



March 2006

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

**Next Regular Meeting: Sunday, March 19, 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 have a great meeting planned for March. Patrick Hudnall will present a discussion of the various aspects of propagating ferns using spores. The discussion will include cleaning, sterilization, viability, sowing, germination and other cultural requirements. A selection of plants and individual fronds with ripe spores will be available for examination. A hands-on project will be conducted for all members and guests. The workshop will generally follow Sharon Banister's "Spore Soup" technique, enabling everyone to take with them an inoculated spore culture to grow at their homes.

We will have a field trip to the Little Thicket Nature Sanctuary in April. Our own Walt Hesson will be our leader. Details and an overview of the trip are attached to this *Newsletter*.

We still need a volunteer for the summer and fall socials. It is always fun to see what someone else is growing. Please feel free to bring ideas to any one of our board members.

Don't forget – if you bring in a plant for our raffle, or other purpose (such as thinning out your garden) please be prepared to give a brief explanation of it and its particular characteristics.

This month, Jessica Sheldon has contributed a wonderful article regarding her personal experiences with ferns. Thanks, Jessica!

We will be having another "starter fern of the month" for members – remember: one per household. By year's end we will have introduced at least 10 new ferns to take home and grow. Remember: you must be present to receive one. The March starter fern was a *Davallia trichomanoides* or "Rabbit's foot fern" and is discussed later in this *Newsletter*.

I'm looking forward to seeing everyone at the meeting,  
Darla



**DUES ARE DUE**

If you haven't paid your dues for 2006 yet, this is a reminder – **please don't forget!**

- Membership dues:
- Individual: \$10.00
- Family: \$15.00
- Student: \$5.00

Our Treasurer will be available to collect them at the next meeting or you may mail your payment to:

Cecil Strange, Jr.  
12002 Palmton  
Houston, TX 77034

Please make your checks payable to Texas Gulf Coast Fern Society or simply TGCFS.

Members: - Spread the word – encourage someone you know to visit us - we always have room for more!

**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



**March Refreshments:**

Refreshments for our next meeting will be furnished by Mary McConnell. Come out and enjoy the fellowship of our Society and taste some really good and delicious food!



**Library**

Don't forget the great resource of information available 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 and videos available for immediate checkout.



**Members Talk about Ferns!!**

This month's fern of the month article is contributed by Jessica Sheldon:

Long ago and far away, in the land of Chicago, when I was a very young girl, our family would visit the Arboretum. Being a little girl, everything was larger than life, or at least larger than me. There was the entryway which always had the

most glorious display of that particular season, the grand rooms filled with orchids, roses, other rooms with twisted and prickly creatures called cactus. But the most interesting, the most strange, and the scariest was the hot, humid misty room of ferns. Behind every twist and turn in that primeval forest lurked dinosaurs, monsters, or depending on my mood, prince charming! I was hooked-I loved ferns.

Then I grew up and did all those things we do in life, until one turn in the road led me to New Mexico. Again I was hooked-the mountains, the desert, the sunsets, the people, the cities-all exotic, especially to a Midwestern gal. Alas what is that old saying? "You want what you can't have." You know the one I mean. In the desert I wanted a fern. One day in a Santa Fe greenhouse I found a Birds nest fern. I misted it, I fed it, I watered it, I killed it. Albuquerque - another fern, another death. Silver City - a Staghorn fern - it lived, it grew, it thrived! It died. I was defeated. I traveled. Once again, as life does, that road took a twist and a turn and I came to Houston.

When my sister and I moved into our present house, there was, much to my delight, a fern planted outside, in the backyard. That's it! Houston! Hot, humid, hot and more humidity! My thoughts flooded back to that forest of ferns in the Arboretum and a dream rekindled. I watched as that Boston fern grew and grew and grew! I didn't have to water it, mist it, feed it, and I didn't kill it! In fact, it was taking over that patch of dirt in the backyard. I was thrilled! Then I dug it up - all of it. But still I could not destroy the fern that wouldn't die. I lovingly transplanted that once lone, always green, always growing Boston fern into eleven 5 gallon pots.



Photo: Geiger 2006

Now I have several more varieties of fern growing outside in that patch of dirt which I dug, turned and added my own hand turned compost (another story). Much "Thanks" to Darla, whose warm outgoing personality and impressive knowledge (she can even remember and pronounce those long names!) led me to the Texas Gulf Coast Fern Society. I so look forward to the Society meetings-the programs, the fellowship and friendships. And while I am an enthusiastic amateur, fascinated with the strange, the unusual, and rare ferns, I will always have a Boston fern. Anybody want one?!

### **Darla's February Starter Fern of the Month (This article was contributed by Patrick Hudnall)**

At the last meeting we all had the opportunity to take home a small "Rabbit's foot fern." Although most people I know call *Davallia trichomanoides* "Rabbit's foot fern," most references call it "Squirrel's" or "Hare's foot fern."



Photo: Lynch 2001

This plant is native to tropical Asia. Most people grow it in a basket of sphagnum moss. This plant also grows easily in clay pots or in the ground. A while back the TGCFs had a presentation where we attached divisions to various rocks. Excellent drainage is essential for success with this fern and 50% shade is preferred, as is good air circulation which tends to keep pests down. Like most ferns, this one can be cultivated from spores but most people use division of rhizomes which grow easily if they have some roots and a frond or two. The spore is found in a cup shaped indusium at the final ends of the fertile fronds. Rabbit's foot fern will defoliate during a frost but the rhizomes are hardy to about 28F or 30F.

Come see what Darla will have for you this month!



#### **Minutes of Meeting – February 19, 2006**

A TGCFs Board meeting was held prior to the regular meeting. The main topics discussed were the need for a new web site and participation in the Orchid Society Expo in May. Committees were assigned and items are scheduled for final discussions at the next meeting of the Board.

A regular monthly meeting of the TEXAS GULF COAST FERN SOCIETY was held at 2:00 p.m., February 19, 2006 at the Houston Garden Center in Hermann Park, 1500 Hermann Dr., Houston, TX 77044. President Darla Harris presided.

Darla described the ferns available for the raffle and introduced the speaker, Brian White of the Houston Orchid Society. He discussed and illustrated many of the varieties of orchids and offered comments to the upcoming Orchid Expo at the George R. Brown Convention Center in May.

Refreshments were provided by Jessica Sheldon, Larry Rucker and Darla Harris

Attendance for the meeting was 24, made up of 20 members and 4 visitors. Of the visitors, Carol and Jan Robinson became new members – welcome Carol and Jan!

The regular meeting was adjourned at 3:30 pm

Submitted by: Patsy Geiger, Secretary

