



CPHPS Spring
2014

IN THIS ISSUE

Louisiana Milkweeds (Asclepias)

by Dr. Charles M. Allen

The genus *Asclepias* (milkweeds) include mostly native perennial herbaceous species in the *Asclepiadaceae* and is a Dicot. All species have milky sap except for butterfly milkweed (*A. tuberosa*). The leaves are



Asclepias amplexicaulis

simple, entire, pinnately veined and mostly opposite but whorled or alternate to subopposite in some species. The inflorescences are umbels that are cymosely



Asclepias curassavica



Asclepias incarnata

or corymbosely arranged. The flowers are perfect, regular, and with five sepals, petals, and stamens. The petals are usually strongly reflexed and the five filaments are modified



Asclepias lanceolata

into five hoods that form a corona round the ovary. Most species also have horns on the corona. The pollen is produced in pollinia with each pollinium formed of two pollen



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masses from adjacent anthers. The ovary is superior with two carpels and the fruit is a follicle with distinctly comose flattened seeds. This is a large genus with more than



Asclepias longifolia

twenty species reported for the state. The common species with white or green flowers include longleaf milkweed (*A. longifolia*), Michaux's milkweed (*A. michauxii*), pineland



Asclepias obovata

milkweed (*A. obovata*), white milkweed (*A. variegata*), whorled milkweed (*A. verticillata*), green comet milkweed (*A. viridiflora*), and green milkweed (*A. viridis*).



Asclepias perennis

Two species, swamp milkweed or aquatic milkweed (*A. perennis*) and common milkweed (*A. syriaca*) have flowers that range from white to pink. The species with



Asclepias purpurascens

pink, rose, purple, red or yellow flowers include clasping milkweed (*A. amplexicaulis*), Brazilian milkweed (*A. curassavica*), pinewoods milkweed (*A. humistrata*), swamp milkweed (*A. incarnata*), fewflower milkweed (*A. lanceolata*), purple milkweed (*A. purpurascens*), red milkweed (*A. rubra*), and butterfly milkweed (*A. tuberosa*). Three of



Asclepias rubra

the white to green flowered milkweeds (longleaf, Michaux's, and whorled) have linear leaves that are more than ten times as long as wide. Whorled milkweed has whorled leaves while the other two have opposite to subopposite leaves. Michaux's milkweed has a solitary umbel and a corona that is more than 5 mm across while longleaf milkweed has two to five umbels and a corona that is less than 5 mm across.



Asclepias syriaca

Whorled milkweed is a prairie and open pine forest species that is scattered across the state with reports from 25 parishes. Longleaf milkweed is a bog and pine savannah species with reports from 19 parishes and Michaux's milkweed is a pine savannah species and is only known from St. Tammany, Tangipahoa, and Washington parishes. The other white to green flowered species all have lanceolate to ovate leaves that are less than ten times as long as wide. These include pineland and green comet milkweed with sessile to subsessile inflorescences and white



Asclepias tuberosa

milkweed and green milkweed with pedunculate inflorescences. Pineland milkweed has a corona that is more than 5 mm across while the corona in green comet milkweed is less than 3 mm in diameter. Both are common species of open pine forests and the Cajun Prairie with reports from 19 parishes for pineland milkweed and 17 for green comet milkweed. White milkweed has pure white flowers, is an erect plant, and is found in shaded hardwood

forests while green milkweed is a spreading plant with green flowers and is usually seen in open areas, especially prairies. White milkweed is reported from 36 parishes and green milkweed from 34. The two species with white to pink flowers (*A. perennis* and *A. syriaca*) also have lanceolate to ovate leaves and pedunculate inflorescences. The differences between the two species is that *A. perennis* has pedicels that are shorter than



Asclepias variegata

3 cm and coronas that are narrower than 3 mm while in *A. syriaca*, the pedicels are longer than 3 cm and the coronas narrower than 3 mm. The habitat and distribution are also different with *A. perennis* inhabiting wet areas such as swamps and wet roadside ditches throughout the state in probably all parishes with current reports from 56 parishes while *A. syriaca* is a plant of disturbed areas in Lincoln, Morehouse, and Ouachita parishes. The most distinctive of



Asclepias verticillata

the pink, rose, purple, red or yellow flowered milkweeds is butterfly milkweed (*A. tuberosa*) with alternate leaves and non-milky sap. It is widespread in the pine and prairie regions of the state with reports from 34 parishes. All the other species with these color of flowers have opposite leaves and include fewflower milkweed (*A. lanceolata*) with linear to narrowly lanceolate leaves. It is an infrequent plant of wet areas mainly in the prairie and pine flatwoods portion of the state with reports from 12 parishes. Both clasping milkweed (*A. amplexicaulis*) and



Asclepias viridifolia

pinewoods milkweed (*A. humistrata*) have sessile clasping leaves. Clasping milkweed is widespread in dry sandy soil with reports from 25 parishes while pinewoods milkweed is known only from St. Tammany and Washington parishes. Clasping milkweed is an erect plant with a solitary terminal umbel and corona that is 5 mm or wider while



Asclepias viridis

pinewoods milkweed is a spreading plant with two to five umbels, and a corona that is narrower than 5 mm. Both Brazilian milkweed (*A. curassavica*) and red milkweed (*A. rubra*) have glabrous to sparsely pubescent leaves while swamp milkweed (*A. incarnata*) and purple milkweed (*A. purpurascens*) have pubescent leaves. Brazilian milkweed has red to yellow flowers and is a cultivated plant that persists in southern Louisiana but takes on an annual

habit in north Louisiana. Red milkweed has pink flowers and is an infrequent plant of baygalls and bogs in west central Louisiana with reports from Beauregard, Natchitoches, Rapides, and Vernon parishes. Swamp milkweed (*A. incarnata*) has lanceolate

leaves and is a plant of the marsh with reports from Jefferson, LaFourche, St. Charles, and Terrebonne parishes while purple milkweed has ovate leaves and habits well-drained forests in Caldwell and Lincoln parishes.



Experiments in Growing Cajun Prairie Milkweeds (*Asclepias*)

by Dr. Malcolm F. Vidrine

Two decades of growing milkweeds from seeds collected in the Cajun Prairie have met with good success. Numerous failures are attributed to weather, poor container choice, lack of cold moist stratification (CMS), seed inviability (not uncommon during years with few pollinators), and poor site selection for placement in final growing site. I plan to focus on successes rather than failures, but the failures not only punctuate but also clarify the successes.

Asclepias tuberosa

(Butterflyweed), *A. lanceolata* (Red milkweed or Few-flowered milkweed), *A. viridis* (Green antelopehorn), *A. perennis* (Shore milkweed or Swamp milkweed), and

A. verticillata (Whorled milkweed) were my central focus. Numerous experiments involving seeding in a variety of soils both in containers and interseeded directly into the prairie soils gave poor if any success. Recent experiments employing CMS have changed these results dramatically. I have literally given up on planting seeds directly into the prairie restorations.

Here is my strategy:

1. Collect seeds from locations near the final growing site. For years I collected and/or bought seeds of a variety of milkweeds, especially Butterflyweed, from numerous places in Louisiana and other states—these grew and bloomed (or not) as annuals only to die in the moist winter soils of the Cajun Prairie. The Cajun Prairie Butterflyweed that I grow was found just south of Eunice in a woodland meadow along a railroad right-of-way—they and their offspring have grown in my gardens for up to 17 years.
2. Remove the seeds from the follicles when the follicles split with a little pressure from your fingers. Grasp the silk and pull the seed from their silks. Seeds should have a viable embryo—a nut-like palpable swelling.
3. Store the seeds in a cool, dry place until February.
4. In February, place the seeds into CMS. This simply requires placing the seeds in a Ziploc-like bag with a small amount of damp sand for 6 weeks in the refrigerator. Do not do this to the non-native Mexican milkweed (*A. curassavica*)—the CMS is lethal in my experience—plant these seeds directly.
5. In March-April, add water to Ziploc-like bag, and the viable seed should float to the surface. Remove the seeds into a growing chamber—I use plastic containers that come with a lid. The seeds are spread out on the surface of potting soil—almost any kind works—and a light covering of soil is used to simply hide the seed. Keep the chamber



Butterflyweed seedlings (2 weeks after CMS) in container.



*Green Antelopehorn in large container
(3 weeks after CMS).*

closed and moist. I place the chamber in a south-facing window.

6. Seeds germinate in a week—really germinate—hundreds of them. Allow them to grow out a second pair of leaves—usually 2 weeks.
7. Move the seedlings outside and transplant them into large containers—5 gallon containers for 1-2 years. I prefer 2 years in order to allow the roots to grow really large (several inches long) and easy to handle.
8. In winter or early spring, either transplant the entire container into the ground or remove the roots and transplant them separately into the final growing site. The roots can be divided in the spring into 2 inch segments, and placed in individual containers providing even more plants. These cuttings can also be planted into the final growing site with approximately 50% success. As a final propagation note, all species can



*Butterflyweed (front) and Red
milkweed (back) in large containers
(2nd year after CMS).*

be grown from stem cuttings (taken after Monarchs are done eating), but the success rate is highly variable, and the process requires more intensive work.

General notes:

- Butterflyweed—it is essential to grow plants from near your location, and it takes years to get a specimen plant; thus plant 3 in a triangle about a foot apart. The plants reach 3 feet in height and have red to orange flowers.
- Red milkweed or Few-flowered milkweed—while this plant likes damp soils, it readily conforms to good soil, but it cannot tolerate drought. I have lost hundreds of these from planting them in poor, dry sites or to severe



*From left to right: Whorled milkweed,
Red milkweed and Butterflyweed (2nd
year after CMS) in bloom in large
containers.*

droughts. The plants grow 4-5 feet in height and have yellow to red flowers.

- Green antelopehorn—this plant can be grown in your lawn as it actually appears to appreciate being mowed by machines and/or Monarchs. It is very easy to grow compared to the previous 2 species. The plants grow to 2 feet high and have green flowers.
- Shore milkweed or Swamp milkweed—this plant can tolerate container growth for years, unlike the 3 previous species. It prefers damp soils and cannot tolerate drought. It stays green almost all winter, and it is a superb host for Monarchs as it is green both in early spring and in late



*From left to right: Shore milkweed,
Whorled milkweed and Red milkweed
(2nd year after CMS) in bloom in large
containers.*

autumn. It is the easiest to grow, and the most prolific bloomer. Seeds lack silk. The plants grow to 2 feet high and have pink or white flowers.

- Whorled milkweed—this plant is easy to grow and transplant. It prefers damp soils and can tolerate drought better than the red milkweed. The plants grow to 3-5 feet and have green to white flowers.

All of these are used by our migratory Monarchs. Each has different growth habits and requirements for good flowering. Butterflyweed and Whorled milkweeds appear to be long-lived (more than 10 years), while the other 3 species appear shorter-lived (usually more than 5 but less than 10 years).



*Butterflyweed (3 plants in a triangle
about a foot apart) in the prairie
restoration after 17 years of
development.*



Harbingers of Spring

by Dr. Charles M. Allen



A thesaurus lists synonyms for harbinger as forerunner, herald, portent, omen, and indication. A harbinger has to occur in a designated time period before the event. So a harbinger of spring would have to occur in our area in January or February and March in North Louisiana. It has been my observation and was pointed out to me by my teachers that there is about a week difference between the beginning of spring in New Orleans and Shreveport, about 300 miles north-south. One of the items on my "bucket list" is to follow spring north one year. I would drive to south Texas in early February and then drive slowly northward following spring. I would zig and zag across Texas and Louisiana and move about 300 miles north each week. Then on thru Oklahoma, Kansas, etc until I followed spring all the way into Canada..



But, I am off topic; back to harbinger of spring. I first heard a botanical use of harbinger of spring in reference to the Trillium which also has the common name of "Wake Robin" in the northern United States. I had to think about that for a while and realized that when the Trilliums begin to flower here, we should call it goodbye robin. There is a plant of the central and northern US that has the common name of "Harbinger of Spring". It is a member of the mustard family with the scientific name of *Erigenia*

bulbosa. In Louisiana, we have some closely related species that are usually called spring cress (*Cardamine hirsuta*) and another one called bulbous spring cress (*Cardamine bulbosa*). Both are harbingers of spring with spring cress found across the state and bulbous spring cress mostly in central and northern Louisiana.

In southern Louisiana, the best harbinger of spring is yellow top or yellow sneezeweed (*Senecio glabellus*). In January every year, you can see this plant covering many of the wet roadside ditches from Lafayette to Baton Rouge and to New Orleans. It is so common that a new common name has been created "ditch daisy". Another harbinger of spring in not only south Louisiana but throughout the state is the yellow flowered crowfoot (*Ranunculus*). It often dominates in pastures where the cows won't eat it. Some other harbingers across the state are annual bluegrass (*Poa annua*), bluets (*Houstonia*), henbit and (*Lamium amplexicaule*). The tree that so many people notice and is their harbinger of spring is red maple (*Acer rubrum*). Its red flowers attract a lot of attention in January and February each year.



In yards and other planted areas, bridal wreath or snowflake (*Spiraea*), Japanese magnolia, and daffodils (*Narcissus*) alert you to the coming of spring. I can remember my mother looking out of the house and saying "look at the snowflake". My younger

nephew jumped up and ran to the door thinking he would see snow but was very disappointed.



As you move to the central and northern parts of Louisiana, other harbingers of spring can be seen. The shrub Elliott's blueberry or summer huckleberry (*Vaccinium elliotii*) produces its small white flowers that will later become wonderful tasting summer huckleberries. And, if you look closely in the shaded forest, you might find these orchids, twayblade (*Listera australis*) or spring coral root (*Corallorhiza wisteriana*). As mentioned earlier, Trillium is one of my earliest harbinger of spring and still gives me a thrill when I see my first Trillium for the year. Most of our Trilliums have greenish to maroon petals but in extreme northwest Louisiana, there is a species of Trillium with small white flowers. A widely distributed woody plant in the state is the native bamboo or sometimes called river cane (*Arundinaria gigantea*). Not many people have ever seen it flower for two reasons; (1) it rarely flowers and (2) the flowers are very bland and not noticeable. I am in the woods a lot during the year and see many populations of the native bamboo but usually only find one or some years no population in flower per year. A woody vine with wonderfully smelling yellow flowers is yellow Jasmine (*Gelsemium sempervirens*). It is a very common vine throughout the pine regions of the state.

In north Louisiana, bloodroot (*Sanguinaria canadensis*) is a sign of spring on the way that is not found in south Louisiana. Its name comes from the red underground rhizome. Spring beauty (*Claytonia virginica*) has large edible black bulbs and produce white to pink flower to signal the coming of spring. It is mostly a plant of north Louisiana and I have seen lawns of it in Monroe that look like snow is covering the ground. One of the most interesting harbingers of spring are the dogtooth violets also called trout lilies. The two species (*Erythronium albidum* and *Erythronium rostratum*) are restricted to the northwestern part of the state. chamber

PHOTOS FROM LAST YEAR



Cajun Prairie Spring Meeting and Tour from last year - 2013

Cajun Prairie Spring Meeting and Tours-Saturday, May 10, 2014

8:00 AM: Tours of Duralde Restored Prairie. Directions: Take LA 13 north out of Eunice and after crossing a bridge, go about 1.5 miles and turn left onto La 374. If coming from the north on La 13, about 6 miles south of Mamou, just past the Fire Station, turn right onto La 374. Follow La 374 west and it will take a sharp right then a sharp left. After straightening out from the sharp left, go about 0.5 miles and turn left at the first double intersection. You will be turning left onto a gravel road that is Navy Road. Navy Road is about 2 miles from La 13. Follow Navy Road and it will take a sharp right and then will start a sharp left but you will not turn at the left but drive straight into Duralde Prairie.

10:00 AM: Eunice Restored Prairies; meet at the corners of Martin Luther King and East Magnolia and enjoy the best restored prairie in the United States. This site is north of U.S. 190 and east of La 13. For those of you coming from the north on La 13, turn left (east) at the first paved road (East Magnolia) to the east after you cross the railroad tracks in Eunice. Go a couple of blocks and the

prairie is on your left. For those coming from the east on U.S. 190 turn right (north) at the first red/green traffic light and follow Martin Luther King Drive for a couple of blocks and the prairie is on your left. For those coming from the west on U.S. 190, follow U.S. 190 through Eunice and after crossing a railroad track, go to the next red/green traffic light and turn left onto Martin Luther King Drive (See above). For those coming from the south on La 13, when you reach the stop sign, turn right onto Maple Ave. Follow Maple for about 3 or 4 blocks and at the 2nd four way stop sign, turn left onto Martin Luther King Drive. Follow this street across U.S. 190 and see above.

12 noon Lunch at Rocky's Restaurant located at 1415 E Laurel Ave, Eunice, LA 70535 (337) 457-6999.

and

Cajun Prairie Society meeting. Presentation to be determined

For more details about the meeting and or tours, contact Dr. Charles Allen 337-328-2252 or email native@camtel.net.

Cajun Prairie Update (March 2014)

Meeting, Sat May 10, 2014

A lot has happened since our meeting in August of 2013. Just a reminder, that the next meeting is scheduled for Saturday May 10, 2014. The schedule for that meeting can be found also in this newsletter. It is the same basic schedule that we have followed for several years. We will begin at Duralde at 8 am and then migrate to Eunice and then to Rocky's for lunch, a presentation, and the Society's meeting. Please send suggestions for a speaker ASAP.

Eunice Update

Lots of woody invasives were taken out during the workday on Sat Feb 8, 2014. A dozen, yes a dozen as in twelve, eager volunteers showed up with saws, loppers, and hatchets in hand and herbicide in sprayers. The woody invasives did not have a chance and are now on their way to the happy hunting grounds for plants, if there is such a place.

Duralde update

On Sat Nov 16, 2013, a group of hardy people showed up at Duralde with the objective of marking off the demo plots with pipes. The pipes had been purchased by Charles Allen and with the help of Jacob Delahoussaye, had been cut into 4 foot sections. Using string, the group layed out the plots and then drove poles into the ground to mark the corners of the plots and the mowing trails. A t-post driver was used which apparently has other names like mother-in-law and the enforcer and perhaps even others. Five additional plots were tilled and planted.

Charles Allen and Stacy Huskins met with Wayne Syron and Richard Myers of Lacassine Wildlife Refuge on Friday Feb 7, 2014. Accomplishments at Duralde during 2013 were discussed plus projections for activities in 2014. The big news was that there is a possibility that Lacassine Wildlife Refuge could (note the word could, so it is not definite) transfer the title of the Duralde Property to another entity. Also, the

possibility of burning of Duralde seems very unlikely. And, Wayne Syron will be retiring from the US Fish and Wildlife Service in May. He has been very helpful to the Society and we need to recognize him in some way. Perhaps, a plaque would be appropriate, thanking him for the assistance over the years.

Publications

A Southeastern Prairie Symposium was held at Mississippi State University and the Proceedings are being published with two papers from our Society members. The two are:

"Attempts at Converting a South Mississippi Bahia Grass Pasture to Diverse Prairie via Local-Provenance, Source Certified Seed" by Marc Pastorek

And

"Floristics of the Louisiana Prairies; Cajun and Inland" by Charles Allen

Honors/Awards

The Annual Governor's Conservation Achievement Recognition Program conducted by the Louisiana Wildlife Federation.

Cajun Prairie Habitat Preservation Society named Conservation Organization for 2013

And

Pastorek Habitats received the award for the Business Category for 2103



Events

President: Dr. Tommy Hillman

Vice President: Brian Early

Secretary: Dr. Malcolm Vidrine

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Webmaster: Dawn Allen

Newsletter Editor: Dr. Charles Allen

Past President: Jackie Duncan

Education Coordinator: Margaret Frey

Fri Apr 4, 2014-Sun Apr 6, 2014

Go Green, Meridian! presents "Growing Health, Sustaining Wellness"-5th Annual GGSIM Sustainability Conference

Where: Meridian, MS, United States

Tue Apr 8, 2014-Thu Apr 10, 2014

Plant Identification Workshop

Where: Allen Acres Bed & Breakfast, Louisiana 399, Pitkin, LA, United States

Fri Apr 11, 2014-Sat Apr 12, 2014

Central Louisiana Garden Expo

Where: 8125 U.S. 71 S, Alexandria, LA, United States

Fri Apr 11, 2014-Sun Apr 13, 2014

Grand Isle Migratory Bird Festival

Where: Grand Isle, LA, United States

Thu Apr 17, 2014-Sat Apr 19, 2014

12th Annual Southern Miss Powwow

Where: The University of Southern Mississippi, College Drive, Hattiesburg, MS, United States

Fri Apr 25, 2014-Sat Apr 26, 2014

Biedenhorn Museum and Gardens Symposium

Where: 2000 Riverside Drive, Monroe, LA, United States

Sat Apr 26, 2014-Sun Apr 27, 2014

Almost Eden Spring Open House

Where: 1212 Smith Road, Merryville, LA, United States

Fri May 2, 2014-Sun May 4, 2014

Arkansas Native Plant Society Meeting

Where: Harrison, AR, United States

Sat May 3, 2014

Plant Photography Workshop

Where: Burden Center, Essen Lane, Baton Rouge, LA, United States

Sat May 10, 2014

Cajun Prairie Meeting

Where: Eunice, LA, United States

Sat May 17, 2014

Wildflower Walk

Where: Carriere, MS, United States

Thu May 29, 2014-Sun June 1, 2014

State of the Prairie Conference

Where: Fort Worth, TX, United States



Membership Dues

If you are a Cajun Prairie member and have not paid your dues recently, then please do so. Dues are due now for 2014. We depend on dues and donations for our day-to-day operations and the maintenance of our Prairies. And if you are not a member, then you need to join. The dues schedule is: \$20 per person, \$25 per family, and \$10 for students. You can go to the website www.cajunprairie.org and pay through PayPal or you can download a form, complete it with a check payable to Cajun Prairie Habitat Preservation Society and mail to:

CPHPS/C/O Patricia Lewis,

262 CR 3062 ,

Newton, TX 75966

If you go to our website, you may also donate to our long-term endowment with the Central Louisiana Community Foundation. Additional information and donation instructions are on our website .



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