

PLANT IDENTIFICATION IN OUR AREA

By Charles Allen

A number of people have asked "How to identify plants?" I attempt to do so with the first step being a definition of the various books. A flora or manual includes (or attempts to) include all species in an area. A monograph is like a flora but covers a selected family and often within a selected political or geographical area like Louisiana. A checklist is simply a list of all species in an area. An atlas is a list of all species plus a map or listing by parishes or counties of all species. Wildflower books are not inclusive and include selected, usually the showy flowered, species. Most floras, manuals, monographs, and wildflower books will have a glossary so don't get discouraged by the unknown terms.

If you have absolutely no idea what your in-hand plant is and it has distinct showy flowers, then start with a wildflower book. Some wildflower books are color coded, that is the flowers are grouped by flower color while others are organized by families. If your wildflower book is color coded, then use that to narrow down your choices. The best thing is to start with the same wildflower book every time and turn the pages looking for a plant that looks like your in-hand plant. If you use the same wildflower book each time, you will soon start to remember what page you saw the plant on and can go directly to that page. If your in-hand plant does not have showy flowers, you might want to start with a flora or manual rather than a wildflower book since it is not likely to be in a wildflower book. Try to use the same flora or manual each time as you will start to recognize that you have seen a drawing of the in-hand plant. Many floras and manuals have keys but require repeated usage for a person to be able to proficiently use. Try the keys and remember that each time you key something out, it will be easier the next time since you will already know that species. But if keys are not your thing, just turn the pages looking for your plant.

If you recognize the genus and/or family, then go to that genus and/or family in a flora, manual, or monograph. Then, follow the steps above to identify your in-hand plant to species.

If I find a plant that I do not recognize, I first start with the family keys in the *Manual of the Vascular Flora of the*

Carolinas by Radford, Ahles, and Bell. I am on my fourth copy of that text as I have worn out the first three. I still have copy number three but is ragged and falling apart. It includes most plants in Louisiana, has illustrations for many species, and has fewer families than the Texas Flora. After getting the in-hand plant ided to family or genus, I then turn to the *Manual of the Vascular Plants of Texas* by Correll and Johnston, to key to genus or species and to double check the species identification. There are some species that are not in the Carolinas but are in Texas. If I can't find it in either of these two, I then turn to the very old Small's *Manual of the Southeastern Flora*. This is the only flora that includes Louisiana but is very outdated plus Small created his own nomenclature rules so the names are often difficult to trace to a modern name. A new book, *Shinners & Mahler's Illustrated Flora of North Central Texas*, has illustrations of all species and can be very useful for Louisiana. And, soon, the monocot and fern volume of the *Flora of East Texas* will be published with the dicots scheduled for 2008. These books are patterned after the North Central work and will be very useful for plant identification in Louisiana.

The next step for selected families and plant groups is to consult one of the monographs. For wetland species, the Godfrey and Wooten two volumes (one Monocots and one Dicots) are excellent works but don't forget that these do not include non-wetland species. A few monographs are completed for Louisiana including *Asteraceae of Louisiana* by Gandhi and Thomas; *Louisiana Legumes* by Lasseigne; *Grasses of Louisiana* by Charles Allen, Dawn Newman, and Harry Winters; and *Trees, Shrubs, and Woody Vines of Louisiana* by the same three authors. Many of these are not in print any more but may be available in libraries. A series of volumes on the *Flora of North America North of Mexico* are being prepared with six volumes out already. These volumes will cover all species in North America with descriptions, keys, and lots of illustrations. One of the volumes already out is that of the Ferns and fern allies, another covers the oaks and related species, and the third covers some of the monocots including the rushes or Juncaceae. Watch for the volumes.

Continued on page 2

cies can be split or lumped, again based on new info (see above) or a different interpretation by a researcher. Another place to check is the *Atlas of the Vascular Flora of Louisiana* series by Thomas and Allen, a three volume work that documents the parishes within the state with known records for each species. If your plant is tied to a species that has not been reported for Louisiana or not for the parish, be sure to get it checked as you may have found a new record. When all else fails, ask someone. After getting an answer, go and read about the plant in as many books as you can. Pay close attention to the related species as this will help you in the future. Also, go to the USDA webpage and the *Louisiana Atlases* and look up the distribution.

[illegible]

Oct. 1 & 2: PlantFest! 2004, Native & hard to find plant Sale.

GOING NATIVE - SMALL TREES

Try these top-performing native trees in the Gulf States

By Jimmy Culpepper

The popularity of all kinds of native plants continues to increase, and native trees are no exception. Native trees are generally hardier, more adaptable to a wider variety of sites, and require less maintenance than introduced species. The following small native trees add a variety of shapes, blooms, and fall color to the landscape.

American Snowbell

(*Styrax americanus*)

This deciduous tree reaches a mature height of 8 to 10 feet and grows in moist, fertile, well-drained soil in full sun to heavy shade. Its upright form is usually multi-stemmed with layered branching and medium texture. Delicate, white, bell-shaped flowers hang in clusters. Fragrant blooms appear in April.

Buttonbush

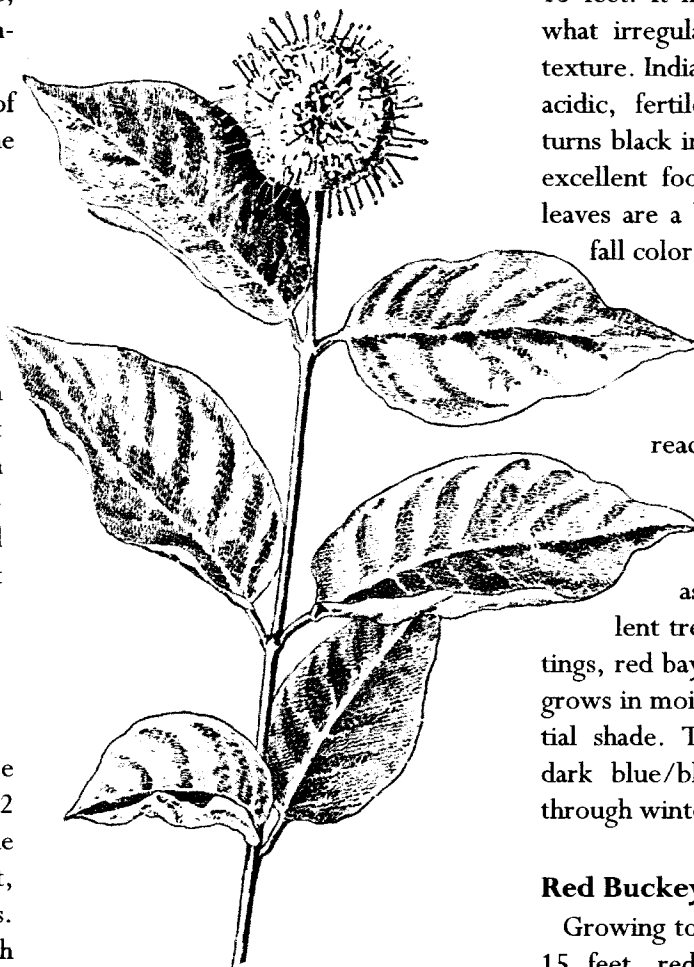
(*Cephalanthus occidentalis*)

This fast-growing, deciduous tree reaches a mature height of 10 to 12 feet. Creamy white flowers are the size of ping-pong balls. Fragrant, soft, threadlike stamens attract butterflies. Round, marble-sized fruit are reddish brown and persist through winter. Buttonbush's irregular form can be pruned to create a uniquely interesting tree. It grows in wet sites but adapts well to drier sites. Buttonbush prefers full sunlight, but can handle partial shade as an understory plant.

Chalk Maple (*Acer leucoderme*)

This deciduous tree attains a mature height of 20 to 25 feet with an oval to rounded form. Chalk maple is a slow grower that can handle full sun to high shade. It grows in moist, well-drained, fertile soils. The tree has outstanding

fall color, turning scarlet, orange, and gold in the fall.



Buttonbush (*Cephalanthus occidentalis*)

Hazel Alder (*Alnus serrulata*)

Growing in wet to moist sites, this deciduous tree usually grows along creek banks but is adaptable to drier sites. It matures to a height of 15 to 20 feet and usually is multi-stemmed. Hazel Alder adapts to full sunlight or partial shade. In the fall, dark, glossy green foliage turns orange to yellow, and birds feed on cone-shaped fruit.

Indian Cherry

(*Rhamnus caroliniana*)

This fast-growing, deciduous tree matures to a height of approximately 15 feet. It has an upright and somewhat irregular oval form and coarse texture. Indian Cherry grows in moist, acidic, fertile soil. Red drupe fruit turns black in the fall and serves as an excellent food source for birds. The leaves are a bright green with yellow fall color.

Red Bay

(*Persia borbonica*)

This evergreen tree reaches a mature height of 20 feet with a moderate rate of growth. Its aromatic leaves can be used as a seasoning. An excellent tree for the naturalistic settings, red bay has an upright form and grows in moist soils in full sun to partial shade. The fruit is a prominent dark blue/black drupe that persists through winter.

Red Buckeye (*Aesculus pavia*)

Growing to a mature height of 10 to 15 feet, red buckeye has palmately compound leaves with a coarse texture and yellow fall color. Flowers bloom in early spring to coincide with the return of migrating hummingbirds. The flower is a 4- to 6-inch long red panicle that blooms as new foliage opens. Nutlike fruit matures and opens in the fall. Seeds can be planted and seedlings will appear in the winter. It performs best in partial shade with morning sun and is an excellent choice as an understory plant in naturalized settings.

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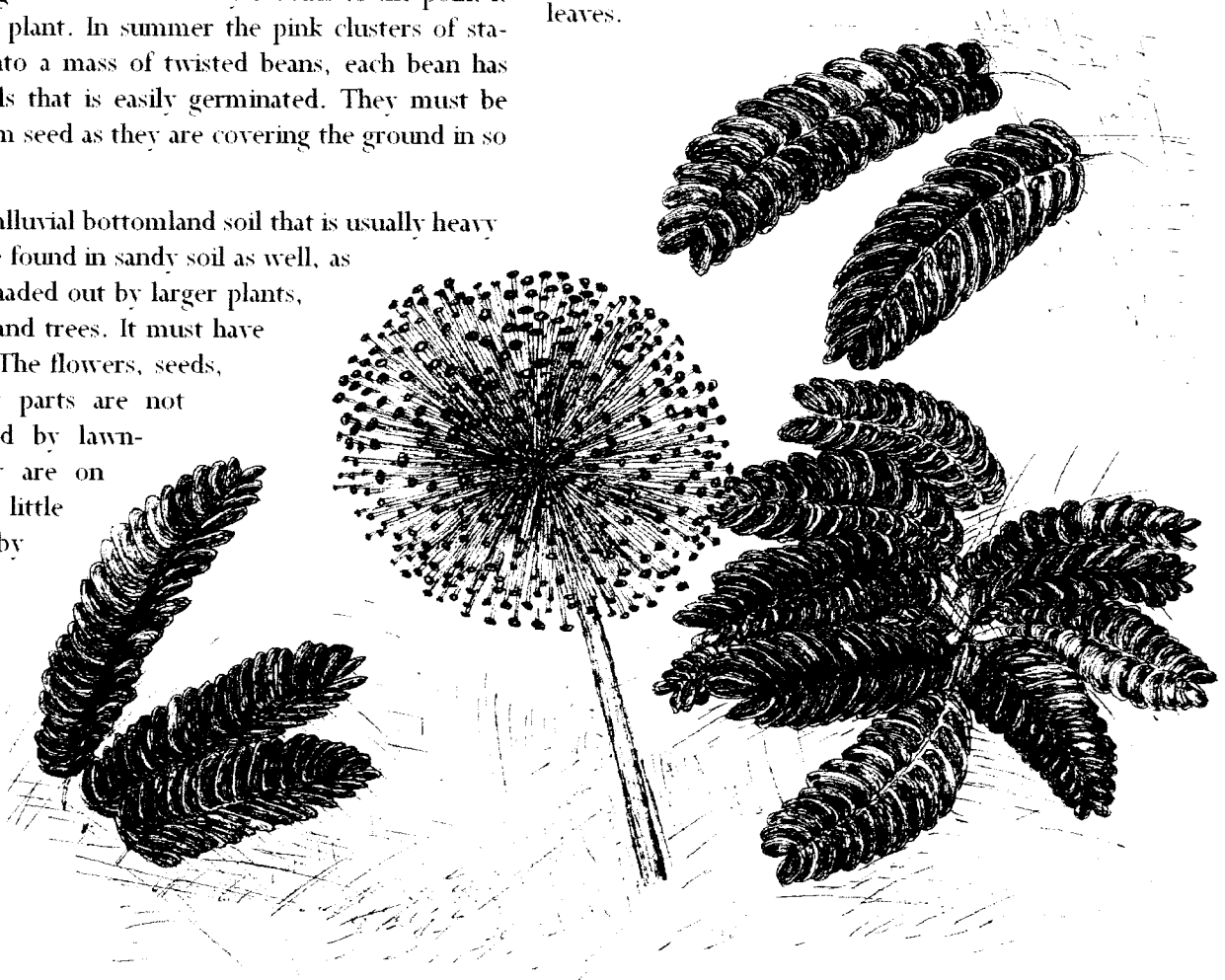
Some Notes on **MIMOSA STRIGILLOSA** by Carl R. Amason

Mimosa Strigillosa is a common yet unusual wildflower that is found in moist lowlands along the major streams and is probably found in every parish in Louisiana. Most people see it when they go fishing, especially if they remain on the banks.

It is a creeping perennial - a groundcover - with long prostrate stems and alternate, two to three inches long leaves consisting of tiny leaflets. The plant does not have thorns so barefoot children can walk and play on a carpet which sometimes covers the ground completely. It is a "sensitive" plant, that is the leaflets will fold up and appear to wilt when it is disturbed, and as a result one of the common names is "shame-face". Only the foliage will wilt but the pink flower remains erect. These flowers consist of stamens only, and no petals. The prominent "power-puffs" consist of stamens, each tipped with a yellow pollen. This plant is lovely in bloom and blooms most of the late spring and early summer covering the sod with many blooms to the point it is a conspicuous plant. In summer the pink clusters of stamens develop into a mass of twisted beans, each bean has several tiny seeds that is easily germinated. They must be easily grown from seed as they are covering the ground in so many places.

It grows well in alluvial bottomland soil that is usually heavy clay but it can be found in sandy soil as well, as long as it isn't shaded out by larger plants, grasses, weeds, and trees. It must have sun to prosper. The flowers, seeds, and other plant parts are not seriously affected by lawn-mowers as they are on the ground so little damage is done by mowing. In fact mowing eliminates most of the competition, letting it grow in complete abandonment.

There are a number of other flowering plants that have flowers without petals and one of the most common is *Albizia julibrissin*, which is frequently grown as a lawn tree and is called "Mimosa Tree". It is not considered a *Mimosa* but is a related legume. Most *Mimosa* species are found in the humid tropics and this is generally one that comes into our temperate area. But the *Mimosa Strigillosa* is one of the most interesting common plants with colorful flowers that grows in our area. In Arkansas, I doubt if it naturally occurs as far north as Little Rock. I have never seen it transplanted into a wildflower garden planting but it would make a beautiful addition to any garden, especially where the site can be closely duplicated as it grows in nature. I suspect that it is easily transplanted when the soil is taken with the plants. It is to be admired for its uniqueness and beauty when found in nature. I always pass my fingers through a bit of the growth to see the "shame-face" response of the leaves.



Sarah Milton Troncale 2004

Events of Interest to LNPS

July 20-25: Cullowhee Native Plant Conference, Cullowhee, NC

July 30-August 1: Carolina Lily and Yellow Fringed Orchid Viewing:

Charles Allen (337-328-2252) native@camtel.net

Aug 8-12: North American Prairie Conference, Madison, Wisconsin.

Sept 18: Haynesville Butterfly Festival.

Sept 25: Native Plant Seminar, Lufkin, TX, 936-875-2948 or damartin@1cc.net

Oct 8-10: Cajun Prairie Fall Meeting plus Arboretum Tour: *Charles Allen* (337-328-2252) native@camtel.net

Oct 14-17: Texas Native Plant Society joint meeting with LNPS>

Nov. 5-6: Central South Native Plant Conference, Birmingham Botanical Gardens,
205-414-3950 or www.bbgardens.org

Carolina Lily & Yellow Fringed Orchid Tours July 30 thru August 1, 2004

It will be hot but this is the time of the year that Carolina Lily (*Lilium michauxii*) and Yellow Fringed Orchid (*Platanthera ciliaris*) are in flower. The Fort Polk crew and I will have located good spots for both of these plus other notable plants for viewing and photographing. We will begin each day at 8 am and shut down around noon or so. Allen Acres will be the gathering point and we will caravan to the spots.

Directions to Allen Acres: From the east sides of the state, get on La 10 going west out of Oakdale and follow La 10 thru Elizabeth and Pitkin and then six miles past Pitkin, you will enter Cravens. In Cravens you will turn south (left) onto La 399. La 399 is just east of the two stores in Cravens. If you are coming from the west, you will turn onto La 10 at Pickering and follow La 10 just south of Ft Polk and continue east for about 15 miles. After entering Cravens, watch for the store on the right and then turn right onto La 399. Now all are on La 399, follow it south for 1.8-1.9 miles and in a sharp curve to the left, turn right into our driveway. If you are coming from the south, get on La 112 (an east-west road) and turn north onto La 399. You will travel north on La 399 for six miles and turn left into Allen Acres. We will have the Allen Acres sign up

Friday, July 30, 2004 - 6:00 pm - Tour of Allen Acres shady spots

Saturday, July 31 - 8:00 am - Caravan to Carolina Lily and yellow fringed orchid spots. Depart from Allen Acres

12:00 noon or so - Chinese Food at Allen Acres

2 pm till 6 pm - Rest, slides shows, anywhere out of the heat

6:00 pm - Tour of Allen Acres shady spots

Sunday, August 1 - 8:00 am - Caravan to Carolina Lily and yellow fringed orchid spots if any new people. If all present were also present on July 31, then different plants will be visited in different spots. Depart from Allen Acres.

For more information, contact Dr. Charles Allen or Susan Allen 337-328-2252 or 337-531-7535 email native@camtel.net.
There are several motels in DeRidder and Leesville.

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

Its purposes are:

- 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.

Membership form:

Checks payable to LNPS.

Name _____ phone _____ Email address _____
 Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____
 Annual dues: Student/Senior \$5 _____ Individual \$10 _____ Family \$15 _____
 Organization \$25 _____ Sustaining \$50 _____ Corporate \$100 _____

Mail to : Jackie Duncan, LNPS treasurer, 114 Harpers Ferry Road, Boyce, LA 71409

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Welcome to New Members: Sonya Bankston, Denham Springs; Doty J. Kempf, Lafayette; Jill & Terry Rehn, Prairieville; Ina Lee Townsend, New Llano; Bob & Stacy Wagner, DeRidder.

Miscellaneous notes:

If you would like to be on the **LNPS email group**, contact Tracey Banowetz at *Banowetz@bellsouth.net*.

The 6th Annual Arbor Day Kick-Off program at the **Southern Forest Heritage Museum**, Long Leaf, La., was recognized for excellence during the Louisiana Urban Forestry Council's Awards Banquet in Baton Rouge on June 24, 2004.

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