



October 2025

Vol. 27 No. 10

<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. **Doors open at 1:30pm and regular meetings begin at 2:00pm on the 3rd Sunday of each month at the Judson Robinson Jr. Community Center, 2020 Herman Drive, Houston, TX, 77004. (713) 284-1994.**

A message from our President:

Hi Everyone,

I hope all that made it to the meeting in September and did the birdbath project had a great time! I want to apologize to our online viewers, for putting up the PowerPoint and not putting the camera on the demonstration. We are working on the logistics on how best to either cut in and out of PowerPoint and the camera so you can see the full meeting. The next two meetings will not be an issue at all. Next month is all camera and the following is all PowerPoint.

I would like to thank Diane Hudnull, who has taken on the membership book for 2026. So, we need to make sure your information is correct and if you would like your photo updated, we will need a copy. Betsy Robinson will be available at the meetings and the Party to take your photo and send it on to Diane for you. We have not had a published book since 2019, after that it was emailed copies.

The board had their last board meeting of the 2025 year, and we did discuss the need for an updated by-law addition. We currently have about \$14,000 in the bank and we have both a checking and a savings account, so we decided it was time to put some safeguards in for the protection of the Society and our Board members. We have always had two signers on our accounts, the President and the Treasurer, but have only required one signature to sign checks or move money around in the accounts. **The board feels that it would be prudent if we changed the by-laws to require two signatures on**

checks or moving money from one account to another in the amount of \$500.00 or more. We also thought it best to limit those two signatures to not be couples i.e. married/partners. So, for by-law changes we must publish the proposed change for 30 days. This newsletter and the November newsletter will be the 30 days. We will vote on this change then in November. We will discuss it at the meeting and if we need to update anything regarding this change then the 30-day clock starts over.

This month’s meeting will be on hardy ferns and the ferns that need to be protected for cold weather, this will be driven by a zone 8 and 9 conversation. If you are in a different zone, please let me know if you have questions on something in particular. It will be hands on, in case someone is growing something and doesn’t know the name, but would recognize the plant.

Thank you everyone for the wonderful refreshments. And we will be getting our signup sheet together for the December Party. I hope everyone will be able to attend.

The raffles have been great, thank you all for bringing plants in for the raffle and everyone that is buying a ticket. The last two raffles have paid half the cost of the birdbath project we did last month so we need a bit more, so the society does not go into the hole or have to start charging to do the project.

October is our month to elect next year’s officers. We have a nomination committee that was approved last month’s meeting Carolynne White, Jacqueline Smith and Patrick Hudnell. Let’s hope they have found enough takers to have our slate of officers for next year. We will be voting on appointing them. We must have a full board

to move forward with our society. It is part of our by-laws, and we are required to follow the by-laws to be a non-profit 501c3.

I hope everyone is well and getting their plants organized for winter. See you at the meeting.

Darla

Dues!

Dues for 2026 are currently being collected. If you have any questions about the status of your dues, please contact Ruby Adams at radams13@sbcglobal.net

Your dues may be paid in person at a meeting or sent by mail to: Ruby Adams, 3906 Woodmont Circle, Houston, TX 77045-3514

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

October - December 2025 TGCFS Calendar

Date	Topic	Speaker/Host
10/19/25	What Ferns Need Winter Protection	Darla Harris
11/16/25	Ferns: Lessons in Survival from Earth's Most Adaptable Plants	Jason S. Suissa
12/21/25	Winter Party (1pm)	Patrick and Diane Hudnell

Door Prize:



Ceil Dow wins the door prize, an *Asplenium antiquum* 'Hurricane' – Hurricane Bird's Nest Fern!

Treasurer's Report

Due to health issues, the Treasurer's Report will be in next month's (November) newsletter.

The African -American Group
A Study of Platyceriums

By Darla Harris

Platycerium elephantotis

P. elephantotis got its name from the fact it resembles an Elephant's ear. Some of the old collectors will still sometimes refer to it by its former name *P. angolense*. This fern is from Africa and does well for us in our area, however it is tropical and does need protection from a freeze.

The plant is a medium size plant having a very tall back shield and long fronds that truly makes you think elephant. Just two shields and two fertile fronds a year. This staghorn will produce lots of pups for you once it gets larger.

I personally find you have to figure out the watering on your plant. Most books will tell you to keep it moist all the time. I find it likes to get watered well and then dry out before I water again. I grow both mounted and in a hanging basket, in sphagnum moss. Good air circulation is very important to this plant. Likes bright light but no direct sun. Loves the Houston area's high humidity. However, I have seen some beautifully grown ones in the Los Angeles area, with very low humidity.

I do find the white fern scale really likes this plant so keep an eye on it, but I caution you that the fertile fronds do naturally have white dots that are called hydathodes and it is pores on the flesh of the fern that allows fluid excretion. This helps get rid of excess water and helps provide humidity. This is common in the vascular plants, and several ferns do have this capability.

These are currently in the trade so you can find them easy now so don't overpay for a small plant.

Definitely a good Staghorn to add to your collection with a very unique look of its own.



Platycerium elephantotis



P. elephantotis spore patch



P. elephantotis



P. elephantotis



Pups of P. elephantotis



P. elephantotis veins



Hydathodes, not scale





The August Meeting

September 21, 2025

Texas Gulf Coast Fern Society

The meeting was called to order at 2:13pm at the Justin Robinson Community Center in Hermann Park. Approximately 19 members were present. The "Go to Meeting" was streamed to members who could not make it to the in-person meeting.

Business Meeting was held first:

- Darla asked everyone at the meeting if they had received an email from TGCFS to confirm their email address. If they did receive it, then the member was prompted to confirm that they did indeed receive the email. Some members may have changed their email address, or the email address could be spelled incorrectly. Only 51 replies were received.
- We need a roster of officers.
- Carolynne White volunteered to head the nominating committee.
- Christopher Goodgame has called & confirmed if the current officers would like to continue next year.
- Carolynne White, Jaqueline Smith, & Patrick Hudnall will be on the Nominating Committee.
- Next month, we will vote on officers which will take on their responsibilities in January.
- Next month's presentation will be on "Ferns That Are Hardy In This Area".

"How to Make a Fern Bird Bath" presented by Ceil Dow. Rick Dow assisting.

(Slide presentation at end of newsletter.)

Board Meeting called to order after the Bird Bath Presentation.

- Darla Harris, Christopher Goodgame, Betsy & Fred Robinson, Ruby Adams, Carolynne White, Anne Swanson & Ceil Dow were present.
- Volunteers are needed to man the membership table at the Bulb Mart event which will be held Friday, October 10 at 9 am – 3 pm and Saturday, October 11 at 9 am – 1 pm. We are trying to get new members. Please have them sign their name legibly. Please contact Darla Harris for more information.

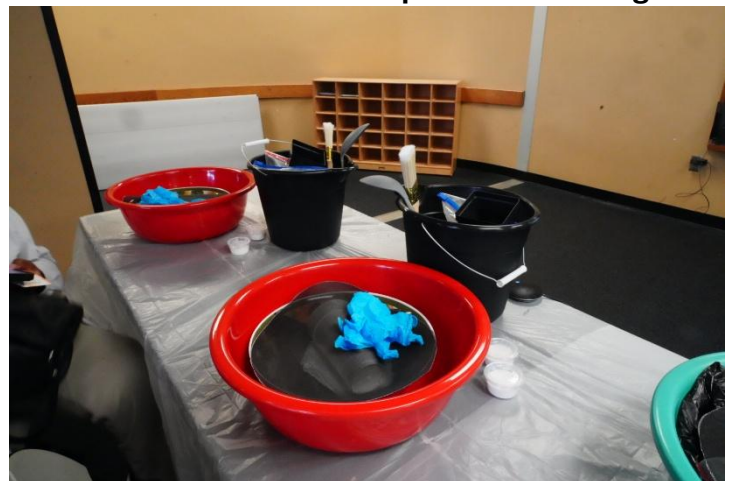
- Diane Hudnall is compiling a current Membership Book with correct addresses, email address & photograph.
- The membership booklet will be available in April.
- Anne Swanson oversees the T-shirt Project. She will look into another vendor. This one did not work out. Will provide one color & one style.
- **The checking & savings account balance is approximately \$14,000. If we make a large withdrawal, we need a 2-person signature. Any withdrawal \$500 and over should require 2 signatures from any members of the board. The caveat is that no two members from a partnership (married couple, partners, family) make up the 2 signatures. This requires an amendment to change the bylaws.**
- **Carolynne White motioned that any withdrawal of \$500 and over should require 2 signatures from any members of the board. The caveat is that no two members from the same partnership can make up the 2 signatures. Christopher Goodgame seconded. The motion passed unanimously.**
- Anyone who sends TGCFS business by registered mail should be re-imbursed.

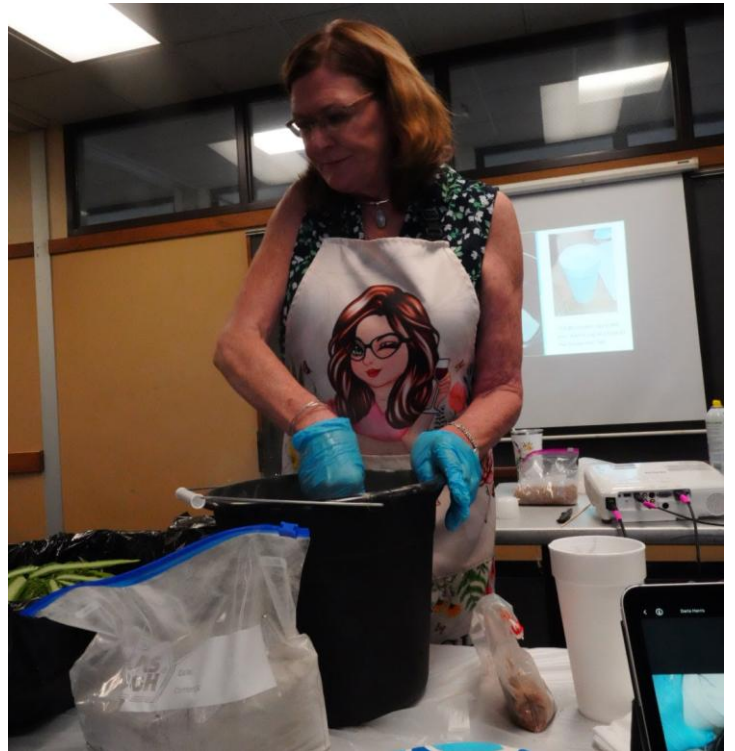
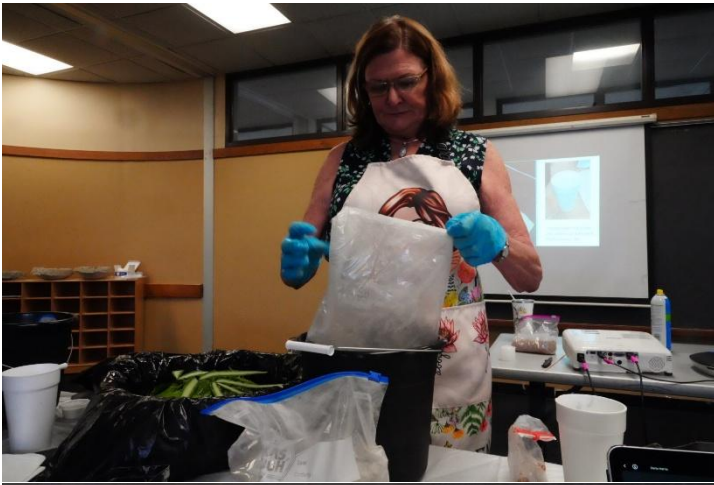
Board Meeting adjourned at 4:55pm.

Respectfully submitted By Ceil Dow



Photos from the September Meeting







From the Library:

Platycterium Fern Facts; by Wendy Franks; Privately Printed 1969; Second Edition 1975; 114 pages; photo illustrations.

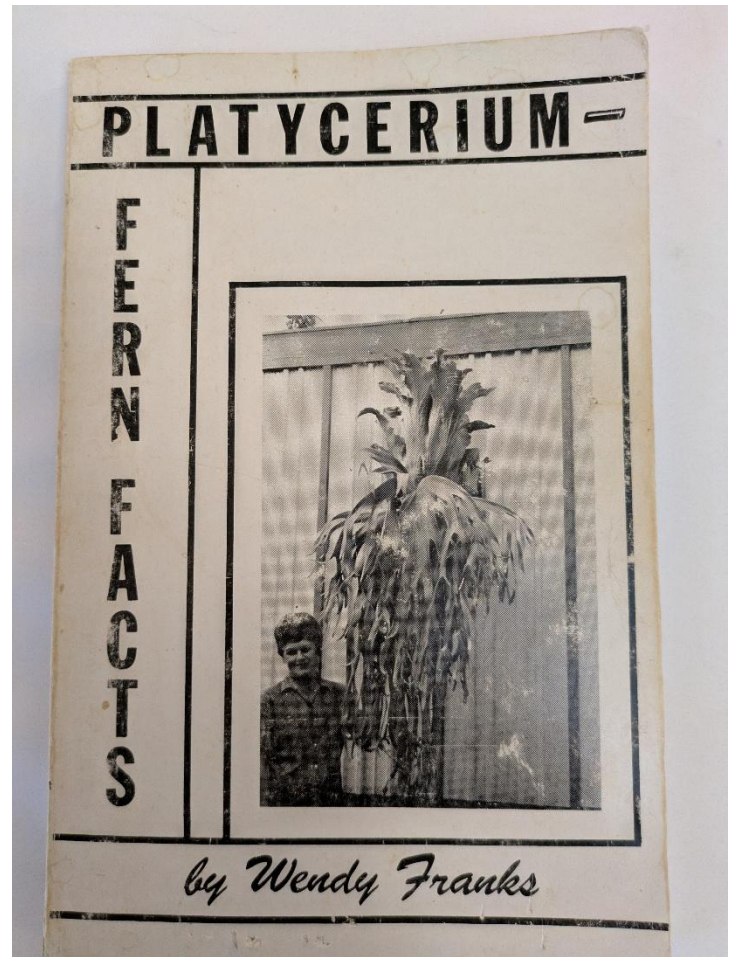
by **Bob Swanson**

As we come nearer the end of our focus on staghorn ferns over the course of the year let's look at one more guidebook.

Reading this book is a bit like stepping back in time to the early days of serious houseplant collecting. The language is unpretentious and friendly, making you feel like you've found a secret guidebook shared among enthusiasts. The text is obviously typed and not set. The photos are very basic. So, this book is not a how-to guide, but a fascinating piece of horticultural history. It reminds you that passionate plant people have been figuring out the secrets to growing these amazing ferns for a long time, often with much less sophisticated resources.

The book has a very direct approach, and all the bases are covered, just not in a lot of depth. We've had plenty of name changes in the last fifty years that can never be covered in a book this old. But one thing in the book made me pause. She tells us to remove pups from staghorns if we want large showy specimens. I've always left them on and grown large clumps of ferns. I guess I should try this strategy on a couple of the ones I have mounted on my fern wall.

If you're looking for your first *Platycterium* book this is probably not it. Get something more modern and comprehensive. But if you're a compulsive book collector and come across it in a dusty old shop pick it up. If you have a soft spot for vintage charm and love these unique ferns, this book is a delightful addition to your collection.



2025 Officers and Committees:

President:	Darla Harris
Vice President:	Carolynne White
Secretary:	Ceil Dow
Treasurer:	Larry Rucker
Board Members-at-Large:	Anne Swanson Christopher Goodgame
Education Chair:	Darla Harris
Hospitality Chair:	Anne Swanson
Library:	Fred Robinson
Membership Chair:	Ruby Adams
Newsletter:	Christopher Goodgame
Spore Exchange:	Patrick Hudnall
Ways and Means:	Larry Rucker
Raffle, Store, etc.	Rick Dow
Web Master:	Malcolm McCorquodale
Welcoming at Door:	TBD

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/>



HOW TO MAKE A FERN BIRDBATH

Fern Birdbath Supplies



*Large Colorful China Bowl *Sunflower Bowl *Black Bucket *Grey Spoon *2 bags of Mortar Mix *1 bag of Sand *4" pot *Circle of Fine Mesh *Paint Brush *Vinyl Gloves *Styrofoam Cup *Small container of Oil *2 Small containers of Bond Adhesive *1 white plastic covers *1 black garbage bag.



*Place Sunflower Bowl upside down into bigger bowl.

*Carefully place wet sand on top of the bowl .

*Smooth down the sand to completely cover the rim of the Sunflower Bowl.





*Lay white plastic cover on top of the Sunflower bowl.

*Be careful not to disturb the sand covering.

*At the last minute, a large black garbage bag was substituted to make the process easier.



*Lay out your ferns.

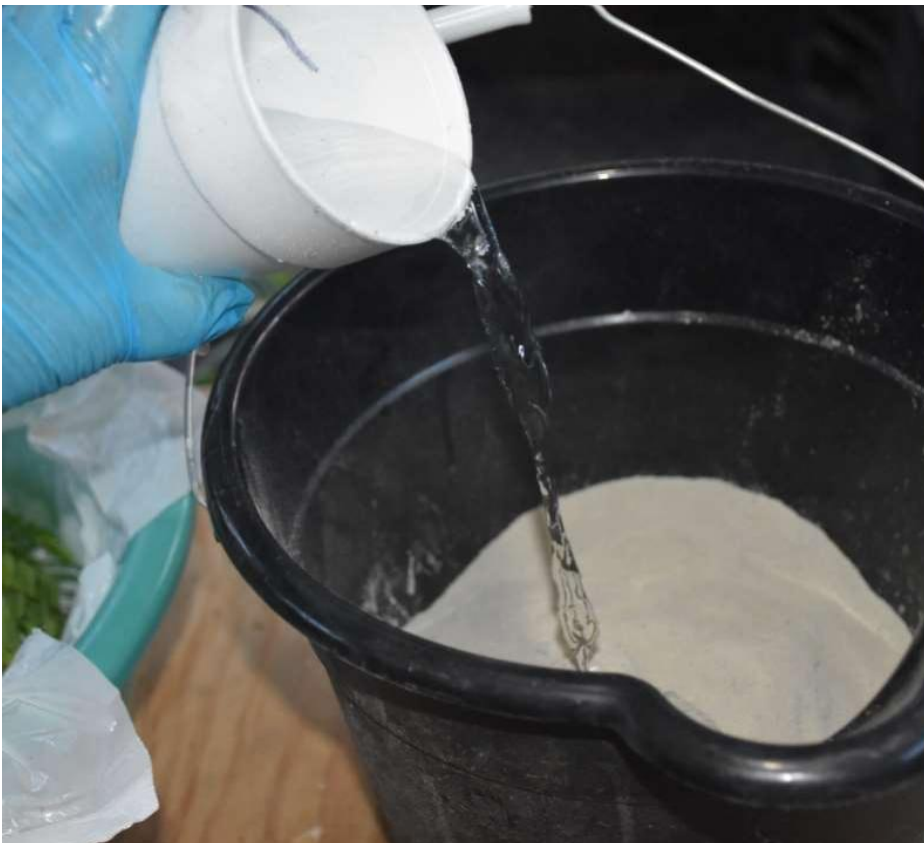
*You may need to gently break the stems of the fern to get them to lay flat.

*Cover the area completely.



*Spray with non-stick cooking spray.

*This will help the ferns release when it comes time to pull them away from the mold.



*Fill Styrofoam cup to the line. Add $\frac{1}{2}$ cup at a time to the mortar mix. Stir.



*Pour 1 of the bonding agents into mortar & water solution mix.

*Stir really well. This takes several minutes.



*Gently add the mortar mix to the ferns.

*Gently press the mortar mix all over the ferns.

*Be careful not to move the ferns in the process.

*To help keep ferns in place, position mortar mix in the bottom of the form between fern & bowl.



*When the ferns have been completely covered, take the paint brush and smooth the surface until is without lumps or bumps.



*Lay the circle of mesh screen onto the surface of the mortar mix.

*It will not lay flat.

*This helps strengthen the structure of the bird bath.



For the second layer of mortar mix:
 *Pour water & bonding agent into mortar & water solution mix.

*Stir really well. This takes several minutes.



*Add mortar mix on top of screen and down the sides to completely cover the first layer.

* This will add an extra layer of strength to the bird bath.



*Brush over the form so the mortar mix is smooth.

*Make sure the bottom edges are evenly distributed with mortar.



*Cover the mound of mortar mix with the second plastic cover.

*Gently smooth it down & drape it over the sides of the bowl.

*This will help the mortar mix dry slowly and completely.



*Take the 4" pot and tap down the dome several times.

*This will ensure the bird bath will lay flat when it has dried.

*Let the form dry for a week in a shady area away from rain or sprinklers.



*Take the white plastic cover off of the form.

*Gently tip the form out of the larger bowl.



*The Sunflower bowl will slip out from the larger China Bowl.



*This is the bird bath after the mortar has dried.



*Pull the fronds from the bird bath form.

*You may need a small paring knife & toothpick to dislocate the fronds.

*Some of the fern fronds may be hard to remove. Eventually they will desiccate and fall away from the form.

*Enjoy!

INGREDIENTS:

*60 lb Bag of Quickcrete Mortar Mix: 2 * 4 cups per Ziploc bag. I used 4 cups per layer of mortar mix.



*Play Sand: 1 * 1 cup per quart size Ziploc bag



*Pro Concrete Bonding Adhesive & Acrylic Fortifier: ¼ cup for each portion size (1/4 cup per layer of mortar)

*Water: 2 cups per layer of mortar mix

*39 Gallon size plastic garbage bag

*Tall kitchen garbage bag cut in half to cover final form.

*Large China Bucket

*Dollar Store Sunflower bowl or use wet Play Sand for mold.

*Dollar Store black bucket to contain mortar mix

*Dollar Store Sturdy Spoon for stirring mortar mix

*Fiberglass Screen cut to size of Sunflower Bowl or sand form.

*Styrofoam cup to denote how much water to pour into Mortar Mix.

*Vinyl gloves

*Pam or any canola oil spray

*Inexpensive Dollar Store paint brush to smooth mortar mix.

*Something to pound the dome down to a flat surface so that it will sit flat. I used an inexpensive 4" pot & my fist.