



Texas Gulf Coast Fern Society

May 2011

Vol. 13, No. 5

<http://www.tgcfersoc.org>

**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!!!

Who would have believed we would have gone from three days of below freezing weather to spring without another real cold spell. That being said, this has been a very nice spring for getting out there and getting our gardens back in order. I know I have had some surprises in the garden, both positive and negative. Now all we need is "Rain". We may have to have a rain dance meeting come June if things do not change.

Speaking of spring, our field trip could not have ordered up a better day... low humidity and a light breeze. The birds were out as we listened to the Warbler call "Kitty Kitty". Everything was just awesome. For those of you who did not get to make it, I'm sorry, for you really missed a 'Great' outing.

I want to give a special "THANK YOU" to Walt Hesson for making this wonderful field trip happen. Walt set up to have Dr. Larry Brown lead our group and what a delight that was. Not only were the ferns beautiful and abundant, we also got to know about a lot of our other native plants including wild orchids and even an Avocado tree. Dr Brown co-authored *Vascular Flora of the Little Thicket Nature Sanctuary San Jacinto County, Texas*. What a tour this turned out to be, a special thanks to Dr. Brown as well.

We had 12 members plus a couple friends so 14 along with Dr. Brown and a few members from the Little Thicket Nature Sanctuary. I know Cherie took lots of pictures so please try to enjoy them as much as we did in person. We missed those of you who could not make it. It was tough, but we had a good time anyway, although it would have been better had all of you been there.

We have a nice workshop planned for this meeting with some ferns you will not find very often in Houston, so do try to attend! For more details, please see Jessica's article.

Don't forget we are still having issues with the parking at the Garden Center so please arrive early and see the attached map for alternative parking areas.

Let's enjoy our nice weather, for we know what is in store for us come June/July/Aug...hot and hotter..

Hope to see you Sunday!

Darla



A message from our Vice President:

History Lesson

May, 2011

One of the 'Seven Wonders of the World' was the hanging gardens of Babylon. The gardens were built by King Nebuchadnezzar for a woman, naturally. His wife, Amyitis, came from a lush green nation, Media, to live in the flat, sun-baked terrain of Mesopotamia. So, as men do for the women they love, take notes guys, he built her a mountain of stone and terraces filled with trees, and other exotic plants. The garden was kept green by means of streams of water from the top terrace filtering down to the subsequent lower levels. Water, plants, and a very rich king, what else do you need ladies?

Fast forward to November 2009 --- Donna McGraw and Larry Rucker lead a workshop on 'vertical gardening'. Donna brought Patrick Blanc to the meeting. You missed it? He is World Famous and you missed it!!!!!! So what if it was only his picture on the dust cover of his book "Vertical Gardening", he was there in spirit. Moving on, that was our first attempt at vertical gardening. Larry had plastic covered chicken wire, about 12" long and a couple of inches around. We packed the center of one wire with peat moss and another with craft polyester batting. I brought mine home and promptly watched them die. Well honestly, if I was watching the plants, they wouldn't have died. I would have watered them. However, I know Marcia Livingston has both of her vertical hanging planters complete with plants, alive. So, ladies, with no rich king to fulfill her plant deprivation, no magical watering system other than a sprinkler, Marcia has started her own "Wonder of Westbury".

Inspired, I have kept the thought in my mind that I would conquer where I had failed. When I bought compost bins from The Woodland Township, they had a curious appendage that came with the bin, a plastic coated cylinder, 30" long and 4 1/2" square, thus the impetuous compulsion for this month's workshop.

Now, fast forward again to this scene, Thanksgiving 2010. The place, the kitchen (the best potters bench I have is the big island in our kitchen). Instead of stuffing the turkey, I am stuffing sphagnum moss mixed with some compost and perlite and whatever else I could find, into my new vertical garden. I strategically cut holes in the wire, stuffed in the plants and promptly placed it horizontal. Well, yes, I had to keep it somewhere where I could keep an eye on my plants, water when

needed and out of the freezing winter weather. So, like most of my ferns, there was my vertical planter, horizontal in a pan long enough to hold it, in my bedroom, enjoying peace, tranquility, and water.

You now see the fruits of my labors. Here is a photo of my vertical garden to wet (pun, in case you didn't get my humor) your appetite for this month's workshop.



I have asked Patrick Blanc to speak to our humble society, however, he is booked up until eternity and sends his regards. In lieu of Patrick, yes, we are on a first name basis, I will humbly be leading the way, fumbling & bumping, through planting your own vertical garden.

Two plants will come with the workshop project, Davallia pentaphylla 'Possum Tail Fern' and Davallia fejeensis 'Lacy Hare's Foot Fern'. These are new ferns for us, so **reserve your ferns by reserving a planter**. The workshop fee will be \$20 which includes one of each fern (that's two ferns all together), the moss, and the planter. Also, please bring heavy duty wire cutters and pliers if you have them.

RESERVE YOUR PLANTER NOW!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Call, email (no ESP please, my receptor has been down for years) for a vertical planter. I only have 30 planters. If you want more than one planter, please indicate how many you want reserved.

jscooking@aol.com Re: planter
 Home: 281-298-4287 leave message, your name and how many planters and a contact #
 Cell: 713-598-5836 same as above

Here's your chance to make history in the archives of the TGCF society. Bring your ferns from Larry's November 2009 workshop and have your picture included in the next newsletter with both vertical gardens!

Submitted by: Jessica Sheldon, Vice President



Up and Coming Attractions

June 18, 2011 Meeting at Mercer Arboretum

We are having our June meeting on **SATURDAY at 11:00 AM** to accommodate our speaker, John Ferguson. His lecture is on the "Soil Food Web". This is also a **RESERVATION PLEASE** meeting. Mercer is including this program on their calendar as an open invitation meeting hosted by the Texas Gulf Coast Fern Society. They are limited to seating 80 people. To track the number of seats available, please let me know if you are planning to attend. We will also have our raffle and a plant of the month to add to our 'Vertical Garden'.

Because this is an advertised meeting, we will need extra food volunteers for the (hopefully) new members and guests who may show up. Contact Jean Richardson to let her know what goodies you can bring.

- May 15: Workshop vertical gardens
- June 18: **Saturday**, John Ferguson on the Soil Food Web and why feeding the soil is feeding your ferns.
- July 17: Open
- August 21: Summer Party at Mary McConnell's home
- Sept 18: Annual Plant Exchange – get those plants growing and potted before the Sept meeting
- October 16: Open
- November 20: Open
- December 18: Christmas Party with gift exchange

Submitted by: Jessica Sheldon, Vice President



2011 Dues:

2011 dues are now being accepted. If you haven't paid for 2011, please complete the membership form and return it with your payment to our Treasurer Terri Dolney or our Membership Chair Mary McConnell at our next meeting or mail it to:

Mary McConnell
 6218 Wister Lane
 Houston, TX 77008

TGCFS dues amounts:

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

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

If you have not paid your dues by June 2011, you will no longer be considered an active member of the TGCFS and you will no longer receive the monthly newsletter.



Marsilea – Water Clover

2011 Officers and Committees:

President:	Darla Harris
Vice President:	Jessica Sheldon
Secretary:	Cherie Lee
Treasurer:	Terri Dolney
Board Members at Large:	Marcia Livingston, Donna McGraw, and Lulu Leonard
Membership Chair:	Mary McConnell
Ways and Means:	Ted Richardson
Special Projects:	Larry Rucker
Web Master:	Malcolm McCorquodale
Newsletter:	Cherie Lee
Library:	Frank Lee
Raffles:	Larry Rucker
Spore Exchange:	Patrick Hudnall
Hospitality:	Jean Richardson
Welcoming at Door:	Beth Ayer and Marcia Livingston



Refreshments:

Refreshments for May will be generously furnished by:

Drinks:	Cecil Strange
Savory:	Noreen Tolman
Fruits/Veggies:	Terri Dolney
Desserts:	Mary McConnell
Service ware:	Martha Burg

Please let Jean Richardson know if you can help with the refreshments for future months. <mailto:tedandjean@aol.com>. Come out and enjoy some really delicious food!



Editor's Comments:

As most of you are aware, the Newsletter is posted on the TGCFS website at the same time as it is mailed out to the members. In an effort to save money on mailings, it has been suggested that email notification be sent that the Newsletter has been posted on the website instead of mailing the Newsletter. Members can then visit the website to view the Newsletter and print it for themselves if they wish. **If you have not done so already, please let me know if you are willing to accept the email notification and forgo the mailed Newsletter.** You can contact me by calling 281-999-8368, emailing cherie.d.lee@sbcglobal.net, or let me know at the next meeting. If I don't hear from you, you will continue to receive the Newsletter as usual. Thanks.

Deadline for the June Newsletter is June 1, 2011.

Cherie Lee, Editor, *TGCFS Newsletter*



Family: [Marsileaceae](#)

Genus: [Marsilea](#) (mar-SIL-ee-uh)

Marsilea is a bog type fern that resembles a four leaf clover, growing in constantly moist parts of the landscape, rooting deeply into the mud. There are over 60 species and depending on the species, can be tropical all the way to taking zone 3 cold.

The life cycle of the Marsilea is very complex and the spore can be viable for up to a 100 years. Once the spore lands in water, it can complete its life cycle in 10 to 15 hours. The spores will germinate within minutes. The sori resemble grains of white rice arranged in a row. Within a few more minutes, the sori will release the small male and much larger female spores and they will quickly germinate and fertilize in the water. After a week, the female spores will look like white dots and at that point they are ready to be placed on wet sand or mud with an eyedropper. Marsilea will mature in 12 to 18 months with long creeping rhizomes, and depending on the species, grow 3" to 12" tall. These are a novelty fern in that they don't look like a typical fern at all. We can simulate a bog area by placing a potted Marsilea in 4" of water, this will keep it at the moisture it needs to excel.



Submitted by: Darla Harris



Sago Palms Will Likely Die
if action by owners is not taken



Many homes are landscaped with Sago Palms. Not actually palms, these plants are cycads. You may have seen, over the past few years, an increasing number of these plants with a whitish substance on their fronds, or the fronds turning brown or yellow when they should be dark green. What you are most likely seeing is “Cycad Scale” and its effect on the plants. This creature, (*Aulacaspis yasumatsui*) is native to Thailand and currently found in many US states. Populations of this scale readily reach high densities, causing necrosis of fronds and eventually plant death. In nearly all cases, your friendly yard maintenance guy will be of no help and may in fact bring the pest to your property from a previous customer. In various tests, researchers have found that horticultural oils applied to foliage and trunks of infested cycads greatly reduce the scale insect populations. Cycad scale management utilizing foliar oil treatments are effective, but control may not be achieved without several fall, winter, and spring applications. Periodic use of oils may be required to help with subsequent re-infestations. Greater scale mortality can be achieved by mixing oils with a contact insecticide, such as Malathion or Sevin.

Foliar applications of systemic pesticides can result in a high rate of kill. Soil drenches of Imidacloprid at recommended rates have been proven effective. This is *my* preferred method of control.

Two natural enemies of cycad scale have been released in Florida. These are a predaceous beetle and a parasitic wasp.

Homeowners should practice plant sanitation in pruning infested plants. In many cases the crawler stage, that look like small white specks, can be spread from plant to plant by pruning equipment or by infested clippings that are not discarded properly. A good practice is to clean pruning equipment before moving to new plants. Crawlers are readily carried by wind currents and can be blown for great distances to other Sago Palms. I experience good control by pruning all infested fronds

and thoroughly spraying the entire trunk, pouring some into the root zone. Successive pruning to control the scale may stress the plant, though it may otherwise die. Verify that you have the pest before spraying as the pesticide kills all insects.

Unfortunately, the cycad scale insect is an unusually hard pest to control. The scale shell remains on the plant long after the insect itself dies and previous scale sites may still look chlorotic, so when control is achieved it may not be obvious to the observer. The scale can quickly re-infest plants. This may be at least partly due to its presence on the roots, where it is even harder to control.

LONG TERM OUTLOOK FOR CYCAD SCALE

A factor in this problem is that “Sago Palms” have for many years been grown as low maintenance plants. They are quite drought-resistant, have low fertilizer requirements, and had relatively few pest problems prior to the invasion of cycad scale. Homeowners who prize their Sagos are willing to invest considerable effort in managing this scale, while others question whether such effort is justified for what they conceive as a ‘low maintenance’ plant. A long-term strategy may involve the use of cycads that are resistant or not preferred by the cycad scale. For example, *Dioon spinulosum* gives an effect in the landscape that is similar, though larger, to that of Sago Palms. This species is almost never attacked by cycad scale, though is less frost tolerant. *Dioon edule* is nearly as hardy, though smaller in stature. Increasingly popular and increasingly available, the Cardboard Palms, *Zamia furfuracea*, are equally susceptible to cycad scale as are the small Florida *Zamias*.

Primary Reference: University of Florida Pest Alert

Submitted by: Patrick Hudnall



Texas Gulf Coast Fern Society
Field Trip
April 17, 2011

The regular April meeting was replaced with a field trip to the Little Thicket Nature Sanctuary in San Jacinto County, Texas, owned by the Outdoor Nature Club. TGCFS members attending met at the sanctuary at 10:00 AM. A wonderful tour of the sanctuary was led by Dr. Larry Brown, Walt Hesson, and several of the other Outdoor Nature Club members.

We had a terrific hike through the woods viewing many different native plants as well as our beloved ferns with a picnic lunch in the middle. In all, we saw ten different ferns. It was a very enjoyable, interesting, and informative trip. For more information about the Outdoor Nature Club and the Little Thicket Nature Sanctuary, go to www.outdoornatureclub.org.

Submitted by: Cherie Lee, Secretary



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, there 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.



May Book Review

“Vascular Flora of the Little Thicket Nature Sanctuary
San Jacinto County, Texas”

by Larry E. Brown and Charles D. Peterson

This publication is an account of the ferns and seed plants of the Little Thicket Nature Sanctuary located in San Jacinto County in east Texas. This nature preserve is a haven for interesting and varied flora and is owned and maintained by the Outdoor Nature Club of Houston. The book contains an annotated list of the vascular plants of the sanctuary and keys for their identification. Each species is listed by its scientific name accompanied by the author citation which is usually abbreviated and one or more common names. Also included with each species are indications of abundance, special facts, localities where the species may be observed, and the usual flowering or reproductive period. There is also an illustrated glossary to help with identification.

Submitted by: Frank Lee



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.

Bromeliad Society/Houston Inc.
www.bromeliadsocietyhouston.org

Regular meetings are held the third Tuesday of every month at 7:30 PM at the Houston Garden Center.

Next regular meeting is May 17, 2011.

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 meetings are June 2, 2011.



April 17, 2011 Field Trip Little Thicket Nature Sanctuary

Our Guides: Walt Hesson and Dr. Larry Brown



Asplenium platyneuron
Ebony Spleenwort



Botrychium dissectum
Cutleaf-Grape Fern



Athyrium filix-femina
Lady Fern



Polystichum acrostichoides
Christmas Fern



Thelypteris kunthii
Southern Shield Fern



Woodwardia aerolata
Netted Chain Fern



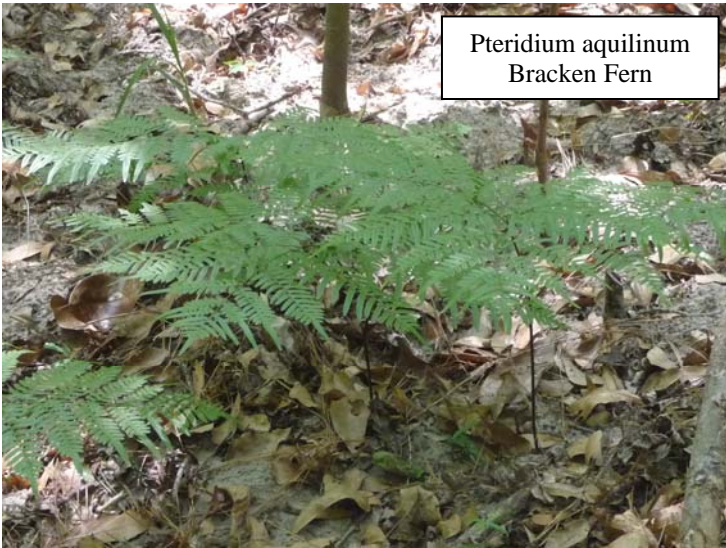
Osmunda regalis
Royal Fern



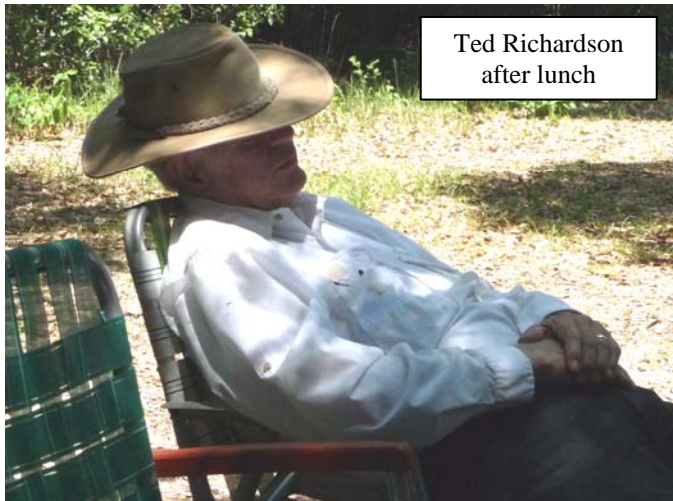
Osmunda cinnamomea
Cinnamon Fern



Dr. Brown in a sea of
Cinnamon Ferns

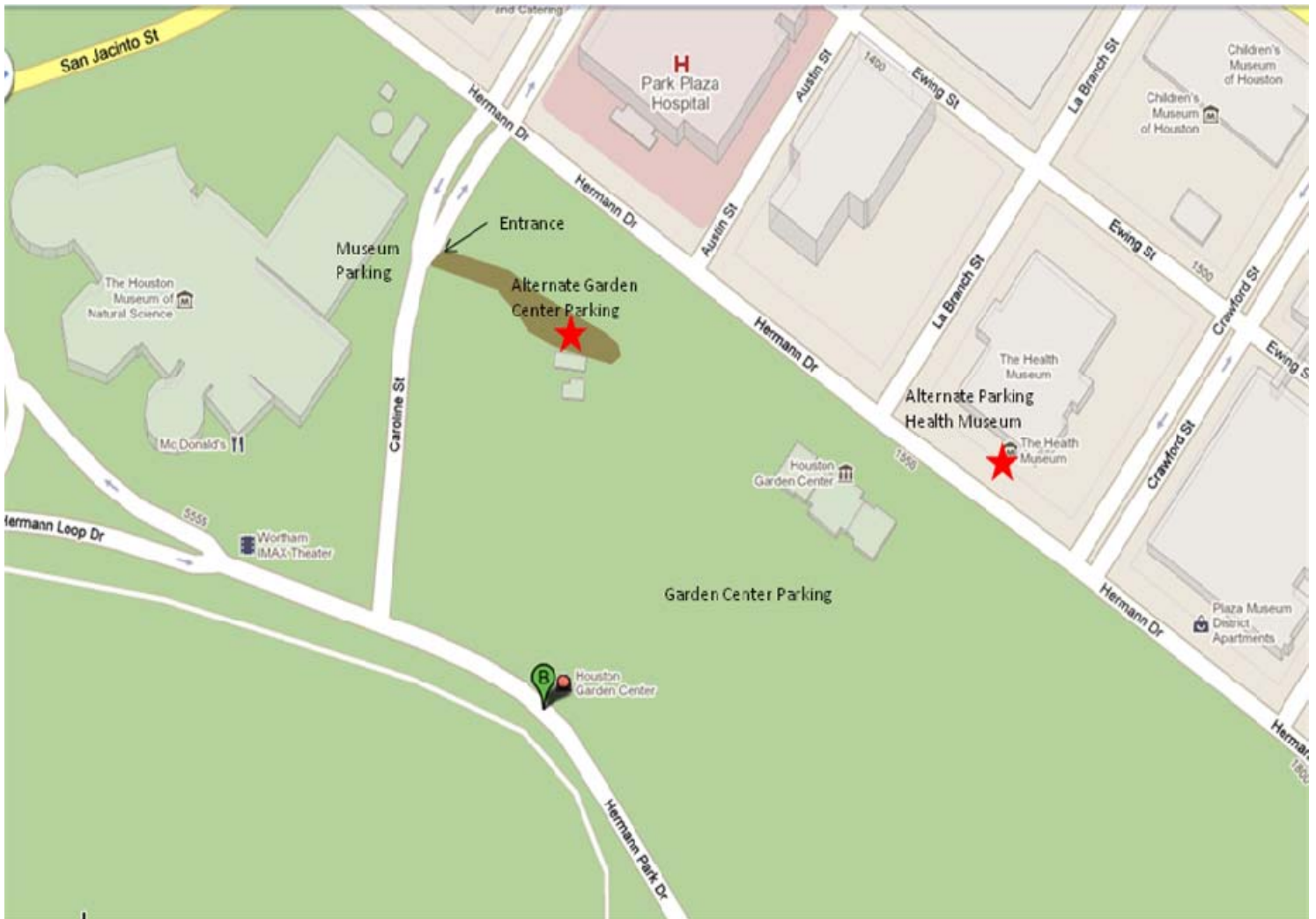


Pteridium aquilinum
Bracken Fern



Ted Richardson
after lunch

Alternate Parking for the Garden Center



If parking is not available in front of the Garden Center, you should be able to park in the Health Museum garage behind the Garden Center for \$3 (go inside the museum to pay) or in the Garden Center's employee parking area west of the building. Entrance to this parking area is opposite the Museum of Natural History's garage entrance.