

April 2008

Vol. 10, No. 04

<http://www.tgcfersoc.org>

**Next Regular Meeting: Sunday, April 20, at 2:00 p. m. – Houston Garden Center in Hermann Park,
1500 Hermann Drive, Houston, TX 77044 – Phone: (713) 529-3960**

We'll be meeting in the Azalea Room this week!!

A message from our President:

Hi Everyone

Ge, what nice weather we've had lately! I wish this could last forever, don't you?

I want to start by thanking Donna and Monty for their wonderful presentation in March. That makes two programs in a row! I think you will agree with me when I say I am always impressed with their knowledge and tireless efforts towards fern education in their programs.

I am excited to announce a yummy program for our April meeting. It will be presented and directed by Laura and Jessica and will be about edible ferns. All of our refreshments will **not** be ferns, but Laura and Jessica will have some for us to experience. If you've never eaten a fern before, remember the old cliché: "Don't knock it until you've tried it!"

Oh, and I have to advise that we will not be meeting in our normal room at the Garden Center. We have been requested to give up our room in favor of an Azalea Society meeting – they need the large space. We will meet in the Azalea Room (where we are sometimes banished) instead. Please take note of this change of venue.

Your Board of Directors met after the regular meeting and voted to support the announcement given at the business part of the regular meeting that the *Society* will not be selling plants before, during, or after the meetings until such time as the Board has determined there are no adverse effects to our legal and taxable status in local, state and federal jurisdictions.

The Board understands that members want to be able to purchase plants from members that want to sell them and is currently looking into ways this can be achieved. Those of you that have been members of the *Society* for years and even from the beginning know this has come up from time to time. But, thus far, we as a *Society* have not been able to accommodate this desire. However, we are looking into the current tax laws to see if there is a way we can do this, but until then we cannot authorize anyone to go against the Board's recommendations.

I believe this would be a good time to go over just why we have a Board to represent the Society. The Board is nominated and elected by the members to oversee and direct the *Society* and keep order. Suggestions as to the direction the *Society* should take are reviewed by the Board and then acted upon, generally after a discussion and in some cases a vote. Recommended changes to By-Laws and big issues are then brought to the members to make a final decision by voting.

Everyday operations of the *Society* are conducted by the elected group. In order for there to be order, committees and committee chair persons are appointed, and then additional members may volunteer to help the chair person. Chairing a committee is never a self appointed position; it is always approved by the Board and appointed by the President. To deviate from this can only cause problems within the *Society*.

We have a great *Society* that has grown while moving forward. We have never had a political problem within the *Society* and that makes it a wonderful place to go each month. I'm sure I speak for everyone when I say a good cohesive group is much more fun to be around. We must do whatever it takes to keep such a joyous *Society* intact.

I'm looking forward to seeing you all on Sunday.

Darla



TGCFS DUES

Dues amounts:

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:

Mary McConnell
6218 Wister Lane
Houston, TX 77008

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: | Laura Lee |
| Secretary: | Terri Dolney |
| Treasurer: | Susan Peacock |
| Board Members at Large: | Ted Richardson & Cecil Strange, Jr. |
| Membership Chair: | Mary McConnell |
| Newsletter: | Paul Geiger |
| Library: | Patrick Hudnall |
| Raffles: | Jan Keiser |
| Hospitality: | Jessica Sheldon |
| Welcoming at Door: | Emma Lee Payne |

April Refreshments:

Refreshments for our next meeting will be furnished by:

- Gary Wooldridge: Drinks
- Donna McGraw: Snacks
- Terri Dolney: Veggie/fruit tray
- Mary McConnell: Desserts
- Jessica Sheldon: Service ware

Come out and enjoy some really good and delicious food!
Thanks to Lulu Leonard, Helen Spiers and Midge Gorman for supplying refreshments at the March meeting.



**Texas Gulf Coast Fern Society
Statement of Income & Expenses
January 01, 2008 to March 31, 2008**

INCOME

Membership Dues:	\$380.00
Sale of Plants:	\$0.00
Raffle Income:	\$114.00
Sale of Books:	\$0.00
Interest Income:	\$2.92
Outstanding Checks:	\$0.00
Total:	<u>\$496.92</u>

EXPENSES

Program Expenses -- Materials:	\$644.28
Program Expenses -- Lecturer:	\$0.00
Member Education:	\$0.00
Field Trip Expense:	\$0.00
Newsletter:	\$201.58
Cost of Plants Sold:	\$0.00
Facility Charges:	<u>\$12.60</u>
Total:	<u>\$858.46</u>



CHECKING ACCOUNT

Deposits:	\$494.00
Checks Written:	\$858.46
Bank Charges:	\$0.00
Interest Income:	\$5.20

Cash Balance, March 31, 2008: \$7,272.68

NET INCOME

Cash Balance, March 31, 2008:	\$7,272.68
Cash Balance, January 01, 2008:	\$7,631.94

2008 Net Income: (\$359.26)



Library

We encourage you to take advantage of 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.

Don't forget to visit our web site (see link in header, page 1) and click on **Library** to see the current list of books available. There you will see some pictures of the books we have and links to reviews at Amazon and elsewhere.

Spore, From the Beginning
Contributor: Donna McGraw

This article is a supplement to the March meeting program on fern spore. It may seem like we're beating a dead horse on this subject but I thought it might be useful to have the information written down.

Monty and I used to judge a nursery based on what they showed us when we asked about ferns. If they showed us an "Asparagus Fern" we didn't hang around for very long. Asparagus ferns have flowers and seeds and are actually a member of the Lily family. Ferns were around long before the flowering plants in earth's history and are considered more primitive. Their spores are nature's precursor to the later flowering plant's seeds. One very significant difference between a spore and a seed is that the seed contains the baby plant and usually enough food to get it started in life. Spores, on the other hand are tiny, one celled vegetative structures which contains only half of the normal number of chromosomes and no embryo.

Growing ferns from spore is very simple and rewarding and allows you to share your ferns with friends. First you have to be able to



determine if the spores are ready to harvest. The picture to the right is taken from the "Fern Grower's Manual," (Hoshizaki and Moran) and shows three views of the same species. The first one is immature, the second is ready to collect and the third one has already shed its spore. Immature spore are usually light green or light yellow; mature spore are roundish and plump and may be yellow to orange, shiny black or brown. After the spores have been shed the sori will have a fuzzy appearance. A hand lens is not necessary but can be very helpful in determining if there are any potential spores left within the sori.

When you determine that the spores are ripe you have the option of removing a leaf or portion of a leaf or

gently scraping the spore from the frond onto a piece of paper or other suitable container.

To sow them you'll need to use a clear plastic or glass container, being sure it's air tight because air dries out the culture and often brings in foreign spore. You can use jelly jars, food storage containers, or even plastic drinking cups covered with plastic wrap and a rubber band – which is my personal favorite. The easiest, but certainly not the only, sowing medium is the Jiffy-7 peat pellet. Soak the pellet in warm, sterile or distilled water for 30 minutes or so until it can no longer absorb any more water and either sprinkle the spore on top or use *Sharon Banister's Spore Soup* recipe (recipe follows) to distribute the spore onto the top of the pellet with an eyedropper or pipette.

***Sharon Banister's Spore Soup* = 1 tablespoon distilled water + 1 or 2 drops of dish detergent + spore and stir. (Adjust according to how many spore you are sowing).**

I've used this method ever since Sharon introduced us to *Spore Soup* years ago. For me, at least, it gives a more even coverage.

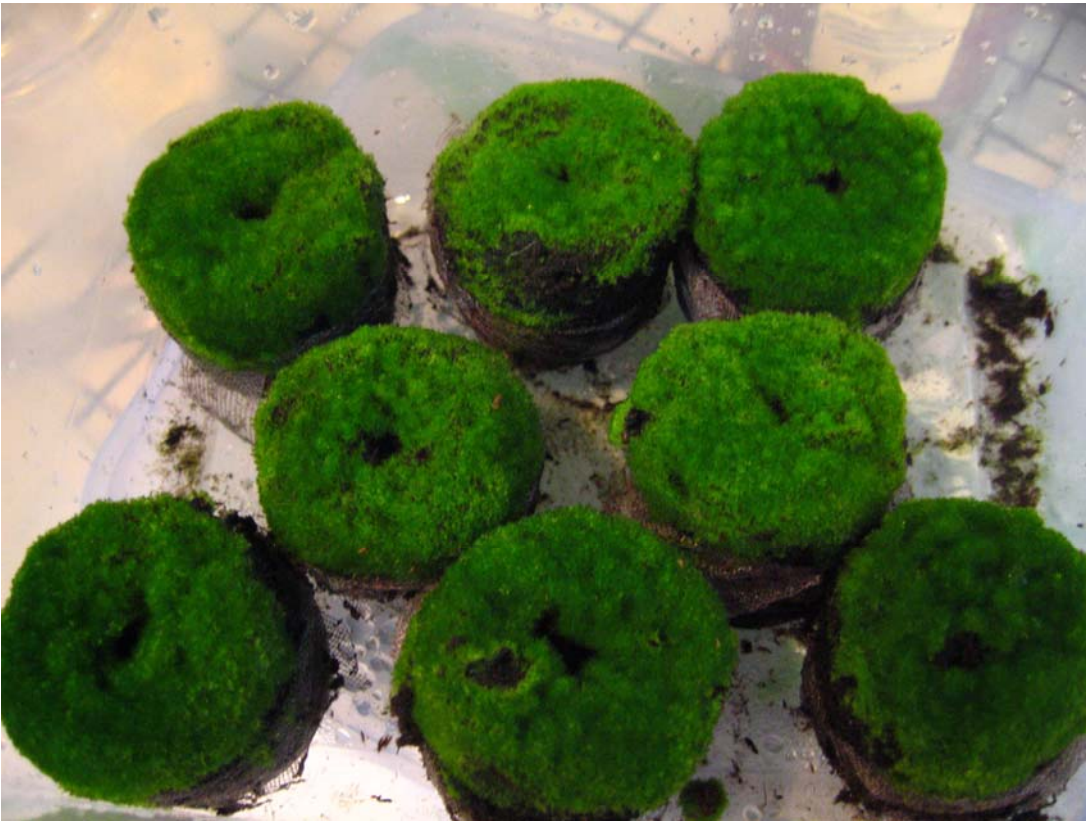


When a spore lands on a suitable surface, like our "Jiffy-7" pellets, it begins to grow into a green leaf-like growth called a prothallus. Most books and articles I've read say that this prothallus is "heart-shaped". I've personally never seen this "heart shape". In the picture on the right (taken from 'From Spore To Spore' by Jerome Wexler, Dodd, Mead & Co. 1985) is the typical shape I've found. The object in the picture is an ordinary straight pin. The size of the prothallus can vary widely from specie to specie.



The prothallus produces both an egg and sperm on its underside and needs at least a small amount of moisture between it and the soil in order for the sperm to be able to swim to the egg and fertilize it. To make sure we can provide this environment hobbyist usually grow them in an enclosed container. If all goes well the prothallus will produce a tiny plant which will grow up to repeat the cycle.

Picture at right is taken from "From Spore to Spore" by Jerome Wexler, Dodd, Mead & Co. 1985



If you find that you have prothallus but no baby plants for months, don't lose patience with your little nursery. Most likely your problem is overcrowding. Simply take a pair of tweezers and pick off dime size or smaller portions of the prothallus and put them into another container – just make sure you can regulate the humidity in the new nursery with either a lid or a piece of plastic wrap.

Seriously overcrowded prothallus (Picture by Donna McGraw)



Prothallia after they've been separated and put into a new covered container (Picture by Donna McGraw)

I'll have some more packets of spore at the meeting: *Thelypteris reticulata*, a beautiful South American specie. See me if you'd like to have some.

Coming next time: **“Using spore patterns to identify your ferns.”**