



May 2023

Vol. 25 No. 5

<http://www.tgcfernsoc.org>

Our meeting this month will be “blended” by meeting in-person at the Judson Robinson, Jr. Community Center (2020 Hermann Dr., Houston, 77004 and/or via GoToMeeting – member’s choice.

TGCFS MISSION STATEMENT

Organized in 1998 by a group of fern enthusiasts (a.k.a. fern lovers, fernies, pteridologists), to cultivate, foster and promote interest in ferns and fern allies, the TGC Fern Society presents educational programs including “how to” sessions, presentations by local, national and internationally known fern experts, and field trips and tours-thus providing a forum for fern enthusiasts to visit, learn, share plants, ideas, information, and have a good time. A very informative monthly newsletter is published for members, and special events include presentations to other groups, fundraiser events, and a year-end holiday season party. **Regular meetings are held at 2:00 P.M. on the third Sunday of each month at the Judson Robinson Jr. Community Center, 2020 Herman Drive, Houston, TX, 77004. Phone (713) 284-1994.**

A message from our President:

**Attention everyone!!
Change of plans!!!!**

We have decided to change the fieldtrip to our October meeting. Jacob, was not available to give us the tour of the grounds and greenhouse for our May date. This will be a better time for us. All the ferns will be grown and we will have more to look at than at Mercer Botanical Gardens. Ceil is planning on taking us to the Ginger greenhouses too, so this will be an awesome fieldtrip I hope all will plan on attending. The October date should be cool after a hot summer if all is normal.

The May meeting will be “Mounting Staghorn Ferns.” This will be a hands-on project, so dress accordingly. Larry Rucker and I will have everything ready for all the members present at the meeting, and we will be sharing the discussion on Staghorns. We hope more will come in person and participate, but if not, we will have it virtual as well. Please remember the materials are provided for those attending in person only. We will be mounting on a cedar tree trunk about 5” x 14”. We will be using bifurcatum ‘Netherlands’ as the plant to practice with. If you have another staghorn you would prefer to put on your cedar, please bring it with you. We will show some other mounting options and techniques as well; such as how to divide a pup to mount or how best to pot a staghorn.

Our ‘Party’ is in June and Claudia Leffle has offered to host. She has a lovely wooded, well planted, shady piece of property near the 1960/Jones Rd. area. She has a very nice collection of Staghorn ferns. In fact, it was through Charles Alford that Claudia and I met. Small world! We get introduced by someone in FL and she and I live less than 20 miles apart. Anyway, more information to come in the June

newsletter. Think about what you would like to bring so you can let Larry know.

We had a fantastic raffle and silent auction at the last meeting. I want to thank everyone that brought plants and bought plants, this is what pays for the projects we do. I can’t wait to see what we have this month. I would like to give a shout out to Fred and Betsy Robinson and to Christopher Goodgame for helping with the technology. I swear something new goes wrong every month. Thank you everyone at home for your understanding. We are working hard to get this right! Teamwork really helps!!

Don’t forget to let Larry know what you will be bringing for refreshments!!

See you soon, and happy gardening while we still have some cool weather!

Darla



In Memory of Loren Neufeld





It is with a heavy heart that I'm letting you know that Loren has passed away. Loren was married to Judith Neufeld and they had two children - a son and a daughter. Loren was a big plant lover but was mostly an orchid guy! He loved growing them and setting them up to display at the orchid shows. I know he would be on the lookout to buy ferns that he thought would complement his orchids. He was a member with Judith in the Fern Society and attended a few workshops we had. He was always on the field trips and attended a few parties too.

One of my fondest memories of Loren was of him waiting in the parking lot for Judith after the fern meetings. He would make sure she was able to attend by driving her over and then picking her up to take her home. He knew she loved her ferns and was a big supporter of her passion. Loren had been sick for over a year and had been slowly getting weaker due to illness, but he would still help Judith around the yard even if it was just sitting near her and watch her work their gardens. He would make suggestions on where to plant things and give praise when it looked great. Enjoying the sun, nature and his beautiful wife, what more can you ask for! He was blessed to have those that cared for him close to him.

Judith told me the last night together. They had a beautiful evening. Their daughter that lives here in Houston was at their house. Their son phoned in and using the speaker phone, they had a great family evening for the last time. He passed not too long after and after all the love and thanks for being there were said, it made it easier to let go. He knew they would be alright without him and it was all ok.

Judith is doing as well as can be expected, but she will need our support and love.

The service for Loren will be held this Saturday, May 6, at 1:00 pm at Sugar Creek Baptist Church.

Darla



Dues!

Dues are payable for 2023.

Your dues may be paid in person at a meeting or sent by mail to: Beth Ayer, 5815 Portal Dr., Houston, TX 77096.

Checks should be payable to: **Texas Gulf Coast Fern Society (TGCFS).**

If you have any questions about the status of your dues, please contact Beth Ayer at either: beth.ayer@yahoo.com or 713.729.0994 (landline; you may leave a voice mail message). See attached Membership form for further information.



2023 Officers and Committees:

President:	Darla Harris
Vice President:	Patrick Hudnall
Secretary:	Ceil Dow
Treasurer:	Beth Ayer
Board Members-at-Large:	Ruby Adams Ken Warren
Education Chair:	Darla Harris
Hospitality Chair:	Larry Rucker
Library:	Fred Robinson
Membership Chair:	TBD (Beth Ayer, temporary))
Newsletter:	Paul Geiger
Spore Exchange:	Patrick Hudnall
Ways and Means:	Larry Rucker
Raffle, Store, etc.	Rick Dow
Web Master:	Malcolm McCorquodale
Welcoming at Door:	TBD



Minutes of Blended Meeting via "GoToMeeting" and In-person

April 16, 2023

Texas Gulf Coast Fern Society

Meeting was held at 2:00pm at the Justin Robinson Community Center in Hermann Park. Members unable to attend the in-person meeting could still participate through the "GoToMeeting" app.

The meeting was called to order at 2:10 pm by Darla Harris. Approximately 17 members present in person & 3 online.

Alicia Baker has had to step down as membership chair. In the interim, Beth Ayers will step in as membership chair. Judith Neufeld's husband is in hospice care.

FERN OF THE MONTH – *Lemmaphyllum*

microphyllum (lem-ma-Fil-lum my-kro-Fil-um)

It is a small little fern about 1" tall which can grow in a terrarium. Pretty hardy to 20 degrees F. Grows on trees. Can grow on a tree fern basket and totems. Creepy crawls with its rhizome and spreads into a nice mat of fern. Can grow mounted on a board as well. Takes very bright light on low light when grown in a terrarium.

Patrick Hudnall discussed the mounted ferns he brought for a silent raffle: *Platyserium* 'Hula Hands', *P. bloomei*, *P. walrusii*.

Darla brought for observation, *Platycterium coronarium* and *P. madagascariense*. Both were grown from spore. They are easily crossed.

Platycteriums, aka Staghorn Ferns and How to Grow them By: Justin Miller

Justin has a variety of interests. He lived in The Woodlands but now resides in Northeast Florida. He spent his younger years in Central Texas where he started working in the Landscape at the age of 15. He has traveled the world collecting specimens for zoos and aquariums like crocodiles and sharks. Then he settled in the nursery trade. Justin has spent a lot of time in West Africa working in conservation.

Platycterium contain 18 different species. Somewhere in China is sequencing the entire genome of *Platycteriums*. This genus is epiphytic and native to tropical & temperate areas of South America, Africa, Southeast Asia, Australia, and New Guinea.

During dormancy, leaves curl up. Right before rainy season, they grow out fronds. Adult plants have tufted roots, growing from a short rhizome, and bear two types of fronds - basal and fertile fronds. Basal fronds are sterile, shield- or kidney-shaped, and lay flat against the tree or rock, to protect the fern's roots from damage and desiccation. They like humidity and prefers to grow over lakes.

Platycterium grandis – Justin lives on the cusp of 9 which has very few freezing hours. Some cannot take frost. The specimen of *P. grandis* is 9'. He brings it in during a hurricane or freezing nights.

Indoors, especially during winter, some do better than others. It is very important to consider lighting. LED lights on a track system works best. You can measure light intensity to determine the best light per variety.

He feels that fertilizer creates thin cellular membrane walls and weakens the plant.

To water indoors, submerge plant for about 15 minutes, Mounted ferns sometimes get water collected at the base of the plant. To prevent this, put holes in bottom of sphagnum moss to drain.

He likes to mount specimens on tree fern bark. It drains very well. He likes to use zip ties in mounting. He prefers to use 2" thick cedar. If using pine or treated wood, the plant eventually falls off. Drill large hole in wood, cover with galvanized mesh to cover hole. This will help drainage.

Colonial species will pup easily. He likes to see colonial species singularly. Cut away pups, place in 4" hydroponic pot, and plant in pure sphagnum moss, coco chunks with charcoal pieces. Only take pups in spring. If you take them in fall, or winter, they seem to fail.

Platycterium superbum – When spores start to sluff off, they are ready to harvest. To collect spores, gently scrape them off with a razor blade. He is very allergic to spores. He suggests wearing a mask to protect yourself. After you

collect spores, place desiccant in bag and put spores in a Ziploc bag. Keep in a cool place.

The media that can be used to grow spores are clay brick and water, sporafoam, special hydroponic rock, leaf litter, charcoal and peat moss. Place on heat mat and they will do better. Place under a grow light. Some take long a time to germinate; from many months to a couple of months to grow. When plants get bigger, separate them. He uses a lot of misting with good air flow.

To get strong viable growth, use slow release fertilizer like Osmocote. In cases where you want strong growth, use a weak solution of orchid fertilizer every 2 weeks. To get a thicker plant with strong cell walls & leaves, use lava sand: ½" top dressing behind the shield and mix it into moss.

Light on LED lights play a big part in the growth and strength of leaves.

P. bifurcatum & *P. veitchii* are common species and grow fairly well in Houston. They are cold hardy species. Some *Platycteriums* are not cold hardy. In Asia, they are producing a lot of hybrids with stronger curls on the leaves.

P. 'Almira' is a cold hardy hybrid but its parents are not. There are dwarf varieties out there but most are very expensive with some costing up to \$200,000! Lots of newer varieties coming out of Asia.

Questions & Answers

Question: What do use for bactericide?

Answer: Consan 20 fungicide at half strength.

Question: If growing from spores, at what stage do you fertilize?

Answer: He tends NOT to fertilize. He worries that the fertilizer could burn them. Hel doesn't like the lanky frond growth with too much fertilizer.

Question: At what stage do you like to harden them off?

Answer: Depends on the media. With a really fine media, they need to have a couple of fronds. He lets them get kinda large so he will not damage them.

Question: Have you tried growing in cells like the growers do in Asia?

Answer: They use plastic cells and it is hard to find those cells. Also, he doesn't like using plastic. He likes vinyl coated mesh. Put sphagnum moss on top of that or tree fern blocks.

Question: Do you know about fire ants?

Answer: They like to transport scale onto the plants. Spinosad bait, Texas Two Step or Terro Bait stations work well. Some kinds of bait are not safe around pets so he uses spinosad based bait. Can put bait station behind the shield. *Note – Darla Harris uses Orthene for scale and ants on *Platycteriums*.

The May Field Trip is scheduled for the 3rd Sunday in May to Jacob Martin's greenhouse at Mercer Botanic Gardens. (This was ultimately postponed due to a conflict with Jacob's schedule.) The summer party is held in June with a regular meeting in July. We will create Stepping Stones in August.

Dismissed at 3:55pm.

Respectfully submitted by Ceil Dow.

The American Fern Society (AFS)

The American Fern Society is over 120 years old. With over 900 members worldwide, it is one of the largest international fern clubs in the world. It was established in 1893 with the objective of fostering interest in ferns and fern allies. It exchanges information and specimens between members via their publications and spore exchange.

AFS non-professional membership (\$20) includes access to the Spore Exchange and subscription to the Fiddlehead Forum.

Professional membership (\$40) includes the benefits above plus access to the American Fern Journal.

Please note that donations to the AFS are not tax deductible.

To find out more about the Society and/or join, visit <https://www.amerfernsoc.org/>

Library

Please be reminded about the very nice collection of books in our library. It's easy to borrow a book for your use and home study. Please contact Fred Robinson, our Library Chairperson. And please remember to return the books in a timely manner to allow others equal access.

If you're looking for our book on Tree Ferns, it is still out on loan and will be returned shortly (hopefully!).

March 2023 Door Prize

Ceil Dow won a coniogramme japonica fern. This was her 2nd win this year. Let's give her some competition!! Congratulations Ceil!



Photo submitted by: Betsy Robinson

New TGCFS Members

It is a pleasure to announce three new members of our Society.:

Cathy Hodge

Mike O'Neal

Anne and Bob Starkridge

Fellow members, at your first opportunity, please extend them a hearty welcome.

Plant of the Month - May 2023

Anemia, The flowering fern

Submitted by Darla Harris

(Pictures by Darla)

Anemia is really not an "iron-poor" fern (LOL)! The Anemia is a genus that contains around 120 species of ferns that are native to the US, Mexico, Brazil, Africa, Indian and Madagascar. It gets its common name from its dimorphic frond (two different looking fronds) that look like grass flower spikes with their yellow and golden-brown spore structures that jut out from the apex of their leaves; hence the name flowering fern, though they are not true flowers.

Anemia Mexicana - It is native to much of Mexico and the Edwards Plateau and Trans-Pecos regions of Texas. Even though this is native to Texas it is only zoned 8-11. So, it is hardy for us in the Houston area except I did lose mine when we got down to 7 degrees in 2021. They do like to be moist, over too dry. I find they take the heat quite well.

Anemia Tomentosa - This plant is small and is suitable for a rock garden, they are very fuzzy and its fronds smell like myrrh. The aromatic compounds in anemia fern leaves are being studied for their insect repellent and antimicrobial properties. These are good zone 7-11. They survived the 7 degrees we had.

Both of these can take morning sun, moist be well drained area. Hight only being about a foot tall they can go in front of other ferns in your woodland garden or rock garden. If you want a fair garden, they do grow well in pots also.

Anemia Mexicana (both):



Anemia Tomentosa (all three):

