



# Texas Gulf Coast Fern Society

May 2005

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<http://www.rwsarchitects.com/fern.htm>

**Next Regular Meeting: Sunday, May 15 at 2:00 p. m. – Houston Garden Center in Hermann Park,  
1500 Hermann Drive, Houston, TX 77044 – Phone: (713) 529-3960**

## **A message from our President:**

Hi Everyone,

We sure had a great meeting last month. For those who couldn't make it we sure missed you, and hope to see you on May 15<sup>th</sup>.

First, I would like to thank John McMillan for sharing Kathy's plants with us. Knowing how much she loved her plants made this was a wonderful gift. I will always treasure mine. Kathy was a special person and in this way she will live on with each of us in our hearts.

Our May meeting is sure to please everyone that can attend. Patrick Hudnall is going to talk to us about Staghorn ferns (*Platycerium*s) and will have several examples of different species and cultivars. Patrick is a great grower of ferns. Two years ago we ordered *Holtumia* from Thailand, and Patrick ended up with one that had almost no roots at all. I really thought it had no chance to survive, but Patrick did. He took it home to work his magic (which he will be sharing with us). His out-grew mine by a long shot, so I can't wait to hear some of his experiences and learn.

I would like to thank Larry Rucker, Paul and Patsy Geiger, Patrick Hudnall, and Cecil Strange for working with me at the Garden Expo at Moody Gardens April 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup>. It takes all the help we can get to put on an event like this and make a good impression on the public and the other "expert societies" showing their wonderful plants. I would also like to thank Walt and Carolyn Hesson, Lulu Leonard and Larry Rucker for their plant donations. We were able to make some good contacts and hopefully gain some new members from the information we passed out – thanks also to Ted and Jean Richardson who provided those handouts. We have a great core group. This was Moody Garden's first attempt at a Plant Society Sale. We were one of about 6 or 7 societies. Next year should be great and we are in on the ground floor. We netted \$362.00 from the sale. It was not a lot of money, but the fern exposure was great. Even other plant society members did not realize there were so many different types of ferns. Next year we will be prepared to offer some tropical types of ferns in addition to the hardy types we had this time.

Tea's Nursery had invited the TGCFs to talk about ferns and promote our membership drive at their Bellaire location, Saturday April 30th.

I was able to be there from 10a to 2p and talked to several people about fern use in their gardens. We were also able to gain two new members (see listing below) that should fit in our group very well. We are proud to welcome them and hope to see them at the May meeting.

Well I have been so busy and my yard really needs my attention. I have loved this cool spring, but have not had the time to take advantage of its beauty. I hope all of you have had a fruitful spring.

I'm really looking forward to our May meeting! Again, I hope to see you there.

Darla



## **Officers and Committees:**

President:	Darla Harris
Vice President:	Martha Burg
Secretary:	Patsy Geiger
Treasurer:	Al and Susan Peacock
Board Members at Large:	Ted Richardson, Cecil Strange, Jr. and Larry Rucker
Membership Chair:	Cecil Strange, Jr.
Newsletter:	Paul Geiger
Library:	Patrick Hudnall
Raffles:	Jean Keiser
Hospitality:	Lulu Mae Leonard
Welcoming at Door:	Emma Lee Payne



## **Minutes of Meeting**

**April 17, 2005**

A regular monthly meeting of the TEXAS GULF COAST FERN SOCIETY was held at 2:00 p.m., April 17, 2005 at the Houston Garden Center in Hermann Park, 1500 Hermann Dr., Houston, TX 77044. President Darla Harris presided. Eighteen members attended and there were no guests recorded.

Cecil Strange, Jr. gave the Treasurer's report.

Darla Harris announced she is taking orders for TGCFs T-shirts. Anyone interested in purchasing T-shirts should contact Darla.

Details of the Moody Gardens "Gulf Coast Gardening Expo" were discussed and a call for volunteers to assist our plant sale was made.

Jean Keiser and Emma Payne provided refreshments that were greatly enjoyed and appreciated as always.

Martha Burg introduced our speaker, Bob Patterson, General Manager of Southwest Fertilizer, a 50+ year business in the Houston area, located at 5828 Bissonnet, 77081. His talk on pesticides and fertilizers was very interesting and he proved to be quite knowledgeable of the products displayed.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:15 p.m. and most attendees remained to enjoy the delicious refreshments and fellowship.

A TGCFS board meeting followed adjournment of the regular meeting. Present were: Darla Harris, presiding, Cecil Strange, Jr., Ted Richardson, Larry Rucker, Martha Burg, Susan Peacock, Paul and Patsy Geiger. During this meeting it was decided to make the August meeting a social event and Ted Richardson volunteered to be host (along with Jean who later affirmed) – details to be announced. Speakers are still needed for June and September. November will be a field trip. Darla was authorized to purchase plants to augment donated plants for the Moody Gardens Expo plant sale. Also, it was decided to form a Membership Drive Committee, but discussion was deferred to a later date.

Submitted by: Patsy Geiger, Secretary

### Library

It is always good to see interest in our library. At each meeting there are take-home sheets that contain a brief review of available books. Also at each meeting is a wide variety of books available for immediate checkout. This is a great source for continued education.

### TGCFS Membership Rosters

Our membership roster has been revised and updated and available for pick-up at our meetings. If any member cannot attend a meeting soon, just let me (your editor) know and we'll gladly mail you one.

Also, if you already have a new roster, please bring it to the May meeting. We need up date some phone numbers and address already!

### Welcome New Members:

As a result of our exposure at Moody Gardens and Tea's Nursery in April we can announce 3 new members:

#### Jessica Sheldon

5818 Portal Dr.  
Houston, TX 77096  
Phone 713-729-9188

#### Linda Whitely (held previous membership)

3007 Massengale Lane  
Webster, TX 77598  
Phone 281-338-2332

#### Ronda Joseph

P.O.Box 792  
Alief, TX 77411  
Phone 713-559-5599

To our new members: We are delighted to have you and hope to see you often.

And to all of our members - Spread the word - encourage someone you know to visit us - we always have room for more!

### Membership dues:

Individual: \$10.00  
Family: \$15.00  
Student: \$5.00

### May Refreshments:

Refreshments for our next meeting will be generously furnished by Darla Harris and Cecil Strange, Jr. Come out and enjoy!

### Our Next Guest Speaker – May 15

As mentioned earlier in Darla's column our speaker for this month will be our own Patrick Hudnall!

Patrick visited Hawaii in March of this year and has provided us the following trip report:

### Fern Observations in Hawaii

by Patrick Hudnall

In a tropical paradise such as Hawaii most fern lovers might expect to see every imaginable variety growing in their tropical gardens, in commercial landscapes and at people's homes.

During the second week of March I paid a visit to my brother, a wholesale landscape hardware dealer based on O'ahu. While in Poipu on Kauai I had the pleasure of a guided tour of the Allerton Garden, part of the National Tropical Botanical Gardens (NTBG). Our host was the Senior Horticulturalist, Maureen Murphy. Their collection of tropical plants and trees is truly remarkable. However, the only ferns I saw of real significance was a fine specimen of *Platycerium hillii* and an *Angiopteris evecta* similar to the one I would later see in Foster Gardens. Later I was told they did have some tree ferns in an area we didn't visit.

The next day during a drive across Kauai we stopped at a coffee plantation that had planted in its landscape a fine specimen of *Cibotium chamissoi*. Our objective this day was on the north shore for a "zip line tour" (see the movie *Medicine Man*). On the steep sides of the hills grew *Dicranopteris* or 'uluhe. It is an especially peculiar fern not found in cultivation. The fern seems to grow only over large, very steep, well watered terrain. It's quite a remarkable site. Later we visited Limahuli Garden and Preserve near the end of the road going north. This garden extends over 1,000 acres and is also part of the NTBG. Their collection contained a couple *Cibotium chamissoi* and more interestingly, a couple nice *Sadleria cyatheoides*, a smallish tree fern with a more primitive looking structure.

During my stay on O'ahu and during a rigorous climb up a ridge on the windward side, I observed *Microlepia strigosa* along the route and our ridge route was covered with *Phlebodium aureum*. Also seen on horizontal, shaded branches, a small form of *Lepisorus thunbergianus*. We also visited botanical gardens in Kailua and Wailua. I visited Lowe's, Home Depot and Wal-Mart garden shops.

The all had the Australian tree fern, and other very common ferns but no especially unusual stuff. At the "Base Exchange" I did find 6 to 9 inch Hawaiian tree fern trunk sections. These are likely to be found at many tourist locations. They are the tip of living tree ferns which, ideally, should be able to root and grow when properly planted. I picked up a few to give it a shot. Waimea Falls Park is now operated by the Audubon Society. Though the gardens are in general disrepair they do have possibly the finest collection of *Heliconia* imaginable.

Finally, it is my observation the ferns play a generally incidental role in the residential and commercial landscapes of the islands. The big landscape story is clearly palms. Every imaginable genera, species and variety. Finally, Foster Gardens, in downtown Honolulu, has several head high *Angiopteris*, giant specimens of tropical trees, palms and cycads, which have to be seen to be believed.



#### From your Editor:

As mentioned earlier by Darla, Patsy and I went to Moody Gardens for the Garden Expo last April 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup>. We decided to make it a mini-vacation and stayed overnight, Saturday at the Moody Gardens Hotel. The experience was wonderful. The setting for an Expo/plant sale could not be better. Moody Gardens is beautiful, as I'm sure most of you already know. It was our first time there and we're looking forward to going back sometime with our grandchildren. We really enjoyed meeting people from the other societies and viewing their displays. Yes we even bought from the other societies as they did from us.

We learned so much! Standing next to Darla, Larry and Patrick and listening to their descriptions of the different ferns was well worth the trip. Personally, I have been attracted to the different Spikemosses and we had some for sale there. They are quite an attention-getter on their own. I offer the following after researching information on them afterwards.

The following is taken from "Ferns for American Gardens", by John T. Mickel, TIMBER PRESS, 2003:

#### Fern Allies

The term "fern allies" is given to several plant groups—clubmosses, spike-mosses, quillworts, and horsetails—that are at roughly the same evolutionary level in the plant kingdom as the ferns; that is, they have conducting (vascular) tissue and reproduce by spores. They are really not related to the ferns. Fern allies have small leaves with simple, unbranched veins and large sporangia, each often containing several hundred spores. The sporangia of most of the allies are produced in cones at the tip of the stem or the branches. In contrast, the ferns have a more complex branched vein system and generally small sporangia with only sixty-four spores each. The several groups of fern allies are distinctive and are more likely to be mistaken for mosses or some kinds of flowering plants than for ferns. They arose even before the ferns, some of them more than 400 million years ago, and, like the ferns, reached their greatest development during the Carboniferous Period, some of them becoming hundred-foot trees with trunks three feet in diameter.

These eventually became much of the world's coal deposits.

Together, the ferns and fern allies are called peridophytes, or lower vascular plants. Botanists studying ferns usually work on the fern allies as well. The fern allies fall into two major groups: One, the clubmosses (*Lycopodium*), spikemosses (*Selaginella*), and quillworts (*hoetes*), all have leaves spirally arranged on the stem with the sporangia borne at the leaf bases. The leaves bearing sporangia are usually smaller than the purely vegetative leaves and are set closer together forming cones, although in a few clubmosses and all the quillworts the fertile leaves are not distinctly different. The other, the horsetails (*Equisetum*), have minute, whorled, white or black leaves fused to form sheaths on hollow, jointed, ribbed stems, and the sporangia are borne on special umbrellalike structures in a cone.

The fern allies have not been used much in cultivation. Certainly many of them would be interesting curiosities as they introduce textures and forms not seen in the ferns. Several of the native horsetails and Asian spikemosses are readily cultivated although most of the clubmosses are challenging to grow. Quillworts grow mostly underwater, and although they can be grown, they are too inconspicuous to be considered further in this book. The fern allies are not grown from spores, partly because they are readily propagated vegetatively and partly because the spores are mostly difficult to germinate (some requiring long periods in the dark and special nutrients).



*Selaginella uncinata* (Photo by Pamela Harper)

Peacock spikemoss, Rainbow moss  
Plants: wide-creeping, semi-evergreen  
Availability: infrequent  
Hardiness zones: 6 to 10  
Ease of cultivation: Moderate

*Selaginella uncinata* is one of the most distinctive of all the spikemosses in having iridescent bluish green leaves and flat, frondlike branches. The leaves are of two kinds, with a pale, shiny margin without teeth. The lateral leaves are oval, the median ones narrowly oblong with a long slender tip. The peacock spikemoss grows in moist woods in China, has become naturalized in Florida and Louisiana, and is at least marginally hardy north to New York and Connecticut. Unfortunately, slugs are strongly attracted to this plant

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