



# Texas Gulf Coast Fern Society

July 2011

Vol. 13, No. 7

<http://www.tgcfersoc.org>

**Next Regular Meeting: Sunday, July 17, 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,

Summer is upon us and the heat has been really extreme for this early in the year. I hope everyone got some of the much needed rain a couple weeks ago, we got about 2" at our house. The plants and soil drank it up leaving no puddles at all. Maybe we should conclude our meeting with a good rain dance. If anyone knows the steps please let me know.

This weather is showing us just which ferns can take the heat and lack of rain. I know I have been watering every day, but that means every other or every third day for some things, which made what John Ferguson talked about at the last meeting even more intriguing. Joe and I are not heavy fertilizer or weed killer people. We tend to hand weed and we thought we had pretty organic soil. We have always used our leaf matter for our flower beds, but we have weeds and we have to water, so I will have to learn more on the organic side of soil. John gave a very educational talk and really got you looking at the mineral side of things again. I do believe we were given everything we need to work with, we just have to figure out when, what, and how much... that has always been the hard part. The number one thing I learned was bacteria really is the culprit. We need to work on our friendly fungus. I will let you know how it goes in my yard.

I don't know how many of you are birders, but we have been seeing a lot of birds that don't normally spend their summers with us. It has been really enjoyable to watch. The deer are having a tough time, we have put out corn for them, but they have been up to the back door getting dry pet food to eat, too. Needless to say... even with dogs and cats they have munched a few of my plants... ferns included. I will be able to write a true book on deer resistant plants after this year.

This being the half way point of our year, I wanted to take the time to thank each of you for the 'Great' job you have done with the society. The programs, newsletter, refreshments, and raffle have been outstanding! The creative energy of our group is something I look forward to month after month at the meetings. It takes all of us to make this a fun and educational society. You are the 'Best'. Thank you!

Looking forward to seeing each of you at the next meeting!

Darla

## A message from our Vice President:

Boston Tea Party

July, 2011

What better month than July to think about our nation's history. The Boston Tea Party was the cumulative effect of taxes imposed on the colonists by the British Parliament. Interestingly enough, the tea sent over to the colonists was the cheapest tea to be bought. So if it was cheaper than what smugglers could get, what was the problem? Well, Parliament was trying to rebuild a diminished treasury from the British and French Indian Wars by imposing various taxes, which were in large part fought to protect colonists from the Canadian French and their Indian allies. The colonists, not wanting to be taxed to fund British forts along the new frontier when protection closer to home was needed, protested. The British backed down. Then, the British had the brilliant idea of making the British East India Company's tea the cheapest tea to buy even with a small tax imposed. The company was going bankrupt from the colonists refusing to drink British tea and smugglers bringing in cheaper tea. But that monopoly on tea cut into all levels of society; wholesalers were eliminated, merchant business decreased, politicians offended by not having a voice in the governing of the colonies, and smugglers, John Hancock to mention one, going broke. The rest is history as the saying goes. Now we drink Lipton, Celestial Seasonings, Bigelow, Tazo, Good Earth tea, Yogi tea, and on and on. We still have taxes.

If you have been patient enough to read this far, I am sure you are wondering what in the heck this has to do with ferns? Well, everything and nothing. We will be having our own tea party. With this triple digit heat, the proper Southerner would be drinking iced tea (if not mint juleps). We are not going to raid Boston. Boston is coming to us!

In 1894, a shipment of sword ferns arrived in Boston. Florist F.C. Becker of Cambridge noticed one of the plants had wider fronds and an attractive drooping habit. He propagated the plant which botanists later dubbed "Bostoniensis", the Boston Fern. But wait, it gets even more interesting. Instead of Samuel Adams, the colonists dressed as Mohawk Indians. And instead of F.C. Becker (here's the punch line), we have Duane Petersen from Wichita, Kansas!

Duane was born on a kitchen table in rural Iowa. The table recovered, but Duane didn't. Suffering from the delusion that he was a musician, he sang, danced, and wrote music which generally embarrassed himself and his family. Attending college at Dana College in Blair, Nebraska, he taught vocal music in Ralston, Nebraska, Vienna, Austria, and Wichita, Kansas until he finally came to his senses, switching to biology and botany, a field for which he also had little aptitude.

In 1975, Mr. Petersen bought his first fern. Of course, it died a few weeks later. Undeterred, Mr. Petersen continued buying and killing ferns for the next 5 years until he finally learned how to keep some of them alive. Glorifying in this new knowledge he proceeded to fill his house with over 50 varieties, and would have raised more but his wife, Dixie, objected rather strenuously to the necessity of removing 20 ferns from the bed every evening before retiring.

The Petersen's then built a solar room attached to the house, and soon followed with a greenhouse in the backyard. Selling at the local farmers markets and home and garden shows to pay for his new addiction, ferns and tropical plants soon began to earn slightly more than the expenses they incurred.

Duane began giving programs on his ferns as a few people with even less knowledge than he had seemed impressed with his prattle. Dallas, Houston, Sarasota and Miami have all had various programs from this confirmed loser. One of Mr. Petersen's most memorable talks occurred at the South Florida Fern Society where his presentation so inflamed the members that they promptly disbanded the society, a fact that continues to make Mr. Petersen extremely distressed. Duane sincerely hopes that our society reacts to his speech in a more seemly manner than the society in Miami did.

My kinda man! The Nephrolepis ferns Duane will be bringing range in size from 3" high to potentially 6 ft long. Pay attention here: they are NOT currently available for sale in the US! Woow!!!! Duane will also bring along Maidenheads, Staghorns Hillii and Willinkii, three varieties of footed ferns, and other varieties not related to anything but sure to get your curiosity tweaked.

So get your game face on, leave the war paint behind, bring a tall glass of your favorite iced tea, and bring the greenbacks to buy some very intriguing ferns.

Submitted by: Jessica Sheldon, Vice President



### Up and Coming Attractions

- July 17: 'Nephrolepis-Boston Ferns' by Duane Petersen  
Plans to bring about 15 different ferns to show
- 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 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
- Society Store: Larry Rucker
- Hospitality: Jean Richardson
- Welcoming at Door: Beth Ayer and Marcia Livingston



### Refreshments:

Refreshments for June were generously furnished by:

- Drinks: Ted Richardson
- Savory: Faye Stansberry & Mary McConnell
- Fruits/Veggies: Jean Richardson & Joan Hudson
- Desserts: Marcia Livingston, Beth Ayer, & Larry Rucker
- Service ware: Society

Refreshments for July will be generously furnished by:

- Drinks: Ted Richardson
- Savory: Darla Harris
- Fruits/Veggies: Cherie Lee
- Desserts: Donna McGraw
- Service ware: Society

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!



### Address Change Notice

Please update your directory with the following address and phone number change for:

Jessica Sheldon  
4545 S. Panther Creek Dr. #932  
The Woodlands, Texas 77381

Cell: 713-598-5836

Submitted by: Mary McConnell, Membership Chair



## Nephrolepis - Not just your Grandmother's Parlor Fern

Family: [Polypodiaceae](#)

Genus: [Nephrolepis](#) nef-roh-LEP-iss

Ask someone to name a fern, and most times they will say Boston fern with a grimace. It is a shame too because the *Nephrolepis exaltata* 'Bostonienis' is really a nice fern with a lot of cultivars, but it is only one species in a very large genus.

Some of the *Nephrolepis* can be grown in the ground here in the Houston area, some will die down during the winter while others just can't take the cold at all. One thing most of the *Nephrolepis* have in common is they don't like to be over watered. They like to have a bit of a dry spell. When mine turn a little gray and the chlorophyll seems to leave their leaves, that is a sure sign it is time to water.

You can start new plants by taking a cutting of the stolon, the long strings that hang down if you have them in a hanging basket. This is a rhizome that grows very long in search of a place to root into and start a new plant. On the Macho fern (*Nephrolepis falcata*), these stolons can grow 6-7 feet long.



*Nephrolepis* fish-tail with stolons hanging down.

Most of us know the *Nephrolepis cordifolia* family. Some of the most recognizable are the 'Kimberly Queen', the sword fern you see out in the yard, but then there is the table fern 'Lemon Buttons' in the same family as well as the hanging basket type, the 'Petticoats' fern.

When we were on the island of Pohnpei, we saw *Nephrolepis acutifolia* growing as an epiphyte in trees everywhere. It is a large fern that you could see hanging from palm trees or hardwood trees all over the island. It, like most *Nephrolepis*, grows well in high light.



*Nephrolepis acutifolia* on the island of Pohnpei.



In Florida, you will see *Nephrolepis* growing on palm trees where the palm fronds have fallen off. I'm trying this now in my Canary Date palm with the 'Petticoats' fern. I will keep you posted.... so far it is taking the heat.... it will be next winter I'm worried about.

So take a look at those Boston ferns one more time... I'm sure you will find the one that fits you!

Submitted by: Darla Harris



### 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 for 2011, you will no longer be considered an active member of the TGCFS and you will no longer receive the monthly newsletter.

### Minutes of General Meeting, June 18, 2011 Texas Gulf Coast Fern Society

A regular monthly meeting was held at Mercer Arboretum and Botanic Gardens, Humble, Texas. The meeting commenced at 11:05 AM with President, Darla Harris calling the meeting to order, welcoming members and guests, and introducing our speaker John Ferguson, owner of Nature's Way Resources.

**Program:** John presented a very interesting program on the "Soil Food Web". He discussed the diversity of organisms which make up our soil and the advantages of enhancing the soil without fertilizers and chemicals. If you'd like additional information, you can visit his website at [www.natureswayresources.com](http://www.natureswayresources.com)

**General Meeting:** A short general meeting was held after the presentation.

If anyone receives a notice on the parking from the May meeting at their home, Mary from the Garden Center requested you fax it to 713-523-6725. She will collect them and get them to the appropriate person to handle.

For the July meeting, they are supposed to have the situation resolved so we can park in that same area. Just make sure to put your pink parking pass in the front windshield.

**Upcoming Programs/Meetings:** The July meeting presentation will be on Nephrolepis, Boston Ferns, presented by Duane Petersen and he will be bringing plants for sale. In August, we will be having our Summer Party and Mary McConnell has once again graciously opened her home to us.

**External Presentations:** Our own Darla Harris will be presenting a program on Ferns at the Mercer Arboretum "Orchids and Tropical Workshop" on Saturday, July 23<sup>rd</sup>. See the Mercer advertisement included in the Newsletter for additional information on the workshop.

**Hospitality:** Chair Jean Richardson reminded everyone to please sign up to bring refreshments for upcoming months.

**Attendance:** Members 17  
Visitors 7

Meeting was adjourned at 1:15 PM.

Submitted by: Cherie Lee, Secretary

### Mercer Arboretum & Botanic Gardens [www.hcp4.net/mercer](http://www.hcp4.net/mercer)

#### Orchids and Tropical Workshop

*Sat., July 23, 9 a.m. - 3 p.m.*

Sign-up now for this one-day workshop that focuses on lush and exotic plants. The day's activities include speakers, a plant sale, and garden tour. The tour focuses on the plants that survived the winter freeze in Mercer's tropical garden and that are well-suited to tropical landscapes. The workshop fee provides lunch, admission to the talks and sale, handouts, and the garden tour. Space is limited to 50 participants and registration is required. TMS members \$60; non-members \$75.

### July Book Review

"Encyclopedia of Garden Ferns" by Sue Olsen

This book is a comprehensive reference with succinct descriptions, habitat information, and cultural recommendations for more than 960 ferns, accompanied by 700 color photographs. Whether you are a beginner, an expert, or anywhere in between, this expansive, well-organized, and lavishly illustrated volume will be the first place you'll turn to deepen your knowledge and appreciation of the fascinating world of ferns.

Submitted by: Frank Lee

### 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.

### 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](mailto: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 August Newsletter is August 5, 2011.**

Cherie Lee, Editor, *TGCFS Newsletter*



### 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](http://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 July 19, 2011.

#### **The Houston Orchid Society, Inc.**

[www.houstonorchidsociety.org](http://www.houstonorchidsociety.org)

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

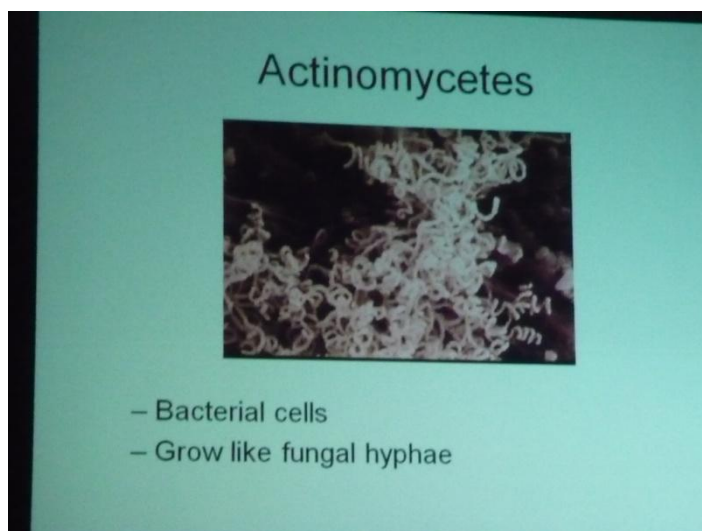
Next regular meetings are August 4, 2011.



June 18, 2011 TGCFS Meeting

“Soil Food Web”

Presented by John Ferguson



**For the Cycad lovers:  
Mercer Arboretum after the meeting**



**Cycas media – Queensland Australia**



**Ceratozamia kuesteriana – Tamaulipas, Mexico**



**With cones**



**Cycas rumphii – Indonesia to Papua N. Guinea**