"A PRAIRIE CHICKEN IN EVERY PLOT"

VOLUME 22, November 2004

PRESIDENT'S CORNER:

Greetings to all! For those of you who missed the October meeting, hello, my name is Sara Thames and I am the new president of the CPHPS. I am really excited about holding this office, and plan to continue the great work of my predecessor, Peter Loos. All of the other officers were voted back in, with the exception of vice president, in which Jim Foret was elected. I'm positive that with this team of individuals holding offices, we will see nothing but progress in the upcoming two years and beyond.

We currently have all of the seeds that were harvested last season, processed and ready. The final count came out to 99 total species and 250 pounds. On Nov. 17th, we seeded the Acadiana Power Partners Prairie, and will be looking forward in the coming years to see the new plants growing as a result. Also, a big thanks to all of those who helped out on this project. As of now we still have seeds for sale, but I'm not for sure how long we'll have them, they usually go pretty fast. So if you or someone you know would like to purchase some of the seeds let me or Dr. Allen know as soon as possible.

The holiday season is fast approaching, with Thanksgiving just over and Christmas right around the corner and then coming the New Year. With all the hussle and bussle of the holidays, we must not forget about another very important season that is fast approaching. What season is this you may ask? It is transplanting season. Yes it's that time of year again. The time when we bundle up, put on our gloves, and get out our shovels, but here in Louisiana we aren't shoveling snow, we'll be shoveling dormant prairie plants instead! Nothing puts you in the holiday spirit more that a couple of weekends of transplanting prairie plants and spending time with "prairie friends" over the holidays. So in honor of "transplanting season" we have tentatively planned a few get togethers for everyone to enjoy. On Dec. 4th & 5th we are planning a little "Christmas get together" and on Jan. 15th, 16th, & 17th we're planning a small "New Year's celebration," and on Feb. 12th & 13th a nice "I love the prairie" Valentine event. So feel free to come out and join us on any of these days and don't forget, each event is BYOB (Bring Your Own Boots) and we'll provide the shovel. In all seriousness though, we plan to transplant from the area to be converted to the parking lot and from area remnant prairies to the northwest section of the Eunice prairie. We have added an insert with the dates, times, and meeting places for the transplanting days. Please add these to you calendar, as we can use all the help we can get.

Until next time, Happy Transplanting!
Sara Thames, President CPHPS

SEEDY SITUATION

By: Charles Allen

I thought that this might be a good topic for our newsletter since we are promoting the collecting and sale of prairie seeds. First some basic botany: a seed is a mature ovule and is located inside the fruit which is a mature pistil. Plants produce flowers for reproduction and the two necessary parts for reproduction are the stamen and the pistil. The stamen is the male part of the flower and produces the pollen which will ultimately produce the sperm. The pistil is the female part of the flower and usually consists of three parts, the ovary, the style, and the stigma. The ovary contains one or more ovules, is the largest part, and is located at the lower end of the pistil. The stigma is the part that catches the pollen and the style is the stalk that connects the stigma to the ovary. The pretty parts, the petals and sepals, are not essential to reproduction but may aid in pollination by attracting insects or birds. So, after the pollen is transferred to the stigma, a pollen tube is produced by the pollen which delivers the two sperm to the ovule. One pollen grain, one pollen tube, and two sperm inside the pollen tube are needed for the fertilization of each ovule. After fertilization, the ovule develops into the seed and the pistil into the fruit so that is why the seed(s) are inside the fruit. Some fruits have one seed and others can have up to 200,000. All grasses have a single seed and the fruit is very closely attached to the single seed so think of corn, a grass, is being technically a fruit with a single seed inside. Sunflowers also have a single seed inside each fruit but the seed is not attached that well and you can crack open a sunflower fruit (usually called a seed) and remove the single seed. Mints produce a fruit with many small seeds inside. Hibiscus and Baptisia also have a fruit with many seeds but these seeds are much larger than mints and can be seen easily.

After the plant flowers, the fruit and seed start to mature. Notice that on a single plant, there are often flowers in different stages of maturity so it makes sense that there will be fruits and seeds of different stages of maturity. Some seeds will be mature but other not. In seed gathering, we have to split the difference and collect the fruits knowing that we have some mature fruits with mature seeds and some not. Many fruits and seeds change color with maturity and often turn a darker color; brown and black are popular colors for mature fruits and seeds. Some fruits and seeds will mature after collecting so there may be additional mature seeds after the dying process. One key is that the stem below a mature fruit often changes from green to brown or black. As many of you know, some fruits and seeds are easy to collect and break right off but others are difficult and have to be cut off with scissors or clippers. For some plants, the individual fruits or clumps of fruits can be harvested but for others, it is easier and more time efficient to collect the whole plant or the entire top of the plant. The fruits and seeds will be separated later after drying.

What should I collect the fruits and seeds in? I prefer the brown bags but some like to use pails or other plastic containers and some use cloth bags. The idea for the pail is that it is always open and you have a wider target to throw your seeds into. A hint from the Texas prairie people is to place a large container and have the volunteers throw the seeds into this container. The cloth bags work well but have the disadvantage of seeds sticking to the cloth. Some like to collect into plastic bags or you may end up in a situation where you find seeds and only having plastic bags. The important thing to remember is that you must remove the seeds from the plastic bags as soon as possible. After collecting, the seeds have to be dried. This is where the brown paper bags work best as those bags can breathe as air can move through and dry the seeds. Another big plus for paper bags is that you can write pertinent info on the bags including the name (very important), date, location, etc. Even with paper bags, you must not put too many seeds in the bag and also be careful if the seeds are wet due to rain or dew. If you collect into pails or plastic containers, those seeds need to be transferred to paper bags also as soon as possible. If you have the room and the time and the labor, you could spread the seeds out for drying but these often get

mixed up with regard to labeling. Fans and heat greatly speed up the drying process but be sure and not have the heat too high as it will cook the seeds. The heat from light bulbs are great for drying and one can build a seed dryer with plywood and light bulb sockets. This dryer could also be used for drying things other than seeds.

After drying, the next step is to process the seeds. The major consideration in processing is to separate the seeds from each other and from the fruit. This will allow one to spread out seeds much better when planting and not have all the seeds of a species piled up in one spot. You can use many things to separate the seeds from jumping on them to pounding them with a mall but one of the best suggestions came from Tim Kiphart a few years ago. He told me to put the seeds in a trash can and then put a weed eater in the trash can with the seeds and whack the mass. We have found the commercial leaf thrasher that uses weed eater string is great. The seeds pass through and get separated from each other and from the fruit parts. I have also put duct tape on the blades of a blender and placed the fruits inside and run the blender for a short time. Many of the seeds will separate by these methods and then you can sieve them out. For most non-commercial situations, the thorough cleaning of the seeds is not necessary and may lead to some disadvantages. The extra material with the seeds, the fruit, the stems etc can also contain the spores of the mycorrhizal fungi and thus be of great benefit to the newly germinated plant. This extra material will also serve as mulch for the seeds and will decompose and provide nutrients to the new plant. Some advocate that a plant grows best in its own organic matter which will be the case if you toss out all materials with the seeds. And, you can't ever get all the seeds separated so you are throwing away seeds still attached to the stalks, etc. Last year, we cleaned the seeds quite well and I threw away the extra material. Many seeds came up in this area I and now have a prairie.

Seeds should be stored in a dry cool place and protected from rodents and insects. A freezer or refrigerator is best but seeds could be stored in your house if these are not available. The freezer or refrigerator not only benefits the seeds as it mimics the outside cool temperatures but also keeps rodents and especially insects away from the seeds. The seeds should be planted before the end of the year but could be saved for several years, if needed. Many feel that the best time to plant is what would have happened if the seeds had fallen to the ground in nature. That time is the fall and early winter for many seeds although the spring blooming seeds would have fallen back in May or June. I say before Christmas is best but no later than February. I also advocate a good seed bed preparation but there are others who argue for no till planting and drill the seeds in. This method would prevent the seeds of many of the annual weed species on site from germinating. But my experience has been that the annual weedy species are present for a year or two after planting and then disappear. Again, I try to mimic nature; most seeds in nature germinate in areas that have been disturbed and very few germinate in a dense prairie sod or any sod. The better the seedbed the more seeds will germinate as the seeds get in contact with the soil. When you are planting, be careful that you spread out too many seeds in one area and run out of seeds before you run out of space. One way to prevent this is to divide your area into four or five or even more lots and then divide your seeds into the same number of lots. Then plant one lot of seeds into one area, the second into the second area etc. This way you will not have a real big area of no seeds and you will actually learn how to spread the seeds evenly as you progress through the lots.

And lastly, I recommend some sort of going over the area after planting. This could be a very light tilling, a culti-packer, a piece of chain line fence, a log, or other inventions. The purpose is to get the seeds in contact with the soil and also to hide seeds from birds. Now, pray for rain or do a rain dance or both.

Calendar of Events

2004

Dec 4-5 Transplanting; meet at the Eunice site at 9 am and we will transplant from our ten acres (area for parking lot) to the northwest section. Later, we will transplant from Frey to the northwest section. For more info, contact Sara Thames (asthames@hotmail.com) 337-462-2543 or 337-531-7535 or Charles Allen native@camtel.net 337-328-2252. Directions to Frey: Take La 13 south out of Eunice, and after crossing a bridge, turn right at the next double intersection onto La 370. La 370 will make several sharp curves and you will cross a bridge. After crossing the bridge, turn right at the next intersection onto La 368. Follow La 368 for about 0.5 mile and turn left onto Parish Road 7-37. Parish Road 7-37 will take a sharp left and then straighten out and run parallel to an old railroad bed. The Frey Prairie is located along this strip

Dec 14 6:30 PM Eunice City Hall. We will present our project to the Eunice City Council. For more info, contact Sara Thames or Charles Allen (see above)

2005

Thursday January 13th: Jason Singhurst, botanist with Texas Parks and Wildlife, will present "Bogs, Baygalls, Flatwood Ponds, Forested Seeps and Wetland Savannas in East Texas" at 7:00 p.m. in Room 202 of Lufkin City Hall, located at 300 E. Shepherd, Lufkin, TX 75901.

January 15, 16, & 17. Transplanting from Frey to the northwest section. Meet at Frey at 9 am or northwest section. For more info, contact Sara Thames or Charles Allen (see above)

February 4-5. Annual meeting of the Louisiana Native Plant Society (www.lnps.org)

Feb 12-13: Transplanting from Frey to the northwest section. Meet at Frey at 9 am or at the northwest section. For more info, contact Sara Thames or Charles Allen (see above)

February 26: Spring Joint Symposium NPSOT and Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center. Those Other Texas Natives Grasses, Ferns, Sedges, Cacti, Yuccas, Agaves, Nolinas And Soils and Organic Practices. Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center, Austin, Texas (http://npsot.org)

April 1-3: Columbia/Catahoula Caravan. For more info, contact Charles Allen.

April 10-11 or 17-18: Annual Cajun Prairie Spring Meeting

May 13-15: Annual BBBB . For more info, contact Charles Allen.

June 18: Arboretum "Friends" tour and meeting

June 20-23: Cullowhee Native Plant Conference (http://nativeplants.wcu.edu/)

July 29-July 31: Carolina Lily and Yellow Fringed Orchid Viewing