

# February 2008 Newsletter

## Native Plant Society of Texas - South Texas Chapter



### February 7th – Monthly Meeting – Guest Speaker Jay Tarkington

Thursday at 7 p.m. at the Garden Senior Center, 5325 Greely Drive, Corpus Christi.

Jay Tarkington, from the Center for Coastal Studies at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi, will present an overview of coastal wetland plants and wetland zones. Topics will include halophytic plants, seagrasses, mangroves, and a little algae.

### Chapter Updates

#### **Renewed Memberships**

Thank you for your continued interest and support.

Margaret Souby & Jeremy Smith of Corpus Christi

#### **Our Next Meeting is March 6<sup>th</sup>**

**Speaker: Dr. Alice Hempel**

**Topic: Sunflowers**

### Please Support the Garden Council

Our chapter is able to meet at the Garden Senior Center for free because we are a part of the Corpus Christi Garden Council – all we pay is \$20 a year. Therefore, each club needs to support the annual Garden Tour which is the Garden Council Fund raiser.

### Native Plant Spring Symposium – Preserving Habitat, Citizen by Citizen at LBJ Wildflower Center

Saturday, February 23, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. This symposium will review habitat preservation, plant conservation and invasive species management programs in Texas, and explore resources that can make a positive difference toward ecological sustainability in your region. The Spring symposium will include a plenary session followed by afternoon breakout sessions. Visit our website, [www.wildflower.org](http://www.wildflower.org), for complete information and registration. Hosted by the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center and Native Plant Society of Texas. \$75 per person; includes box lunch.

### Do You Know Your Natives??? Contributed by: USDA-NRCS Kika de la Garza Plant Materials Center



Gulf cordgrass [*Spartina spartinae* (Trin.) Merr. ex A.S. Hitchc.] is a stout, native, perennial grass that grows in dense clumps. The genus name comes from the Greek word “spartine”, meaning cord from spartes or *Spartium junceum*. The genus name probably was given because the leaf blades are tough, like cords; hence, the common name cordgrass. It is also know by the common name sacahuista. Gulf cordgrass has a non-rhizomatous base, although occasionally it can be sub-rhizomatous towards the outer edges of the clump. The tips of this grass’s leaf blades are sharp and spine-like. It flowers in spring, summer, and rarely in the fall. It is moderately saline tolerant (0-18 ppt.), and does well in mesic areas. It can even grow in soils that are occasionally submerged, but are above sea level most of the time.

Its growth form and salt tolerance make it a good plant for coastal restoration and shoreline stabilization projects. Gulf cordgrass can also provide bird nesting habitat and wildlife cover for wetland margin species. Geese, sandhill cranes, and mottled ducks are among the species that make use of gulf cordgrass stands. Gulf cordgrass can also be a good source of cattle and geese forage when managed properly.

Domestic livestock do not eat unburned gulf cordgrass, but will graze it heavily following a prescribed burn. The new, young shoots are tender, but older mature plants are too tough even for horses.

Gulf cordgrass grows along the Gulf Coast from Florida to Texas, and South into Eastern Mexico. More rarely, gulf cordgrass grows inland in marshes, swamps, and moist prairies. It can also be found along the Caribbean coasts, and inland in Argentina and Paraguay. In Texas, it can be found along the gulf coast on coastal flats and around brackish marshes. It is occasionally found in inland marshes and salt flats in the Post Oak Savannah, Rio Grande Plains, and Edwards Plateau Regions. Gulf cordgrass grows mostly on clayey soils, but at the Plant Material Center, we have had success growing it on sandier soils as well. Physical and chemical soil properties do not seem to influence the occurrence of gulf cordgrass, but elevation in relation to inundation is a key factor.

Gulf cordgrass is best reproduced vegetatively. Currently there are no commercial sources of gulf cordgrass. However, the PMC has two accessions that look promising for producing seed, and hopefully they will become available in the next few years.

Info Sources: *Manual of the Vascular Plants of Texas* - Correll and Johnston; *The Grasses of Texas* - Gould, 1975; *Grasses of the Texas Gulf Coast Prairies and Marshes* - Hutch, Schuster & Drawe, 1999; *Manual of the Grasses of the United States*, 2nd Edition - Hitchcock, A.S., 1971; and research performed at the PMC.



**Upcoming Events** (361) 852-2100 [www.ccbotanicalgardens.org](http://www.ccbotanicalgardens.org)

- **Winter Lecture Series for residents and ‘Winter Texans.’** Guest speakers will present unique perspectives on regional environmental, agricultural and horticultural topics from 10 to 11:30 a.m., Wednesday mornings. Cost is General Admission only & STBGNC members are free.
  - Feb. 6: Harvesting Snake Venom TAMUK Natural Toxins Research Center
  - Feb. 13: Wetlands—More than Meets the Eye Jay Tarkington TAMUCC
  - Feb. 20: Tricks of the Trade & Home Remedies Frank Eicholz
  - Feb. 27: Must-Have Herbs Rockport Rose & Herb Study Group

### **NPSOT Calendar Fall 2007- Spring 2008**

- **Feb. 7<sup>th</sup>** - NPSOT Monthly Meeting 7 p.m. – Speaker Jay Tarkington - Wetlands
- **Feb. 23<sup>rd</sup>** – Native Plant Spring Symposium at LBJ Wildflower Center
- **March 6<sup>th</sup>** - NPSOT Monthly Meeting 7 p.m. – Dr. Alice Hempel – Sunflowers
- **April 3<sup>rd</sup>** - NPSOT Monthly Meeting 7 p.m. – Speaker T.B.A.
- **May 1<sup>st</sup>** - NPSOT Monthly Meeting 7 p.m. – Speaker T.B.A.

### **Chapter Contacts**

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**State Web Site** [www.npsot.org](http://www.npsot.org)