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- To preserve and study native plants and their habitats
- 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

The Wild Garden of Longue Vue House and Gardens *by Amy Graham*

Starting in 1937, three women – esteemed philanthropist and plant collector Edith Rosenwald Stern, distinguished landscape architect Ellen Biddle Shipman and revered Louisiana naturalist and conservationist Caroline Dormon – joined to collaborate on an ambitious native plant garden in New Orleans.

Now, more than eight decades later, the Wild Garden at Longue Vue House and Gardens continues to thrive as it attracts plant enthusiasts, museum lovers, and

anyone who enjoys a quiet, shady place to think.

Occupying an acre of Edgar and Edith Stern's eight-acre estate, the Wild Garden is devoted almost entirely to plants indigenous to the Southeastern United States.

At the turn of the 20th century during Longue Vue's conception, wild gardens were favored by American landscape architects for private estates and inspired by European designs. The term wild gardening as a practice is attributed to Irish gardener and writer William Robinson, as found in his 1870 book *The Wild Garden*. Robinson observed that English woodlands and meadows were placed at risk by fossil fuel pollution and deforestation, which accelerated greatly during the industrial revolution. The prevailing garden design style of the day was extreme manicuring, symmetry and love of



Pond in the Wild Garden.

The Wild Garden at Longue Vue House and Gardens cont.

exotics, but Robinson favored lush wildness, a natural approach with meadows of grasses with naturalized



Eupatorium serotinum along trail through the Wild Garden.

bulbs and great swaths of wildflowers and ferns. He considered short lawn mowing “ridiculous work” and a “costly mistake.” While his designs mixed native plants with exotics, the overarching theme was laying out a garden by the rules of nature, not geometry. Although Robinson’s philosophy was not overwhelmingly accepted in the approximately four to five decades following publication of *The Wild Garden*, his methods clearly were widely embraced during his lifetime and the concept is especially relevant now.

Shipman typically included Wild Gardens in her designs, to offer a dramatic counterpart to the more formal gardens contained within an estate. This is the case at Longue Vue, as visitors step from the octilinear Walled Garden of vegetables into the dappled sunlight of the more open Wild Garden.

Shipman completed the first plans of the Wild Garden in 1938, incorporating live oaks and mid-story trees to set the tone for an all-encompassing experience of light, shade, texture, color, movement, and sounds. It is a garden that from month to month offers new views and experiences. Deciduous trees reveal their unique sculptural forms during winter, and migratory birds and butterflies find shelter and food throughout the seasons. Colorful irises and other wildflowers brighten the heavy, humid days of spring and summer.

A pigeonier designed by Shipman provides a seated view of the pond and shelter for visitors caught in an afternoon thunderstorm.

Dormon’s *Wild Flowers of Louisiana* (1934) was the first published work devoted entirely to describing Louisiana wildflowers. Stern underwrote the printing for the first 1,000 copies. As a thank you, Dormon gifted to her the original watercolors for the book illustrations, which remain in Longue Vue’s col-

lection today.

In 1947, Dormon joined the staff at Longue Vue on an annual retainer, growing, collecting, and buying plants for the Wild Garden, then planting most of them herself. Shipman was also on retainer in semiretirement. While no longer taking on new projects, Shipman would continue to visit Longue Vue a few times a year to discuss plantings and alterations.

Stern relied upon Dormon’s expertise to fill the Wild Garden plan with a palette of Louisiana natives, from trees, to shrubs, to ground covers.

They shared a love for wildflowers as associates in the Garden Club of America’s roadside beautification efforts. On November 29, 1948, Stern wrote to Dormon: “Am sure that it will interest you to know that on March 28th there will be two or three days of meet-



Caroline Dormon watercolor drawing of Indian pink (*Salvia coccinea*), Skullcap (*Scutellaria integrifolia*), and Pink-root (*Spigelia marilandica*),

The Wild Garden at Longue Vue House and Gardens cont.

ings of the Southern Zone of the Garden Club of America, when some sixty women will be here and our Wild Garden should be at its best then.”

Stern was keenly involved in the plant choices for the Wild Garden, corresponding with Dormon about acquiring various species, including *Erythrina herbacea*, *Erythrina coccinea*, *Rhododendron canescens*, *Aster amellus*, (a northeastern native which apparently did well here), *Acer saccharum*, *Cephalanthus occidentalis*, *Prunus Mexicana*, *Chionanthus virginica*, *Cliftonia*, and *Crataegus apifolia*. In a letter to Dormon on March 31, 1947, Stern exclaimed: “You would be so excited if you could walk through the wild garden. Things are really coming up, the tiny iris, columbine, phlox, birdfoot violets, and, oh, the wonders of the mertensia and the trillium! I hope you are planning to come back in the near future to show us just how to give all these plants summer care. I assure you it’s one of the most exciting things I have ever had happen to me.”

In an undated letter, Dormon wrote to Stern, “That place of yours simply gulps plant material! Am getting lots more phloxes and violets---not fancy violets but native ones that will ‘go’. Native ground-covers are badly needed all through---not only for beauty, but to hold the soil. I got home just in time, for November has really come---cold, and the

steady patter of rain. Hope it will be nice again the first week of December, as I plan to return the first part of that month. Mrs. Bond tells me you are expecting Mrs. Shipman at that time. I shall be so glad to talk wild garden with her. You, she, and I will get things lined up. It will be very lovely next spring. I enjoy winter, but those first spring flowers! Have a good time---but dream of the garden just a bit---”

Head Gardener James Ward reported to Dormon on April 4, 1949: “The *Sarracenia sledgei* produced some good flowers, some having five to a clump, and I believe Mrs. Stern would welcome some more. I have tried the *S. purpurea* in a mixture of sand and sphagnum moss. *Verbena canadensis* is still flowering so profusely I have not needed to have any flowers removed.... The *Illicium floridanum* has given a multitude of bloom, and just now the fresh leaf growth lends a charming effect to the bush, whilst *Kalmia latifolia* is still a mass of flower, there is also a very good form of a semi double dogwood in flower, the creamy bracts looking very striking. The *Amelanchier canadensis* is not looking very sprightly and seems to have difficulty in bursting into bud, also the *Crataegus spathulata* by the doorway of the library is as dead as it will ever be.”

At times, as is still the way, plantings were controversial. In a letter dated April 22, 1947, Stern stated to

Dormon, “I am sorry you got so upset about the smilax vines. I really think in the long run we have worked this out in the best possible way. We just have to get that fence along the canal, both in the Wild Garden and the back of the temple, covered this summer.” On January 16, 1948, Edith wrote, “I promise you at long last, the bamboo will come out of the Wild Garden.” Any gardener who knows smilax and bamboo would share Dormon’s apparent dismay.

The conversation between the three women was unique and continued between Stern and Dormon after Shipman’s death in 1950.

Three winding pathways encourage visitors to take their time strolling through Longue Vue’s Wild Garden:

The Iris Path

The Louisiana Iris is the highlight of the spring garden! Walking Shipman’s winding path conjures the experience of viewing these plants in their native habitat of a swamp, from a canoe. This walkway contains over 3,500 plants including the five native species, natural hybrids, and hybrids created by local hybridizers Patrick O’Connor, Benny Trahan, Joe Musacchia and others of the Greater New Orleans Iris Society.

The Wild Garden at Longue Vue House and Gardens cont.

The Dormon-hybridized Louisiana irises which remain in Longue Vue's collection are Wheel Horse, Violet Ray, and The Kahn.

The Camellia Path

Producing stunning blooms throughout the winter months, camellias, which are native to Eastern and southern Asia, were a favorite of the Stern family. One hundred twenty *Camellia japonica*, *C. sasanqua*, *C. reticulata*, *C. sinensis* and hybrids of these are planted along this walkway, which is a part of the American Camellia Society's Camellia Trail. Many of the camellia shrubs were generously donated by the New Orleans Camellia Society and the Northshore Camellia Society.

The Wildflower Path

Blooming in spring and summer, this path contains many wildflower and shrub species including *Helianthus angustifolius*, *Rudbeckia hirta*, *Salvia lyrata*, *Salvia coccinea*, *Hydrangea quercifolia*, and an impressive display of *Spigelia marilandica*.

Edith Stern opened the gardens at Longue Vue for tours in 1968, keeping with the Stern family legacy of giving, which she and husband Edgar cultivated as a couple throughout their lives. Opening the gardens was the first phase of the Sterns' intent of leaving Longue Vue as a resource for all. This was fully realized in January 1980, when Longue Vue

House and Gardens opened as a museum. Throughout those 12 years, Stern was still involved in everything from fine tuning garden plans to purchasing lightbulbs until her death in September 1980.

Longue Vue's Wild Garden has matured and evolved with an even more distinct sense of place for visitors. Since 2005, while in keeping



Spigelia marilandica along trail.

with Shipman's design intentions, a slightly more diverse and sustainable plant palette has been adopted to offer a stronger wildlife habitat, and to better serve visitors as an example of a garden which can thrive in the special challenges of the New Orleans climate.

Today, the Longue Vue staff has embraced a new commitment to

environmental stewardship and has developed sustainable management practices for every aspect of the site. The gardens, even including the lawns, are maintained chemical free, and leaf blower use ceased in 2019, resulting in a safer, more serene space for staff, visitors and wildlife.

With passion and combined expertise, the Longue Vue gardeners continue to perform the daily tasks of stewarding this enduring ecological and cultural treasure, championing its long life as an invaluable community resource.

Amy Graham is Director of Gardens at Longue Vue House and Gardens. She has been gardening professionally since 1992 with special interest in wildlife habitat gardening, lepidoptera study, and the art of plant propagation.

References

Allan, Mea. William Robinson, 1838-1935 – Father of the English Flower Garden. London: Faber & Faber, 1982.

Rick Darke. William Robinson, The Wild Garden Expanded Edition, Timber Press, 2009.

Caroline Dormon letters are held at the Northwestern State University Library.

Habitat Restoration at The Red River Wildlife Refuge Headquarters Unit

By Gloria McClure and Janet Creech

This is a story about a pecan orchard that is slowly being converted to native habitat and two of the volunteers that are working to make that happen. Janet Creech and her sidekick, me Gloria McClure, work on the restoration project at the Red River National Wildlife Refuge (RRNWR) Headquarters Unit. Very little of the original habitat (bottomland hardwoods, cypress, and shrub swamps) exists at the site. The Headquarters Unit of the refuge is located in an urban setting at 150 Eagle Bend Point in Bossier City, LA. It is a significant asset for Bossier Parish and the surrounding metropolitan area serving a population of approximately 436,000. The Headquarters Unit is a diverse campus providing the community with a visitor and education center, boat dock on Lake Caroline, fishing, wildlife observation and photography, and walking trails.

The condensed history of the RRNWR is below. These are not my words, and I saw no reason to recreate the wheel, but I do think it is important for one to understand in what way the refuge came about. The history also brings awareness to a significant fact: we are volunteering on Federal lands. With this fact comes many rewards and opportunities, but it also comes with a large portion of rules, comprehensive conservation plans, restrictions, guidelines, levees, flooding, and

protected hungry deer.

The Refuge System is managed by the Fish and Wildlife Service (Service), an agency within the U.S. Department of the Interior. The Service is the primary Federal entity responsible for conserving and enhancing the Nation's fish and wildlife populations and their habitats. Although the Service shares this responsibility with other Federal, State, tribal, local, and private entities, the Service has specific trust resource responsibilities for migratory birds, threatened and endangered species, certain anadromous fish, certain marine mammals, coral reef ecosystems, wetlands, and other special aquatic habitats. The Service also has similar trust responsibilities for the lands and waters it administers to support the conservation and enhancement of all fish and wildlife and their associated habitats. The mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System is to administer a national network of lands and waters for the conservation, management and, where appropriate, restoration of the fish, wildlife and plant resources and their habitats within the United States for the benefit of present and future generations of Americans.

Red River National Wildlife Refuge is made up of four units in the Red River Valley in northwestern Louisiana. Headquarters Unit in Bossier and Caddo Parishes, Bayou Pierre Unit in Desoto and Red River Parishes, Lower Cane Unit in Natchitoches Parish and Spanish Lake Low-

lands in Natchitoches Parish. The first property was acquired on August 22, 2002. The Visitor Center, Headquarters Offices and Education Center opened in January 2012. The refuge is important to waterfowl, wading birds and songbirds especially.

The Red River National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) was created legislatively by the Red River National Wildlife Refuge Act - signed into law on October 13, 2000. The first land purchase was made in August 2002 consisting of 1,377 acres. According to legislation, the refuge shall consist of approximately 50,000 acres of Federal lands and waters along that section of the Red River between Colfax, Louisiana and the Arkansas state line, a distance of approximately 120 miles. Therefore, Red River NWR is comprised of a headquarters unit and four additional focus units.

Red River NWR is located in the Red River Valley which historically was forested with bottomland hardwoods, cypress sloughs and shrub/scrub swamps, providing a variety of habitats for wildlife. In the early 1800's, settlers began clearing land for homesteads and farms after the Louisiana Purchase. The mid-1800's brought more clearing for cotton farming and during the mid-1900's, deforestation accelerated with the increase in soybean prices.

Habitat Restoration at The Red River Wildlife Refuge Headquarters Unit cont.

In 1870, Captain Shreve began clearing log jams to make the Red River more navigable and attempts to improve navigation continued with the completion of the lock and dam system in 1994. Completion of the Red River Waterway Project in 1994 led to higher and more consistent water levels in the river which has greatly reduced the turbidity. Water quality has improved and with the seasonal retention of water levels, a rich diversity of aquatic plants has developed.

Increased water levels on the river also improved conditions for some wildlife. Flooded timber and farm fields with wet, depositional areas are now more common and are being used by wading birds, waterfowl, and other animals. USDA programs such as the Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) and Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) are restoring valuable wildlife habitat through the reforestation of marginal farmlands and highly erodible lands in the Red River Valley.

Once the 50,000 acres have been acquired, the refuge will connect with other conservation areas reducing habitat fragmentation and providing wildlife corridors and stop-over areas for migrating waterfowl and songbirds.

Red River NWR is a relatively new Refuge; therefore, public use areas and opportunities are being added as staff and funding grow.

For more information go to www.fws.gov/northlouisiana/RedRiver/

Though the Headquarters Unit officially opened in January of 2012, it was in 2011 that Pat Stinson, manager of the Unit, contacted Janet Creech. Pat had learned of her skills creating native habitats at the Louisiana State Exhibit Museum and at Shreve Island Elementary School. He needed a project leader to develop the 4 acres of grounds surrounding the Unit's visitor center, so he asked for her help. Janet accepted the challenge and began by documenting the site. As you can see from the images below, it was a blank slate.



East Entrance 2011

Visitor Center

West side 2011



Visitor Center 2012—Iris planted in the swale.

Front of building, east side

Front of building, west side

At the beginning and after 10 years of work, Janet's aim is the same, to improve the grounds in such a way as to create a wildlife corridor, nurture the wildlife, be inviting to humans, and teach the public about the importance of native plants and their role in sustaining

Habitat Restoration at The Red River Wildlife Refuge Headquarters Unit cont.

wildlife. To achieve this aim, plant material used in the landscape is evaluated on several levels to decide the planting location. A check off list helps determine the eco-services a plant provides: water filtration, soil improvement, carbon sequestering and climate change adaptability. Additionally, plants are put through another filtering process: Are they native to the area? Does it provide wildlife food or shelter or nesting? Can it tolerate the pH8 soil conditions at the Unit? Is the growth too aggressive? Is it fragrant? Is it attractive? If plants do not thrive in the original location selected for them, we reevaluate and try them in another area. For educational purposes, plants are labeled with their scientific and common names when placed in the landscape. Following planting, plants are mulched with pine straw to create a tidy appearance, discourage weeds that are lying in wait, conserve moisture and improve soil structure. A volunteer collects about 95% of the straw used at the site; therefore, it is FREE. Pine straw that was destined for the land fill has become a vital resource to us as there are limited volunteers to weed and water.

In 2014 Janet and I met at the Louisiana Society for Horticulture Research meeting, and she encouraged my husband, Mike, and me to volunteer with her at the refuge. Our home is less than a mile from the refuge, and we were already members of the RRNWR Friends group, but not active. It made sense

to join forces with her. With approval of the Unit manager, Janet guides the majority of all aspects of the habitat project and makes use of my degree in Horticulture and background in landscape design to help maintain and develop the grounds at the visitor center. The **visitor center** is a public place, so it is important that the grounds be welcoming to the public. To this effort, a constellation of specific garden theme areas have been developed around the building making them easily accessible to visitors. Additionally, an arboretum planting of native trees and shrubs that was initially installed on the grounds has been expanded. The theme gardens, and the grounds, are designed to be a wildlife corridor as well as educate visitors and be examples of plants they might use in their own landscapes to sustain wildlife. The theme areas are shown in the following pictures:



Foundation planting around the perimeter of the Visitor Center
East and Front sides



Visitor Center parking lot bordered with Bald Cypress on swale edge (2018).



Trees planted around the grounds. Water in the background is Lake Caroline (2012)

Habitat Restoration at The Red River Wildlife Refuge Headquarters Unit cont.



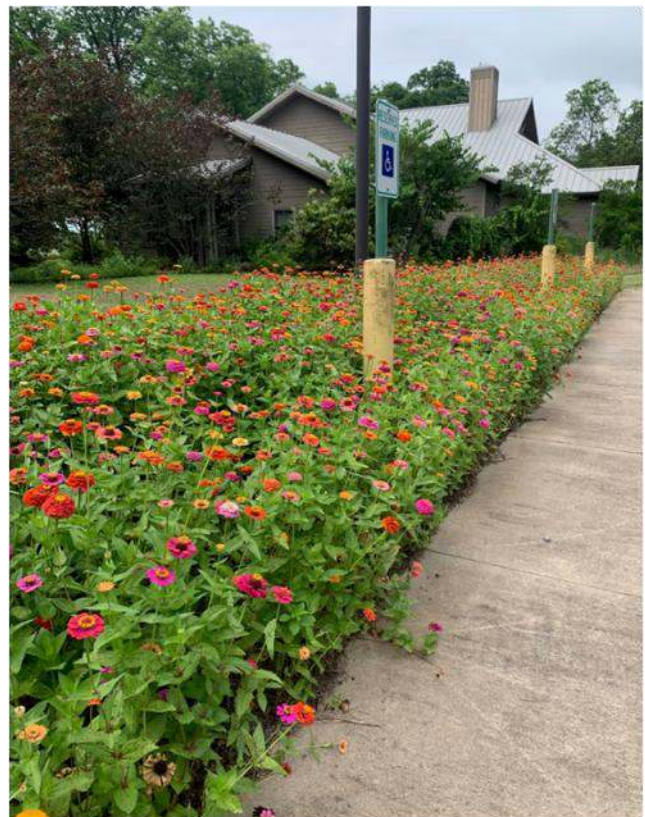
Polinator garden with teepee (2017)



Pollinator garden (2021)



Visitor Center flag pole garden (2021)



Zinnia photography bed (2021)

Furthermore, the theme areas generate educational content that is posted on the refuge website or Facebook page and/or the Friends' website or Facebook page. Unit rangers often use

the gardens in their programming for the public. The theme gardens are also a favorite spot for photographers to capture butterflies, bees and all manner of wildlife.

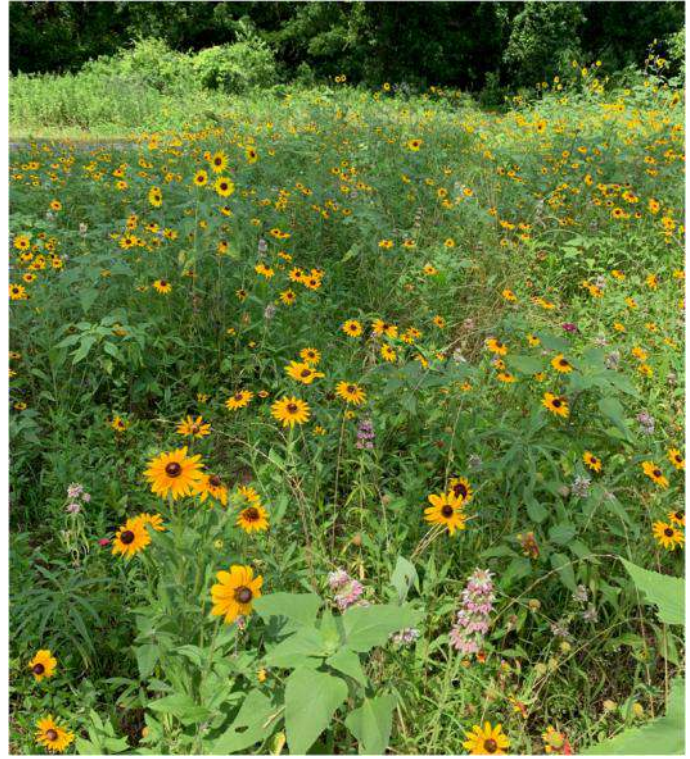
Habitat Restoration at The Red River Wildlife Refuge Headquarters Unit cont.



Triangle wildflower meadow

We would be remiss if we didn't mention the generous cooperation of Pat Stinson, the Unit manager and wildlife biologist. Pat has allowed us a great deal of freedom to use our own knowledge, skills and experiences to restore a native habitat at the Unit. Equally important is the public-private partnership of the Friends of the RRNWR for they are a dedicated group of volunteers. The Friends' ***"mission is to be an advocate for the RRNWR by promoting and participating in the conservation, enhancement, and appreciation of our native wildlife communities through education, fund raising, development of partnerships, and development of onsite projects for volunteers."***

Although the initial landscape installation was funded by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, since that time the Friends' board has graciously funded much of Janet's and my work. We are grateful for their cooperation, support and vol-



Big wildflower meadow (2019)

unteer time. I am now serving on the Friends' board and routinely report landscape/habitat updates and needs to the board, and the board provides us with ideas and suggestions for future projects. Recently, the Friends supported the purchase of over 500' of metal edging to border several of the theme gardens. Friends' president, Zac Burson, coordinated volunteer installation of the edging which we appreciate immensely. Not only has the border greatly improved the landscape's appearance, it has provided a boundary for weed eating and mowing. These tasks are often done by volunteers and the edging helps prevent unfortunate mistakes.

It is essential to recognize Dr. David Creech, director of Stephen F. Austin Gardens, who is and has been a generous source of wisdom, native plants, supplies and encouragement. Compliments to Mike McClure for his willingness to do the heavy work we could not manage. We also wish to acknowledge the Louisiana Native Plant Society. Much has been learned at their annual meetings which are a great source of information, ideas and plant

Habitat Restoration at The Red River Wildlife Refuge Headquarters Unit cont.

material. These meetings are also a great place to meet like-minded folks and experts that share their experiences. Many thanks to Dr. Charles Allen and Marc Pastorek for answering numerous questions and providing us guidance. We especially recognize Bud Willis and his many generous plant donations that have spanned the past 10 years. His latest donation of Southern Magnolia and Sweet Bay Magnolia are doing well. Thank you Bud!

Gloria McClure lives in Bossier City and Janet Creech lives in Shreveport. Both are longtime members of the Louisiana Native Plant Society



Magnolias donated by Bud Willis in 2019. Placed to screen the Unit equipment yard from the hiking trail and parkway.



Sweet Bays donated by Bud Willis placed between hiking trail and main entrance drive at Visitor Center .



A Louisiana Certified Habitat

By Linda Auld



BEFORE: Front bed of grass, boxwood and azaleas



AFTER: Front bed after four years of planting

In January 2016, I purchased a new location for my three-generation old family business, Barber Laboratories, at 6444 Jefferson Highway in Harahan. At that time, the front garden consisted of St. Augustine grass, boxwood hedges and non-native azaleas. I knew that a big change must happen! In the last four years, I've planted with a purpose, transforming this space into a wildlife-friendly garden consisting of a combination of native and non-native annuals and perennials. Each side flower bed covers about 120 square feet and is packed with an assortment of caterpillar host plants and butterfly nectar plants mixed with some human eye-candy. This little oasis has attracted a wide variety of butterflies, moths, bees, and wasps. Since I began adding more native plants, I have noticed an influx of more native bees that I've never seen before! "Plant it and they will come" really is true and really does work. The native plants are more disease resistant plus most have a deep tap root and are more drought tolerant. The annuals re-seed and the perennials sprout new leaves after a cold winter. Sometimes I plant native and non-native next to each other just as an experiment to see which plants the pollinators will choose. I also like to show

folks that native plants can easily be added and blend-in well with non-natives in existing gardens. Through my last forty-three years of raising butterflies, my plant buying and usage has definitely changed, selecting more native than non-native simply because our native insects recognize these plants as "real food."

I display my live caterpillars and butterflies inside my store to show folks how bugs can be interesting and fun to study. Having the plants growing at the office helps provide flowers for the butterflies and host plant foods for the many caterpillars I tend every day. Folks enjoy looking at the colorful flowers and the array of insects visiting their fuel stop. Two-spotted long-horned bees and honey bees are regularly seen visiting the penstemon, purple coneflowers, stokesia, baptisia, blue lobelia, monarda, mistflower, ironweed, slender mountain mint, garden phlox, red lobelia, rudbeckia, and the big-leaf mountain mint. In the front gardens, partridge pea (for sulphur butterflies) plus both aquatic and swamp milkweeds (for monarchs) are the caterpillar host plants available for the little munchkins.

A Louisiana Certified Habitat

cont.



BEFORE: Backyard with concrete

The backyard was all concreted with a spirea and a lantana at the base of a huge pecan tree. My son constructed a raised bed frame so that I could create the backyard butterfly haven. I used an assortment of trees in pots leftover from previous caterpillar rearing that I wanted to finally get into the ground.

Many folks don't know that many types of moth and butterfly caterpillars eat specific tree leaves as their diets. Cooking bay (for Palamedes swallowtail), camphor (for spicebush swallowtail), cherry laurel (for cecropia silk moth), cottonwood (for viceroy), elm (for question mark), hackberry (for 4 butterflies: question mark, hackberry emperor, tawny emperor, and snout), maple (for rosy maple moth), pawpaw (for zebra swallowtail), sassafras (for spicebush swallowtail), tulip poplar (for tiger swallowtail), and willow (for viceroy) are all growing together in harmony. Red lobelia, buttonbush, ironweed, garden



AFTER: Backyard after four years of planting

phlox, and bee balm make a good nectar smorgasbord alongside the coral honeysuckle curling its way up the back corner fence.

I have enjoyed watching ruby-throated hummingbirds nectaring on penstemon flowers, honey bees gathering pollen from hop tree flowers and giant swallowtail caterpillars eating the leaves. A female great southern white butterfly stopped by to lay a clutch of eggs on the cleome. Painted lady, monarch, gulf fritillary, cloudless sulphur, long-tailed skipper, along with many of the swallowtails--black, giant, spicebush, and tiger --have all found refuge in the BugLady's garden oasis.

Last year I promoted the use of native plants with my "Geaux Grow Natives" project. You can view the list of plants on my website and buy these plants at my store. The announcement of the new Louisiana Certified Habitat Program piqued my curiosity to know just how many native plants are growing here. I checked out the list and am happy to report that my garden has 94 species and is level GOLD!

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American Basket-flower

By Wendy Rihner

Star Thistle. Shaving Brush. American Basket-flower. American Star-thistle. Whichever name we use, this plant is a must for any pollinator garden! Basket-flower (*Plectrocephalus americanus*) is an annual native to south-central United States and into Mexico, preferring woodland openings and edges, prairies, savannas, meadows, and pastures.

Basket-flower gets its name from the woven straw-colored bracts at the base of the flower holding the petals in place. Each petal is a filament of beautiful lavender to pink. The plant exudes a sweet fragrance, slightly reminiscent of honey. Though Basket-flower resembles a thistle, it is not prickly, and it has pretty, cream-colored center.



The only native American cousin to Bachelor's Button, Basket-flower will distract pollinators from nearly any other plant in the garden, for according to the company Native American Seed, it offers nectar rich in sugars and amino acids and pollen high in protein, everything insects and hummingbirds need

to build strength. In fact, Lemon Bee Balm (*Monarda citrodora*) is the only other plant in my garden that can successfully compete for pollinators when Basket-flower is growing nearby! And let's not forget the seeds! Bobwhites in Texas have been recorded feeding on the seeds before many Helianthus species go to seed.

Along with the pollinators, Native Americans used Basket-flower to cure jaundice and indigestion. Venomous snake bites were also treated with this plant.

The Lady Bird Johnson Center claims that Basket-flower is easy to cultivate, and in my experience, it is one of the easiest plants to grow from seed. The seeds need no stratification, no special treatment of any kind. And when ready to be transplanted, seedlings need only full sun, well-drained soil, and average moisture. This is a robust plant, growing up to four feet tall, and the blooms reach anywhere from two to three inches wide. A white variety is also available from companies like Select Seed.

Once the blooms have faded and the seeds held within the "basket" fall out easily, it is time to collect. Supposedly, Basket-flower



American Basket-flower cont.

By Wendy Rihner

makes a great cut plant, but I would not dream of depriving pollinators of a single bloom! And since it is not sold in native plant nurseries, Basket-flower must be grown from seed. However, I can guarantee that once you start growing this unusual and uncommon wildflower, it will assume its much favored status in your garden.



Wendy Rihner is an avid native plant enthusiast living in Metairie. She is also co-publisher of this newsletter.

Disclaimer: Basket-flower is not typically considered native to Louisiana, but it has been found a couple of times in the western Parishes. It is a possible native in the far western extent of the coastal prairie in Calcasieu Parish, but otherwise likely a waif/non-native.

LNPS NOTICES

1. **WEBMASTER** — The LNPS webmaster position remains vacant. If you would like to volunteer for this position or know someone who is willing to help out, please contact LNPS by email lnpsinbox@gmail.com. LNPS has currently contracted for the website to be redesigned. The new webmaster would be able to be involved from the beginning.
2. **2022 ANNUAL MEETING.** Mark your calendar for the 2022 Annual Meeting scheduled for **February 4-6, 2022**. I know I missed seeing everyone this past year because of the COVID pandemic. I looked forward to seeing you next year.
3. If you are interested in the **Louisiana Certified Habitat Program**, please email louisianacertifiedhabitat@gmail.com for more information and to receive the application.

Annual LNPS Dues

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

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