you, do what Leslee Reed does: plant it with ironweed or other rambunctious growers and cut them back before the flowers form so they bush out and bloom low.



Bear's-Foot is a great pollinator plant. Sit and watch the flowers in the sunlight or shade and you'll see bees and wasps and flies and who-knows- what else visit for pollen and nectar.

Linda Auld told me Bear's-Foot is "a preferred nectar plant for the very rare gold-banded skipper," which isn't found in Louisiana – yet. But it does occur in Mississippi, and its host plant, thicket bean (*Phaseolus polystachios var. polystachios*) grows in many parishes. Linda says, "I realize that

## In Defense of Bear's-Foot in the Garden cont.

by Charlotte Seidenberg

'Plant it and they will come' doesn't always work but I like to be prepared." Of Bear's Foot she says: "I really love the flower color and the fact that it blooms in between bloom time of other garden staples." July, August, September. Yes, July!



A cursory search of bugguide.net turns up clues to the critters mining or chewing some of my Bear's-Foot leaves and living in or on the plants: could be the larvae of moths, sawflies, flies, beetles, gall-forming flies or wasps and insects that are their parasites or parasitoids. Snails slime their way up the stems to the leaves. Even when it's not blooming, the plant is whole ecosystem in itself – and a cafeteria for tree frogs and birds.



Leslee Reed and I found Bear's-Foot lump it into that category of the growing in Dauphin Island, Alabama during a birding trip over 20 years ago. We dug just a little for our New Orleans gardens. She planted some at St. Andrew's School for her class of "Kinderbears." She says it's still there.

I brought mine with me when we moved to Covington 10 years ago. It's supposed to occur in the Beech -Magnolia woods where we live. I haven't found any, but the plants and offspring of the ones I brought are thriving as if they know they belong here – four ever-thickening clumps, one from seed.

Where can people get Bear's-Foot? Bill and Linda both comment on its limited commercial availability. Stay as local as possible, but If you can't get plants or seeds from a friend, you can buy them from Prairie Moon Nursery, whose website advises that Bear's-Foot has "very large seed with a tough seed coat; scarification is necessary."

Seasons trapped in leaf mulch must have scarified the seeds of Bear's-Foot that came up in a bed of honevsuckle azalea. I sure didn't plant it there. I passed some along to Tammany Baumgarten on July 24. I hope she's going to propagate it and use it in the gardens she designs, to spread the word.

Bear's-Foot is grown in a few gardens and persists in natural areas here and there. Maybe someday it will be everywhere. People with suburban mindsets may see it and

unwanted: plants they call weeds. Those of us who know better need to work on changing that mindset.



Charlotte Seidenberg is an Amateur naturalist, lives in the woods in Covington, LA. Author of The New Orleans Garden, Gardening in the Gulf South, her garden reflects her second (out of print) book The Wildlife Garden, Planning Backyard Habitats.

### The Louisiana Certified Habitat Program: How and Why to Certify?

By Phyllis Baudoin Griffard Acadiana Native Plant Project

If you were at the 2019 LNPS state meeting, you may deserve some of the thanks for our brand spanking new initiative. That meeting kicked off a conversation about how we could extend our reach beyond just the native plant society "choir", across Louisiana's diverse ecosystems and organizations, to recognize property owners and institutions that have added, landscaped with or conserved native plants on the land they manage.

At that meeting, a few people put up their hands to get this project started. Tammany Baumgarten, Susan Nichols, Margaret Vincent and Chris Doffitt were in on an early email conversation about what kind of program we wanted and could support with a small budget and group of volunteers. We checked the few other certification programs in other states and those of the national conservation nonprofits like Audubon, Xerces and National Wildlife Federation. One of our first decisions was that the purpose was to recognize Louisiana habitats, not native plants, per se. That is how we arrived at the name of the program: The Louisiana Certified Habitat Program. This gives weight to our message about the critical importance of local, native plants as the foundation of healthy, resilient habitats. This is also the spirit of Doug Tallamy's proposal in Nature's Best Hope that we should all contribute to Homegrown National Parka in our own backyards.

We also decided early that we wanted to offer a tangible, visible, durable yard sign to inspire curiosity and hopefully some neighborly oneupmanship. We wanted the program to be sustainable in every way: financially, doable with available volunteers and with a strong common message. We wanted the certification criteria to be attainable by even beginning native gardeners and scaled to encourage continuous progress and diversification, thus the bronze, silver and gold designations and free upgrades. One thing we borrowed from another state certification program was to include information about good habitat stewardship practices regarding invasives and pesticides. We wanted to vet each application personally, something more than an honor checkbox system but not as rigorous as a final exam.

We intentionally designed a decentralized program because so many of us are also active with outreach in local conservation and gardening groups. Any nonprofit organization can request to purchase signs from LNPS at cost, which allows each group some autonomy with respect to discounts for members or worthy causes, application, payment and vetting procedures, and publicity, but adhering to the same criteria. The Acadiana Native Plant Project and the Native Plant Initiative of Greater New Orleans have purchased a large number of signs from LNPS and are promoting and vetting applications in Southwest and Southeast Louisiana parishes, respectively. We would







## The Louisiana Certified Habitat Program: How and Why to Certify? Cont.

be delighted if other organizations joined us.

The LNPS board approved our request for an initial purchase of 100 metal yard signs, weatherproof upgrade decals and brochures. By year's end, Tammany Baumgarten got the ball rolling again. We hammered out lots of design details for the signs, decals and brochures with a vendor. We worked with Jackie Duncan, Brian Early and some talented techies to get our application and payment structure finalized and our webpage and links working. We finalized the common criteria, which are as follows: Any Louisiana resident, school, organization or business may apply for bronze (25 species), silver (50 species) or gold (75 species) level and can be upgraded for free at any time. Any property size, from urban garden to rural acreage, is eligible. To accommodate applicants with smaller properties, we also award bronze, silver or gold for properties with 25%, 50% or 75% of the plants being natives, since they may not be able to accommodate so many distinct species in a small space. The application form includes a convenient checklist of common native plants in Louisiana landscapes, for which we thank Brian Early, Bill Fontenot, Lawrence Rozas, Dona Weifenbach and others. The cost for certification and 9 x 12" metal yard sign is \$45 with free upgrade decals.

By spring, we were ready for a soft launch. We invited our first applicants, Bill and Lydia Fontenot in Lafayette Parish, to test drive our procedure. They were awarded the first Louisiana Habitat Certification in late April, at the gold level, of course. Since then, about 30 properties, from private yards to public parks, have been certified in 17 different parishes. Volunteers Robby Maxwell, Brett Auttonberry, Jackie Dun-

can, Heather Warner Finley, myself, Tammany Baumgarten and a whole team from NPI of Greater New Orleans are the primary contacts with the applicants. We are featuring their gardens, property, signs and faces in our respective social media outlets and newsletters. Now we know what we have built will work. Launching slowly is also letting us make incremental tweaks to our procedures that reduce barriers to participation and extend our reach. Thank you for your enthusiasm and patience as we got the LCH program up and running.

Details, brochure and application links are at lnps.org/ Louisiana\_certified\_habitat. Ask questions, make suggestions, apply or volunteer! Our program email is <u>louisianacertifiedhabitat@gmail.com</u>.

# Wild Azalea Trail in July

By Jackie Duncan

On July 16, 2020 in 92 degree weather I decided to see what I could find on the Wild Azalea Trail in Kisatchie National Forest in Rapides Parish. I think of July as being a month where not much is blooming, but I found these beauties.



Spider lily (Hymenocalis spp.)



Coreopsis spp



Rattlesnake Master (Eryngium yuccifolium)



Ironweed (Vernonia texana)



Yelllow Fringed Orchid (Plantanthera cristata)



Featherbell going to seed (Stenanthium gramineum)

## LNPS NOTICES

- 1. WEBMASTER The LNPS webmaster position is currently vacant. If you would like to volunteer for this position or know someone who is willing to help out, please contact LNPS by email Inpsinbox@gmail.com.
- 2. NEWSLETTER EDITOR The LNPS newsletter editor position is currently vacant. If you would like to volunteer for this position or know someone who is willing to help out, please contact LNPS by email at Inpsinbox@gmail.com.
- 3. LNPS GRANTS— The deadline for the LNPS grants for students and organizations has been postponed until September 30. If you would like to apply, please download the grant application from the website www.lnps.org or request an application through email Inpsinbox@gmail.com.

## Annual LNPS Dues

Circle one: Individual, \$10. Student/Ser \$100.	nior, \$5. Family, \$15.	Organization, \$25. Sustaining, \$50. Corporate,
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