



Texas Gulf Coast Fern Society

March 2010

Vol. 12, No. 3

<http://www.tgcfersoc.org>

**Next Regular Meeting: Sunday, March 21, 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:

Greetings. I hope I'm not being premature in welcoming spring back to Houston. We had some chilly nights last week but the last few days have been wonderful and this coming week looks too good to be true.

We had a good turnout for February's interesting and inspiring program. Monique Reed from Texas A&M showed us some of the fern specie pages she maintains for the Herbarium at the university. She explained how and why the plants are collected and encouraged us to create herbariums for ourselves using acid free scrapbooking supplies and leaves from our personal collections.

A special "thank you" to Larry Rucker for being thoughtful enough to bring pots and potting soil for those of us with baby plants. As he's said repeatedly, the sooner you can get those babies into pots the more success you'll have with them. I hope yours are doing as well as mine - again, thank you Larry for this thoughtful gesture! I hope everyone remembered to contribute to the kitty for the soil.

As most of you know the Fern Society is an associate member of the Houston Federation of Garden Clubs and as such, members are encouraged to attend their monthly meetings at the garden center. This month's meeting is March 12 (10:30 am) and will feature 6 of the club's designers showing some of their work. They are also having a workshop geared toward new garden club officers and chairmen who want to learn about what their responsibilities will be for the next year. The workshop is free but you need to make reservations so they know how many to expect - call Pat Spiller at 281-581-2904.

The April Federation program is entitled "The Nature of Art: A Show" and will showcase talent from photography to needlework to jewelry. Some of the artwork will be for sale. If you'd like to show off your artistic abilities you need to register by calling Christine Morrison at 281-589-0564.

I hope to see you all at this month's meeting -
Donna



March's Program:

Forget the Fish!

I just bought an aquarium; not for fish, for ferns! Just think of it, if the number one cause of plant death is overwatering (of which I contribute to all too often) then this month's project on water ferns should be a life savior. I imagine my tank filled with water with which I can happily fulfill my obsessive nurturing that all plants need water and lots of it.

Truly this must be one of the best kept secrets in ferndom. Have you looked on line or in your books about aquatic ferns? Not much there. We have an edge to this missing link of information – Frank Lee. His credentials are: well he grows aquatic ferns and that is good enough for me. I'll let Frank tell you himself his story at the March meeting, how he has come to crack to code of the "Secret of Aquatic Ferns".

What will our ferns look like? I search through my books but the images are blurred with the green from ferns in terrariums that surround me. I carry mysterious daydreams of long floating fronds searching for me, of short little leaflets floating daintily on my hands, and even giant fronds defying the bounds of their water home. Whatever they look like, in order to transport them home, we will need to bring a large jar or container with a lid, filled with water (rain or distilled) if possible, and if you want, some kind of rock or wood to anchor them to and floss or fishing line to tie them.

Just one question before I close: Do I buy my ferns a plastic fish or rubber ducky?

Submitted by: Jessica Sheldon, Vice President



Dues:

If you haven't paid your dues for 2010, this is a reminder.

TGCFS 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.



Up and Coming Attractions

March 21	Water Ferns by Frank Lee
April 18	Xerophytic Ferns by David Mahler
May 8	Casa Flora Field Trip
June 20	Open
July 18	Platynerium Identification by Barbara Joe Hoshizaki
August 15	Summer Party and Plant Exchange
September 19	Ferns from A-Z by Darla Harris
October 17	Open
November 21	Open
December 19	Holiday Party

April: David Mahler, an ecologist for Environmental Survey Consulting Company in Austin, will give a presentation on xeric ferns of Texas. I see the possibility of a mini garden with a xeric fern in our future.

May: Field trip to Casa Flora and Dallas Arboretum are being planned. Let me know or sign up at the next meeting if you'd like to carpool.

We have many other possibilities and speakers being pursued for our Society. As always, suggestions for programs are always welcome so please let me know if you have any, especially for the open dates.

Submitted by: Jessica Sheldon, Vice President



Refreshments:

Refreshments for February were generously provided by:

Drinks:	Cecil Strange
Chips & Dips:	Mary McConnell
Cheese & Meats:	Lulu Leonard
Desserts/Fruit:	Cherie & Frank Lee
Service ware:	Cecil Strange

Refreshments for March will generously be furnished by:

Drinks:	Patrick Hudnall
Snacks:	Sharon Banister
Fruits/Veggies:	Jessica Sheldon
Desserts:	Marcia Livingston
Service ware:	Cecil Strange

Come out and enjoy some really delicious food!



2010 Officers and Committees:

President:	Donna McGraw
Vice President:	Jessica Sheldon
Secretary:	Cherie Lee
Treasurer:	Terri Dolney
Board Members at Large:	Sharon Banister, Darla Harris, and Lulu Leonard
Membership Chair:	Mary McConnell
Ways and Means:	Ted Richardson
Special Projects:	Larry Rucker
Newsletter:	Cherie Lee
Library:	Frank Lee
Raffles:	Patrick Hudnall
Hospitality:	Cecil Strange
Welcoming at Door:	Marcia Livingston



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.



March Book Review

By: Frank Lee

"The Gardener's Fern Book" by F. Gordon Foster

This book is an excellent definitive reference for the serious horticulturist or nature-lover. It includes identification drawings and descriptions as well as advice on growing and using ferns in various locations. In this book, the parts of the fern are identified, carefully and simply explained, and beautifully illustrated by silhouettes of the entire leaf, together with enlarged sketches of diagnostic features. There is also a wealth of specific information on light, soil, potting, fertilizing, watering, temperature, and other important pointers for growing tender and exotic species indoors, and hardy species outdoors.



Board of Directors Meeting, February 21, 2010 Texas Gulf Coast Fern Society

Meeting held at the Houston Garden Center, Houston, Texas with President Donna McGraw presiding and calling the meeting to order at 12:30 PM.

Members Present:	Donna McGraw – President Jessica Sheldon-Vice President Cherie Lee – Secretary Terri Dolney – Treasurer Sharon Banister Darla Harris Lulu Leonard
Committee Chairs Present:	Mary McConnell Ted Richardson Larry Rucker

Mary McConnell shared an example poster she had developed with the Board members as a method of increasing membership. Ted Richardson will get her the TGCFs logo to add to it. Ted Richardson will also check into local newspapers / websites for advertising the society and meetings.

Terri Dolney provided Board with a copy of the TGCFs bylaws. She will work to update them with the changes approved by the membership at the November 2006 General Meeting and they will be provided to the members.

Jessica Sheldon discussed upcoming meetings with the Board, see "Up and Coming Attractions" in the Newsletter for the latest. Jessica also requested a speaker budget to help with schedule planning. Board granted one \$500 fee / travel expense per year. Board discussed possibility of joining with Austin and Dallas Fern Societies to share the cost for speakers.

Ted Richardson discussed requirements for holding an auction. No city or county license required but a \$75 per year fee to the state to sell plants. Not possible to get a waiver for this. Also, only two tax free sales are allowed per year to maintain the tax free status. Ted provided paperwork for tax free purchases to Board members. Terri Dolney to get past receipts to Ted and he will pursue getting refunds for sales tax from the state.

Discussion was held about the cost of plants and projects for the meetings. Decision was made by the Board that meeting plants and projects should be charged at cost plus 10% for the Garden Center.

Darla Harris recommended that a committee be formed to plan the TGCFS's first auction and that it be held in 2011 to allow ample time to plan and advertise. The Board agreed.

Meeting adjourned at 1:45 PM.

Submitted by: Cherie Lee, Secretary



Minutes of General Meeting, February 21, 2010 Texas Gulf Coast Fern Society

A regular monthly meeting was held at the Houston Garden Center, Houston, Texas.

The meeting commenced at 2:15 PM with President, Donna McGraw calling the meeting to order.

General Meeting: Donna McGraw informed the members that the Board had decided to form a committee to plan the TGCFS's first auction to be held in 2011. Anyone interested in volunteering, please sign up.

Jean Keiser had parking passes for the Garden Center available for anyone needing one.

Library: Chair Frank Lee reminded attendees that the Library was open for checking out books and to please return books at the next meeting.

Membership: Chair Mary McConnell reminded attendees to pay their dues if have not done so already. Member list will be available at the next meeting so pay up.

Newsletter: Editor Cherie Lee reminded members that the Newsletter is posted on the TGCFS website for viewing and /or printing. Please let her know if you are willing to accept an email notification that the Newsletter has been posted and forgo receiving the mailed Newsletter to help save money. Deadline for the March Newsletter is March 6th.

Hospitality: Chair Cecil Strange reminded everyone to please sign up to bring refreshments at upcoming meetings.

Upcoming Programs: Vice-President Jessica Sheldon discussed the programs for upcoming meetings. These included Water Ferns in March, Xerophytic Ferns in April, Casa Flora field trip in May, Platycerium Identification in July, and more exciting programs to come.

Two plants were available for purchase at cost: Arachniodes Stanishii "Upside-down Fern" and "Austral Gem" a cross between Asplenium dimorphum and Asplenium difforme. Plant data sheets were available for each to be added to members' notebooks.

Program: Monique Reed, Herbarium Botanist for the Texas A&M University Biology Department Herbarium presented a very interesting presentation on techniques for gathering, preserving, and documenting ferns. She brought many

examples and explained the Do's and Don'ts when collecting, pressing, attaching, and documenting your ferns. She also provided some additional information on interesting and educational websites.

Texas A&M University's herbarium holdings:

<http://botany.csdl.tamu.edu/FLORA/tamu/tamu1.htm>

Texas A&M University's image gallery:

<http://botany.csdl.tamu.edu/FLORA/gallery.htm>

Or, to search the gallery:

http://botany.csdl.tamu.edu/FLORA/gallery/gallery_query.htm

USDA site with accepted names for North American plants:

<http://www.plants.usda.gov/>

Good site for looking up names to find synonyms:

<http://www.ipni.org/ipni/plantnamesearchpage.do>

Another good site for untangling names:

<http://www.tropicos.org/>

The Flora of North America project is supposed to put its published volumes online. I've consulted it before--full keys with descriptions and distribution maps. It seems to be down at the moment, but well worth checking back to see if it's up. Best source for keying North American pteridophytes. You want volume 2. <http://www.fna.org/volumes>

Plant Raffle: Patrick Hudnall ran the plant raffle.

Meeting was adjourned at 4:15 PM.

Submitted by: Cherie Lee, Secretary



Upcoming Events – Other Societies in Houston Area:

If you have the time and would like to expand your horticultural activities, take note of the following announcements by the Houston Bromeliad and Orchid Societies.

The Houston Orchid Society, Inc.

www.houstonorchidsociety.org

Regular meetings are held the first Thursday of every month at 7:30 PM at: The Houston Garden Center.

Next regular meeting is April 1, 2010



Annual Show and Sale
Houston Museum of Natural Science

April 17 – 18, 2010

Saturday 9 AM to 5 PM & Sunday 10 AM to 4 PM



Studying

How it's done.



She made it look so easy!



Stenochlaena tenuifolia

By Donna McGraw

This fern is considered to be a scandent climber which means it scrambles as much as climbs - it doesn't have tendrils to hold onto a suitable perch. It uses its long, shiny green rhizome to climb up trees or scramble over the surface of a flower bed but it's only semi-hardy and needs to be protected if we have another winter like this last one (and we will someday). Barbara Hoshizaki says in *The Fern Growers Manual* that it has survived 18 degrees for 3 days. It's also used as a hanging basket plant which would make it easier to protect in the snow. Be aware though that the books say its leaves can get up to 3 feet long (some of mine are closer to 4 feet) so it will be a large hanging basket even if the leaves don't reach their full potential in the basket. I've also grown it in a large pot but it tends to want to escape over the edges and down to the ground or floor.

Stenochlaena contains 6 species, all originating from Africa or Asia. The *S. tenuifolia*'s home is in SE Asia. Barbara says that it's sometimes confused in the nursery trade with one of its cousins, *S. palustris*, the differences are subtle and if you're not sure which one you have, she has the differences listed in her book. I recommend that everyone purchase their own copy of the *Fern Growers Manual* as a great reference but it can also be checked out of our library.

S. tenuifolia grows well in bright light and moist soil. It is strongly dimorphic and the fertile fronds are quite attractive. It can be propagated from rhizome cuttings but they can be slow to root. I had almost given up on the cuttings in the rainforest but left them because they were still green - see pictures for the results. I'll have some cuttings at the next meeting for some of you who would like to try growing this one for your collection. While I'm making cuttings - is anyone interested in cuttings of the yellow impatient seen at the top of the first picture? I believe they were blooming like crazy at the Christmas party - they actually haven't stopped since we got them last June. Give me a call - 281-376-2923 or email donnamcg@charter.net.

For those of you getting the newsletter electronically I would suggest you print this page out for your notebook that Jessica helped us start at the beginning of the year.

