

LNPS Fall Field Trip

Mark Saturday, October 23, on your calendar for the LNPS Fall Field Trip to Clark Falls near Thompson's Creek. This is an area known to many of us but has been very strenuous for many of the folks. Now, however, there have been steps cut into the cliffs. While the grade is the same, it is much easier to navigate. Everyone should be able to hike this time.

For those who have not visited this area, it is geologically unique in Louisiana and the unusual vertical terrain offers some special plant sightings. Some plants I hope to spot are: *Halesia diptera* (Silverbell), spectacular *Hydrangea quercifolia* (Oak-Leaf Hydrangea), *Lobelia cardinalis* (Cardinalflower), several ferns, and *Monotropa uniflora* (Indianpipe). There are also several orchids I would hope to see: *Pontheiva racemosa* (Shadow witch), *Tipularia discolor* (Crane fly), one or two of the *Spiranthes*, and *Epidendrum canopseum* (Green-Fly).

With our unusual weather the past couple of years it will be interesting to see what difference there is, if any, in the plant material. In the past, in October, I have seen *Eriocaulon decangulare* (Pipewort), some of the *Ipomoeas* (Morning Glories), and *Eupatoriums* (Bonesets). And, of



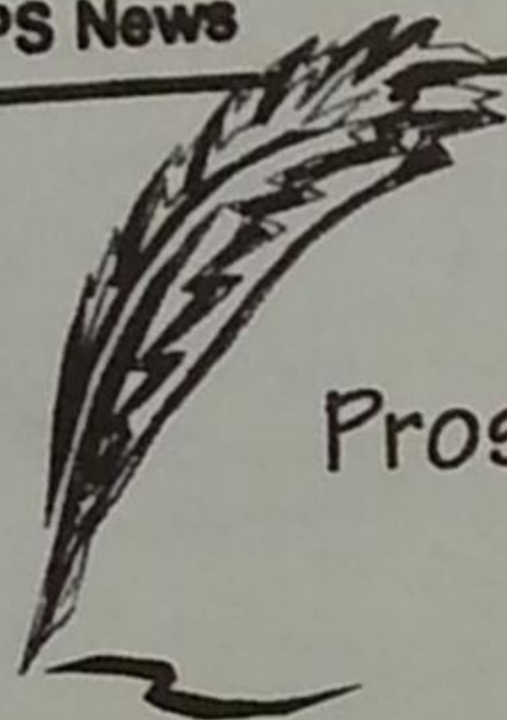
Boneset, *Eupatorium perfoliatum*

course, the drive up we hope will offer the usual glorious stands of sumac, sunflowers, ironweed, goldenrod, and crown-beards. Watch for some unusual plant sightings to share. Don't forget your cameras and notebooks for this one!

We will meet at 9AM at the SOUTHERN BELLE TRUCK STOP located on the west side of US Hwy. 61, just north of the bridge crossing Thompson's Creek. This is a large facility with plenty of parking, so we can carpool from there.

For folks coming from the north, this is 6 miles south of the intersection of US 61 and La. Hwy. 10 near St. Francisville. For those coming from the south, it is exactly 6 miles from the light, immediately after I-110 ends into US 61.

Chances are the weather will still be warm, so we need to dress accordingly. Bring plenty of liquids to drink. Obviously there will be no place to get lunch so we need to pack our own, or pick up something at the truck stop. We will plant to stop along the way to eat. We also need to bring bags to pack out our trash. I hope most of you will plan to join us for the day. Contact person: Marion Drummond (address inside)



Prose from the president's pen...Marion Drummond

Everyone says that Summer is winding down but I don't see any sign of it outside here in the South Louisiana area; only on the calendar.

GATHERED FROM HERE AND THERE:

I found two new books on wildflowers at the Cullowhee Native Plant Conference this year, both of them new in print. Long time friend of native plant gardeners in the Southeast, Jan Midgley is the author of *Southeastern Wildflowers*, published by Crane Hill, a division of Books-A-Million. This book has beautiful close-ups of the blossoms and expanded information on each plant, including an introduction mentioning information on the name, its underground structures, on its traditional uses, and the wildlife it attracts. It also includes very useful information on seed storage and propagation. Its handy 8 1/2" x 5" size and plastic protective cover, make it a good book to carry in the field. It includes a lengthy bibliography, native plant resources, and mail order nurseries. A good buy at \$19.95.

The second book, *Wildflowers of the Eastern United States*, is by Duncan and Duncan who also authored *Trees of the Southeastern United States* which has been a staple for so many of us. In the current book, I miss the maps they included in the tree book, showing the range of each plant. Again, the beautiful pictures focus on the blossoms, rather than the entire plant itself. The plants are grouped by family, which is helpful, and with 630 listings it is somewhat more complete than Jan's book. This one is published by the University of Georgia Press and retails for \$29.95.

The third *Atlas of the Vascular Flora of Louisiana* by our own Drs. Thomas and Allen is now available through the Louisiana Department of Wildlife & Fisheries Natural Heritage Program. It completes the listing of Dicotyledons, F-Z. Volume I includes Ferns & Fern Allies, Conifers, & Monocotyledons; Volume II, the Dicotyledons A-E. These books list each plant with a Louisiana state map divided into parishes and dots indicating in which of the 64 parishes that particu-

Are Your Dues Due?

Check your mailing label. If the number above your name is highlighted, your dues are due with this issue. Please send your dues to the treasurer, Jessie Johnson, 216 CAROLINE DORMON ROAD, SALINE, LA. 71070. **Remember to send us your change of address.** The newsletter is sent bulk mail and will not be forwarded to you by the postal service.

DO NOT SEND DUES TO THE NEWSLETTER ADDRESS!!!

Student or Sr. Citizen	\$5
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Family	\$15
Organization	\$25
Sustaining	\$50
Corporate	\$100

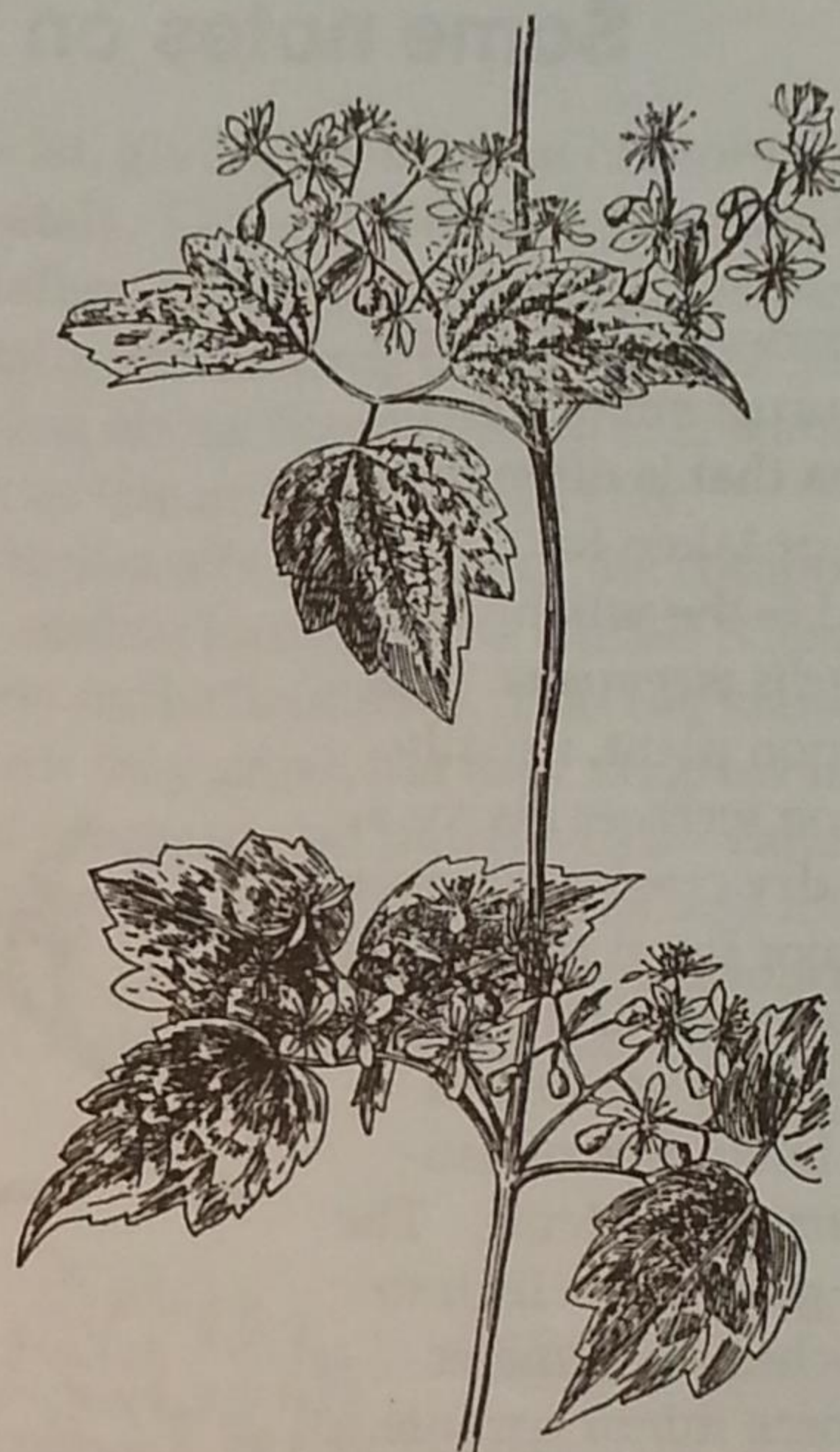
lar plant has been found. The books retail for \$10 each, \$12 if mailed; or a special price of \$25 for the three volumes. They may be ordered from 225-765-2823. I am hopeful that we can have them available for sale at the January meeting.

According to a report from Wisley Arboretum in England, the most recent trend in gardening in that country is vermiculture, the growing of worms in especially designed containers. These are mini-style compost bins that are available in a variety of styles for under the kitchen sink; for a closet/storage room; or for outside use, with protection from the cold weather (and robins?). Acknowledging that worm castings are one of the richest nutrients for plants, even the British government is advocating the practice.

One of this country's most popular plant publications, *The Avant Gardener*, devoted an entire Special Issue in June to "Fertilizer Facts". Among other revelations, "Soil is much more than an inert support for plants...it contains a vast, teeming world of 'animal' life...containing trillions of bacteria, fungi, and other microorganisms." Its eight pages cover "More than N-P-K," "Fertile Compost," "The Many Manures," and other pertinent topics. I found most interesting the statement that, "This may sound like heresy: mature plants rarely need fertilizer. Their own dead leaves and litter, when processed by the soil life, will amply supply the nutritional needs of trees, shrubs, and perennials --- including lawngresses." What have we been saying all these years??? It looks like the rest of the world may be catching up to us.

I hope most of you will be able to join us on October 23 for our Fall Field Trip. See you then.

Marion



Clematis virginiana

*If you know of an organization with an activity relating to native plants, let Beth Erwin (kalorama@centuryinter.net 318-874-7777) or me (m.drummond@worldnet.att.net 225-274-9674) know and we will try to include it in one of our quarterly newsletters.

The Louisiana Native Plant Society News is published four times per year. It is the official publication of the Louisiana Native Plant Society. The editor welcomes articles, notices of upcoming events, and book reviews of interest to native plant folks, as well as illustrations, poems, and prose. Deadlines for submissions are June 1st, September 1st, December 1st, and March 1st. Send any address changes to LNPS News, P.O. Box 126, Collinston, La., 71229.—Terry Erwin, editor.

Some notes on Witchhazel.....by Carl Amason

A common woodland tall shrub or small tree of this area that is often overlooked or taken for granted is the witchhazel, *Hamamelis virginiana*. It is a common plant, usually found on terraces above a wet or dry creek but never in a major flood plain. The plant is lovely and interesting in any season. It grows in clumps of usually four or six stems. The trunks grow to an inch to four inches in diameter with some minor sprouts.

It grows to a height of twenty feet or so, in a pleasing ascending manner. Where they grow naturally, they seem happy as there is usually a small grove. Underneath, one can usually find Christmas ferns and other woodland plants, some real treasures and others weedy. There is very little weedy about the witchhazel.

The common name of witchhazel comes from the fact that the European *Hamamelis* resemble the hazelnut in leaves. It was "bewitched" because it bloomed out of season and bore no edible nuts. It was a favorite wood for the forked limbs used by "water witches." Witchhazel leaves are a pleasing medium green, about two to five inches long and broad, with some indentations. It is a slightly rough, elongated leaf with some prominent (reticulated) veining. The two parts on either side of the midvein are slightly



unequaled, somewhat like an elm leaf. The petiole is short.

The trees are long-lived. Colonies or individual trees can last a lifetime. They are both shallow and somewhat deep-rooted so they can take drought conditions well. They are woodland trees, but grow well on the edges of roads and rights-of-ways. This time of year, in the fall, when the leaves begin to color, witchhazels become conspicuous with their bright yellow leaves, just a shade lighter than golden perhaps, but still a brilliant yellow. This happens when most hunters go to the woods to hunt. Usually there is ample moisture that nothing is struggling to survive. Just as frequently, there is a light covering of fallen leaves on the ground that makes a crunchy noise when walking. It is a glorious time to walk in the woods. In spite of all of the glories of autumn, few people notice the full beauty

of the yellow flowers that spangle the branches of the little trees themselves. This because the flowers and leaves are the same shade of yellow and the leaves are most visible. At a certain time in the afternoon, the flowers have a very pleasing fragrance, not a floral fragrance, but an understated medicinal odor that is difficult to describe. It is this fragrance that has become associated with certain skin lotions and rubbing alcohol that has become to be a medicinal smell.

From reading the literature on native plants, I learned that people in Appalachia skin the small trees for the bark. It is then processed to get the essential oils or ingredients, which is then used in lotions and rubbing alcohol for the astringent properties. As far as I can find from the books, this is the only medicinal use of this tree. Locally, I know of no one who has collected the bark for personal use.

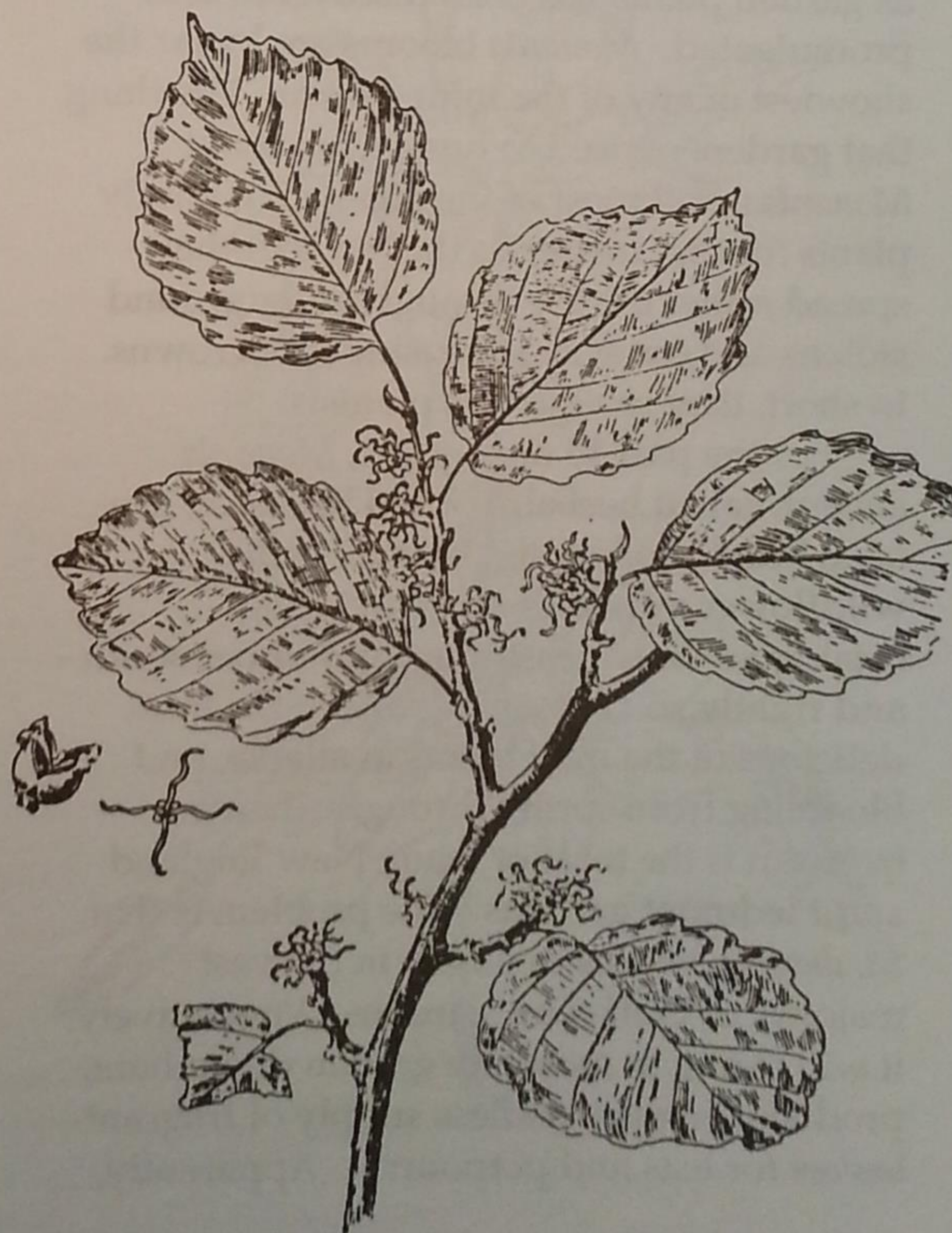
This is one of those native plants to enjoy in the woods and in the garden. They are easily grown from seeds. That brings up the subject of the fruits, which are small capsules that develop through the winter into the following late summer or early fall. The dark brown apple sized seeds are ejected with an explosive force, scattering the seeds away from directly below the mother plant. In fact, the seeds are being scattered up until the plant begins blooming, so it takes a year for the seeds to mature.

It is the beauty of these small trees that make them a real woodland treasure. There are some differences in the times of blooming and the size of the yellow flowers. Most bloom at the time of fall coloring, when the curly yellow petals radiate

and twist, giving the illusion of more than the four petals. Others bloom after the leaves have fallen, giving an airy effect, yet pleasing, especially for the time of the year. Most begin blooming about Thanksgiving and some bloom as late as New Year's Day.

Witchhazels are a part of the composition of the eastern forests of the United States, particularly in the Southeast. I do not know how far north they grow, but they do grow into central Missouri and into the Ohio Valley. They grow into northern Florida and into eastern Texas. There are other witchhazels in the United States and in the Orient. This is an-

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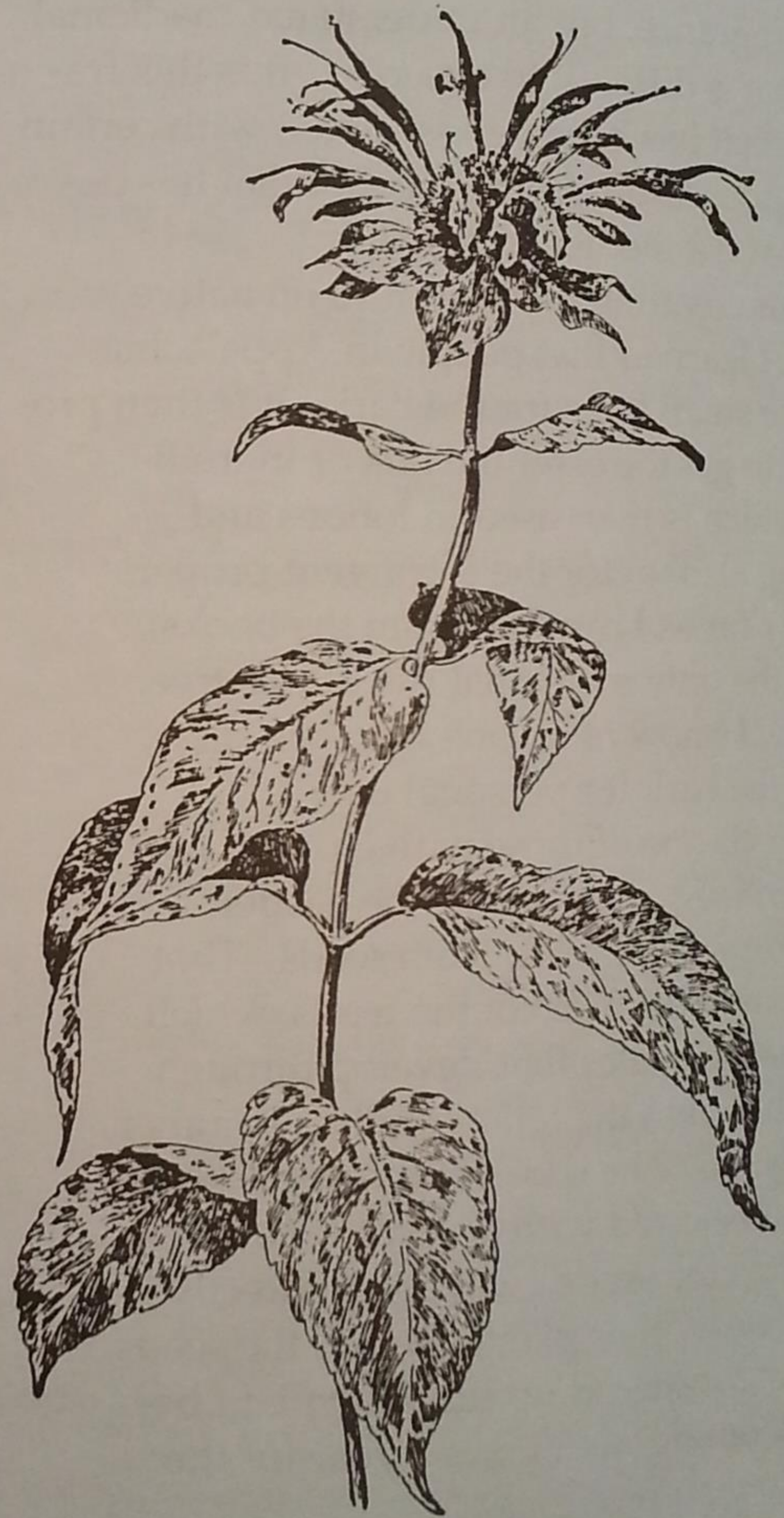


Beebalm and Horsemints *by Bill Fontenot*

Ed. note: The bulk of this article appeared in May 1997 in Bill's weekly column in the Lafayette Advertiser.

Within the mint family, three separate genera exist whose leaves give off minty fragrances when bruised: the *Menthas* ("true" mints), the *Pycnanthemums* ("mountain" mints), and the *Monardas* ("horse" mints and beebalms). Within the genus *Monarda*, several species whose ranges encompass the southeastern U.S., Texas, and even northern Mexico have been widely used as medicinal plants; and it is only recently that their value as garden plants has been discovered and promulgated. *Monarda* blooms are by far the showiest of any of the mint genera. The thing that gardeners need to remember about *Monardas*, and most of the other mint family plants for that matter, is the fact that they spread rather thickly through underground stolons and/or ever-increasing root crowns. In short, they're vigorous plants.

For the past 15 or so years, *Monarda didyma*, called beebalm or red beebalm, has been heavily promoted by mail order wildflower nurseries and gardening catalogues on the east coast and upper south - and rightly so. Possessing one of the most delicious of the mint scents available, and blooming from spring through summer, beebalm is the toast of many New England and Piedmont gardens. The problem is that *M. didyma* refuses to bloom in the vast majority of Gulf coast gardens. Vegetatively, it will thrive in most any garden down here, producing a near-endless supply of fragrant leaves for teas and potpourris. Apparently,



Wild bergamot, *Monarda fistulosa*

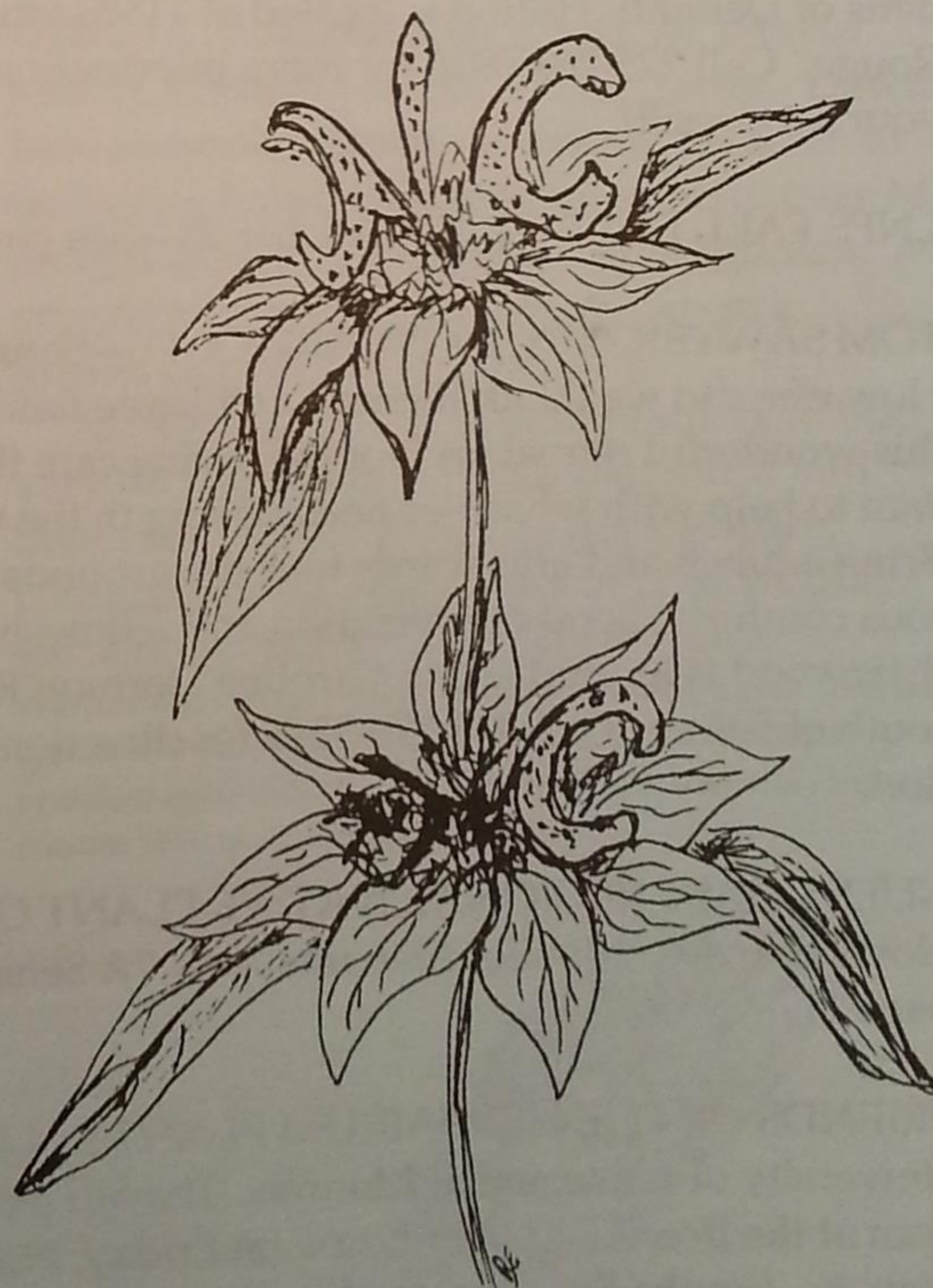
this plant obviously carries some sort of "bloom chill" requirement. Down here in zones 8-9, it will only bloom if overwintered outdoors in a container, thus exposing its roots/root crown to lower temperatures than if it were in the ground itself. Even then, it will not bloom near so well as it routinely does within its native range.

Thankfully, we've got several more species of *Monardas* whose native ranges extend down into the Gulf rim itself. Two species with the most extensive eastern U.S. ranges are wild bergamot, *Monarda fistulosa* and horsemint, *Monarda punctata*. Locally, I've seen wild bergamot in a remnant coastal tallgrass prairie strip between Opelousas and Eunice. Years ago, Theresa Grissom gave Lydia a start of wild bergamot that she had collected somewhere in east Texas. We still have that one growing strongly in my "wildflower wheel." Both the "Cajun prairie" strain (genotype) and the east Texas strain possess pale mauve/lavender blooms; while a plant given to us by Covington landscaper/nurseryman John Mayronne a few years ago possesses "hot magenta" flowers. Wild bergamot blooms from May through June, and its leaves smell (to me) just like oregano. Rather than loosely spreading over a relatively large area like beebalm, wild bergamot forms a very dense, 3-4' diameter colony that rises 18-24" in height when blooming.

The aptly named horsemint, is a very tough, coarse plant with a strong, almost pungent aroma. This species can be seen blooming from mid to late summer throughout much of northern and central Louisiana, especially along non-herbicide roadways such as US 71 between Alexandria

and Shreveport. Too, I remember stumbling upon a large colony of it along a utility line right-of-way in the Atchafalaya Basin during an especially intrepid hike I took one August day with Jim Whelan and Bill Vermillion. While wild bergamot possesses almost demure-looking whorls of filmy or "tissuey" blooms, horsemint flowers are husky, with prominent pink sepals and thickened petals that are (get this) yellow with purple polka-dots ("dot", I understand; but what exactly is a "polka dot"?).

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Horsemint, *Monarda punctata*

Calendar of Events

EAST BATON ROUGE PARISH MASTER GARDENERS are sponsoring a presentation by Andy Wasowski on The Gardening Revolution; Tuesday, September 21 at 7pm at the Burden Research Center on Essen Lane at Interstate 10. Admission \$5. Those of you who know Sally and Andy know they are great advocates of native plants. Andy is a humorous and forceful speaker; sometimes controversial. Reservations required. Call 225-389-3055

FRIENDS OF HILLTOP ARBORETUM PLANTFEST! Saturday, October 2nd, 9am to 4pm, and Sunday, October 3rd, 11am to 2pm. There is always a tremendous selection of native plants displayed by habitat: wet sun, dry sun, wet shade, dry shade. The plants, plus knowledgeable people to assist with your needs, make this sale a must for folks who are looking for plants to add to their Gardens of Delight! Hilltop is located at 11588 Highland Rd. in Baton Rouge. Call 225-767-6916 for more information (or to volunteer your services!!!)

LNPS FALL FIELD TRIP—October 23—See page 1.

TOM SAWYER DAY AT BRIARWOOD.—Saturday, October 30. How else can we thank Richard and Jessie (and Miss Carrie!) for this wonderful retreat and for the loving care they give it? Meet at 9am to help with whatever needs doing in the way of maintenance. Bring a lunch and afterwards tour the grounds on foot or in luxurious comfort! Good conversation and fellowship guaranteed. Briarwood is located at 216 Caroline Dormon Rd., off La. Hwy 9 south of Saline. Call 318-576-3379 for directions or more information.

GULF COAST REGIONAL NATIVE PLANT CONFERENCE—November 4-6, Mobile, Alabama area. "A Sense of Place." See page 11.

FRIENDS OF THE HERBARIUM PLANT SALE—November 5-6. University of Louisiana at Monroe. The fall plant sale is from 8am-5pm at the Bon Aire Greenhouse on Friday, Nov. 5 and Saturday, Nov. 6. Emphasis is on woody plants but we will have all our usual native perennials and ferns. If you are looking for something in particular, contact Dr. Thomas at bithomas@alpha.nlu.edu, or 318-342-1812.



Evening primrose
Oenothera biennis

Beebalm & Horsemints

(Continued from page 7)

Bloomwise, perhaps the most beautiful of all native U.S. *Monardas* is *M. citriodora*, called "lemon beebalm," with its signature, lemon-scented foliage. Unlike the others, lemon beebalm is an annual; which, to me, is very frustrating since I'm not too good about collecting seed and re-sowing it each year in order to keep a plant in my garden. That's too bad, because if there ever was a native annual worth keeping around, it's this one.

Depending on genetic strain, both the sepals and corolla of this species can range between pink and purple in color - often times, mixed! Additionally, it's only about half the height (10-14") of the others when in bloom. Since our Louisiana Project Wildflower planting at the juncture of I-10 and I-49 in 1986, I've noted a rather persistent colony of lemon beebalm that established along the southbound lane of I-49 just north of I-10. So persistent it is, that you'd swear the thing was a perennial.

Five years ago, Texas plantsmen Will Fleming (Tomball) and Tim Kiphart (Brenham) supplied Lydia and I with our first starts of *Monarda lindheimeri*, a pure-white blooming, east Texas species that occurs in western Louisiana. Possessing leaves that are similar to, but narrower than *M. fistulosa*, I expect that this species is a very close relative - if not an outright ecotype - of wild bergamot. In any case, it is a beautiful addition to our hummingbird garden. It blooms at the same time as *M. fistulosa*. But the real prize that these two guys supplied us with is *Monarda pringlei*, a red-blooming Mexican species, which we promptly planted in our driest garden locales (as we did for *M. lindheimeri*). In spring of 1997, we received our first bloom

activity out of this species, and man were we excited. Since it has already survived 16°F (plus 48+ consecutive hours below freezing) in February of 1996, I believe that *M. pringlei* will eventually supplant *M. didyma* as the red beebalm of choice in Gulf rim gardens. More recently, we have acquired another Mexican species, *M. bartlettii*. It differs from *M. pringlei* in two important ways: 1) it possesses a magenta bloom color (blooms in April/May), and 2) its leaves, while possessing a "drought-busting" thickness similar to *M. pringlei*, are somewhat wider than the latter; more like those of *M. fistulosa*. Unlike any of the other *Monardas* mentioned here, both *M. pringlei* and *M. bartlettii* possess reddish stems. Down here in extreme South Louisiana, we seem to be having better luck with *M. bartlettii* over *M. pringlei* in terms of longevity in the garden. *M. pringlei* may resent rain-soggy soils to a greater degree than *M. bartlettii*.

Monardas are tough, drought-tolerant, but very showy plants that hummingbirds and butterflies adore. If you've got the space, consider giving them a spot in your wildlife garden. Bill Fontenot is the author of *Native Gardening in the South*. He and his wife, Lydia, own and operate Prairie Basse Nursery near Carencro. He is past president of the LNPS, and curator of the Acadiana Park Nature Station in Lafayette.



Magnolia seedpod

LNPS Officers and Board of Directors

Marion Drummond, President
1891 Erlanger Dr
Baton Rouge, LA 70816-8634

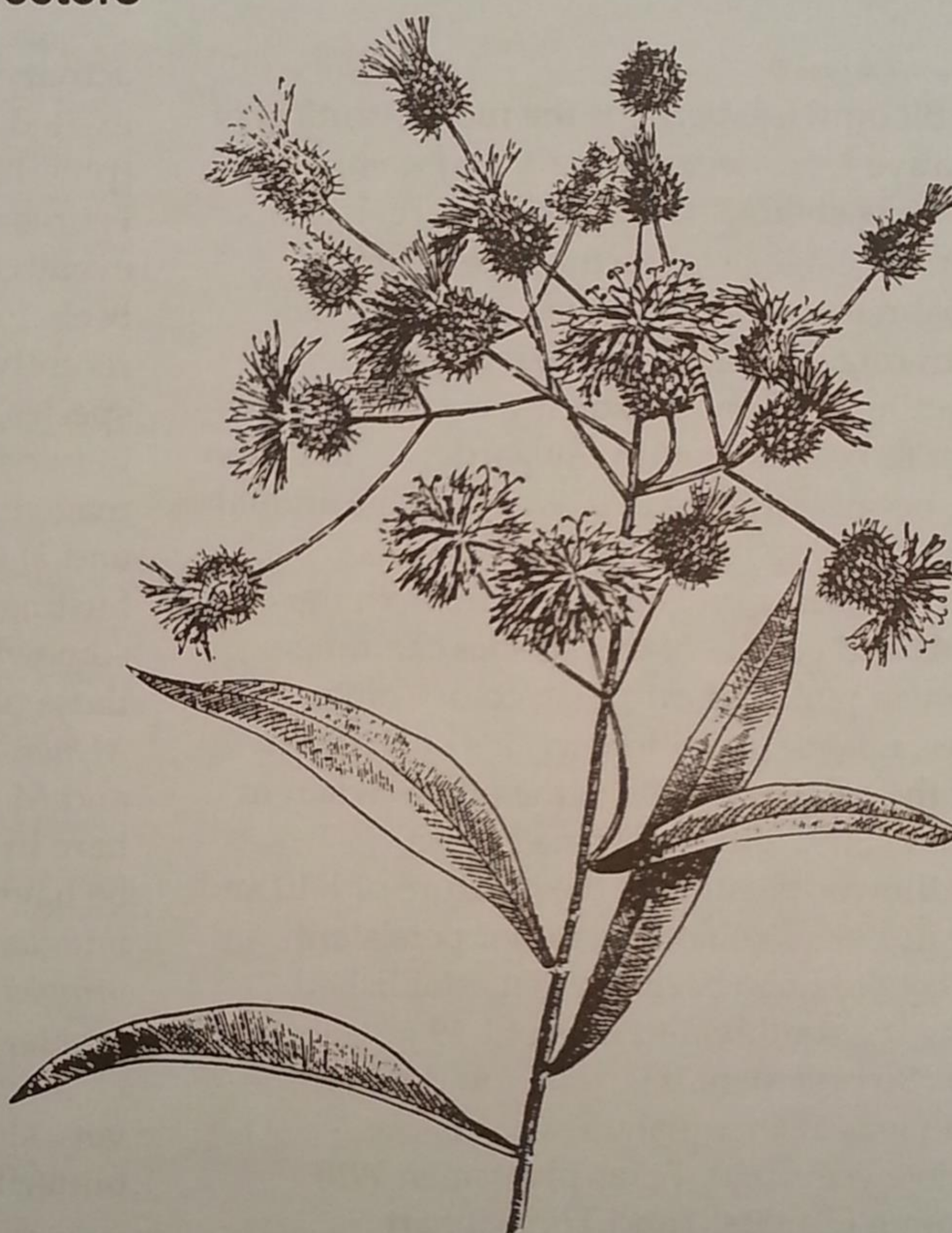
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Collinston, LA 71229



Ironweed, *Veronica texana*

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expires 86419 Mockingbird Rd
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1101 16th St Apt 221
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Newllano, LA 71461

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Elizabeth, LA 70638

Ken Wilson
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3535 Old Mooringsport Rd
Shreveport, LA 71107

Charles Ancona
PO Box 12710
New Iberia, LA 70562

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other classical example of the species found in the eastern United States and in the Orient.

Another species that is found in the mountains of Arkansas, Oklahoma, and Missouri is the more shrubby *Hamamelis vernalis*. It has red-dish or coppery flowers as do others from China and Japan that usually bloom in mid-winter.

Lately, there has been a concerted effort to hybridize witchhazels and there are now hybrids ranging from bright yellow to coppery red. All are excellent garden subjects, but like all other garden plants, they must be well watered for a year or two. Most hybrids are rooted cuttings, best left to the professional nurserymen, where failures are about as common as successes.

None of the books list witchhazels as a species for bird or butterfly gardening. I'm sure there is always some wildlife eager to eat a twig, flower, or seed of some plant. Nothing goes to waste in nature. Really, the best way to enjoy these wild plants is to see them growing in their natural habitat. In recent years, the economy has produced vast areas of highly developed monocultures, such as pine trees, cotton, rice, wheat or lawn grasses. Enjoy what is being left as nature. If you want to try witch hazels on your place, please plant some seeds and plant them for your children or grandchildren. *Carl Amason is a superior plantsman who lives and gardens near Calion, Arkansas.*

A SENSE OF PLACE

Gulf Coast Regional Plant Conference
November 4-6, 1999
Beckwith Camp and Conference Center
10400 Beckwith Lane
Fairhope, Alabama

Format is mostly field trips, very casual.
FEATURED HABITATS:

Longleaf pine forest
 Bill Finch, leader

Bottomland hardwood forest
 Harry Larsen, leader

Pitcherplant bog
 Fred Nation, leader

Maritime forest, Coastal dune
 Chan West, leader

Lodging is rustic, camp style with bunk beds and shared baths. Some motel type available. All meals from Thursday lunch-Saturday lunch provided. Dinner and music at the covered pavillion Thursday and Friday nights.

Details are still being worked out. Space limited. \$50 deposits are being accepted. Make checks payable to GCRNPC. Send checks and contact if you have questions to Thayer Dodd, PO Drawer 439, Semmes, AL 36575 334.645.2222

Other options: ROPES course(extra cost)
 Boat tour of the Delta. State if interested

The Louisiana Native Plant Society was founded in 1983 as a state-wide, non-profit organization. Its purposes are:

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

LNPS News

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inside...

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