

The Crosby Arboretum

Mississippi State University Extension Service

Quarterly News Journal

Winter 2015-16

30.1

MILKWEEDS (*Asclepias* spp.) NATIVE TO MISSISSIPPI

Over the past year the Arboretum has received many inquiries about which native milkweeds (*Asclepias*), the host plant for monarch butterflies, are the best for home gardeners to plant. Ever since the 2013-14 population of overwintering monarch butterflies in Central Mexico was reported to be the lowest in twenty years, media sources have encouraged home gardeners to grow milkweed to help boost monarch population numbers, and in particular, have promoted planting native *Asclepias* species rather than the widely available non-native tropical milkweed, *Asclepias curassavica*.

This summer, Dr. Wayne Morris of Troy University graciously provided the Arboretum with a list of fifteen native Mississippi milkweeds suitable for growing in the Picayune area. After studying the USDA range maps for these species and learning about their environmental preferences, I compiled a poster illustrating the *Asclepias* species for an Extension field day event, and a table summarizing each plant's preferred habitat. These resources are available at the Arboretum, and are the foundation for a future Extension publication to aid home gardeners in making a quick determination of the milkweed species suitable for their garden or natural areas.

The process has been an enjoyable journey. Going from the point of only being acquainted with a few species in the genus *Asclepias*, it is a pleasure to have made the acquaintance of so many individual "personalities". Also of note is that the morphology of the milkweed flower has been compared in complexity to that of orchids. The flower pollination is a fascinating story – a pollinator's leg must pass through an



www.SoutheasternFlora.com



Pat Drackett

Green antelopehorn milkweed (*A. viridis*) is found in NE prairies and central MS. Fewflower milkweed (*A. lanceolata*) grows in the Arboretum's south bog, and wet coastal sites.

extremely narrow slit to hook a pollen sac, which must then be transferred to another flower by the reverse process. Sometimes a pollinating insect can lose a leg during the procedure, or even become trapped and die.

Some species occur as solitary specimens, such as white milkweed (*A. variegata*), while others, like whorled milkweed (*A. verticillata*) are found in colonies. Some have long taproots, such as butterfly weed (*A. tuberosa*) and green milkweed (*A. viridis*) and are finicky about transplanting, while others, like aquatic milkweed (*A. perennis*) have fibrous roots. Some prefer consistently wet conditions, i.e. longleaf milkweed (*A. longifolia*), fewflower milkweed (*A. lanceolata*), and aquatic milkweed (*A. perennis*), while others occur in dry sites, i.e. pinewoods milkweed (*A. humistrata*), pineland milkweed (*A. obovata*), and tall green milkweed (*A. hirtella*). Some species produce copious amounts of milky sap, so much that it can drown early instars of monarch caterpillars. The most commonly known native species, *Asclepias tuberosa*, has clear sap and much lower amounts of the cardiac glycosides that render monarch caterpillars unpalatable to predators. (Avoid contact with *Asclepias* sap as it is toxic to humans and livestock, some species more than others.) Interestingly, if other species of milkweed are present, monarchs will usually choose these over *A. tuberosa*. Hopefully, by getting to know these native *Asclepias*, you will find a few new favorites among them!

- Patricia Drackett, Director
The Crosby Arboretum, MSU Extension Service



www.SoutheasternFlora.com

Michaux's milkweed, *A. michauxii* (left), is found in moist savannas and coastal pine meadows in southern Mississippi, and aquatic milkweed, *A. perennis* (right), grows in the wet muck of bottomland hardwood forests throughout the state.



The Crosby Arboretum Mississippi State University

A regional arboretum representing the native flora of the Pearl River Drainage Basin in Mississippi and Louisiana.

Picayune, Mississippi, USA

Director's Notebook:

The bald cypress trees along the Piney Woods Pond are cloaked in rust, and we are winding down from a busy fall, looking back on a successful year. Visitor numbers are the highest in twelve years, and membership numbers the highest since I started in 2007. One factor contributing to our increase in memberships is office associate Sherri Lowe's steadfast recruiting efforts with new visitors!

Our site visitation, and program and event attendance, have benefited greatly this year by a **Visit Mississippi** grant from the **Mississippi Development Authority** for advertising and promotion purposes. With this grant, Coastal Research & Extension Center web developer Andy Collins has placed Facebook ads for our larger events, resulting in weekly post reaches of over 10,000. Our total page "likes" has jumped to over 1,400, and these individuals now receive our regular postings. The grant has also allowed us to purchase banner stands to display event artwork designed by MSU graphic arts student Kimberlin Singletary and printed by the MSU Agriculture Communications Department. With grant funds, we brought the Audubon Institute's Bugmobile to Bugfest, and Hazel & the Delta Ramblers and the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians' Southern Pine Drum Group to our 13th Piney Woods Heritage Festival. This December, Bob Brzuszek and Tim Schauwecker from the MSU landscape architecture department will visit and continue construction planning for the Quaking Bog Educational Exhibit, funded by a grant through the **Five Star and Urban Waters Restoration Program** and Southern Company, the parent company of Mississippi Power. The bridges in the Swamp Forest Educational Exhibit are almost complete, and a future deck is planned at the intersection of this trail's connection to the Slough Trail. We are looking forward to 2016!

- Patricia Drackett, Director

The Crosby Arboretum, MSU Extension Service



Bugfest volunteer **Brady Dunaway** posing with the new banners.



Curator's Corner:

The 2015 year has gone by quickly, and it has passed with much success. As a strong portion of our weekday is concentrated on planning, the weekend programs marched forth this year with flying colors.

Forge Day in January brought forth the sights, sounds, and smells of an old time blacksmith shop. In February, children made beautiful and brightly colored valentines...and then they got to play in the dirt! Our quarterly native plant sales moved at a fast pace, offering hard to find native trees, plants, and a nice selection of perennials. Come early in 2016 to our plant sales, because many choice plants go fast! April showers gave way to a vibrant display of artwork in our Program room; add ice-cream and strawberries on the side and the weekend was made.

The summer offered a nice selection of botany walks, a mycology tour, birding programs, and a week of Summer Nature Camp for kids. Our campers enjoyed nature crafts, field walks, bug collecting, and we even spotted an alligator in the pond. Oh my! We experienced a couple of rainy days that week, however, camp moved along with much enthusiasm, especially at snack time. Have you ever tried hot s'mores out of a skillet? Kids plus s'mores should always equate to victory. Like I said, flying colors.

Bugfest in September brought out the site's creepiest crawlers and the 13th annual Piney Woods Heritage festival sung with melodies of the past. If you missed this year's Piney Woods Festival be sure to come next year for freshly churned butter, jams and jellies, storytelling, history, and much more.

The Crosby Arboretum has much to offer but the greatest spectacle undoubtedly proves to dwell in the natural areas. This southeastern MS landscape is alive with color and contrast throughout the year. Join us for a walk through the woods and a stroll through the savannas. Feel the warmth that nature has to offer outdoors.

- Jill Diamond Mirkovich, Senior Curator
The Crosby Arboretum, MSU Extension Service



The Crosby Arboretum
Mississippi State University

A regional arboretum representing the native flora of the Pearl River Drainage Basin in Mississippi and Louisiana.

Picayune, Mississippi, USA

Plant Profile: FLORIDA ANISE

Illicium floridanum

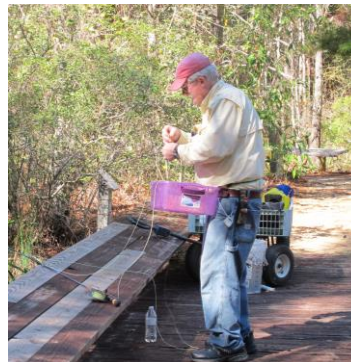


Above, *Illicium floridanum* growing in the mature beech-magnolia understory of Crosby Arboretum's Mill Creek Natural Area, located in northern Pearl River County.

Our natural landscape displays layers of plants throughout the region and one of these layers, the understory, offers a unique evergreen shrub called the Florida Anise (*Illicium floridanum*). The Florida Anise shows off dark green, lustrous leaves and when you brush past this plant in your garden it offers a strong aromatic smell. Found in the rich, mesic forests throughout southern Mississippi, *Illicium floridanum* can grow 8-12 feet tall and wide. Dainty flower buds begin to develop during the winter months and attractive dark red star shaped flowers begin to open in late winter and continue flowering into the spring. Try this native evergreen in your shade garden this year! Plant in partial to deep shade. The Crosby Arboretum has a small group of *Illicium floridanum* that has colonized to the south of the Visitor's Center (at the bottom of the south ramp). Come and explore native plants at the Arboretum this winter.

– Jill Diamond Mirkovich

Thank you, Crosby Arboretum members, patrons, and volunteers for another great year!



Will Sullivan
Piney Woods Heritage Festival



Jack Ramirez
Crosby Arboretum Art Show



Jean and Paul MacInnis
Strawberries & Cream Festival



Eileen Hollander
Iris Propagation program

PLANTS WITH WINTER INTEREST

- Bluestem Grass** (*Andropogon gerardii*)
- Bushy Bluestem** (*Andropogon glomeratus*)
- Elliot's Blueberry** (*Vaccinium elliotii*)
- Farkleberry** (*Vaccinium arboreum*)
- Florida Anise** (*Illicium floridanum*)
- Goldenclub** (*Orontium aquaticum*)
- Longleaf Pine** (*Pinus palustris*)
- Red Chokeberry** (*Aronia arbutifolia*)
- Southern Smilax** (*Smilax smallii*)
- Witchhazel** (*Hamamelis virginiana*)
- Netted chainfern** (*Woodwardia areolata*)



Harriett Greulich
Piney Woods Heritage Festival



Diane Soniat
Wildlife Day

Crosby Arboretum Memberships Make GREAT HOLIDAY GIFTS!

 *Show someone you care!*

Crosby Arboretum memberships include special admission privileges and discounts at nearly 300 other public gardens through the **American Horticultural Society's Reciprocal Admissions Program**. Call Sherri Lowe at 601-799-2311 for more information. Gift memberships will be attractively packaged for holiday giving.



Senior Curator **Jill Mirkovich** led a hands-on workshop in September on creating fall planter arrangements, which was very well-attended!



Installation of the Swamp Forest Exhibit bridges project is nearing completion, thanks to the steady efforts of grounds manager **Terry Johnson** and staff member **Jarrett Hurlston**, assisted at times by volunteers **Tom Heim** and **Paul Breland**.

The News Journal is a quarterly publication of The Crosby Arboretum, Mississippi State University Extension Service. Journal subscriptions may be obtained with membership at the Arboretum. Printed on recycled paper with $\geq 30\%$ postconsumer waste recycled fiber. Journal may be received electronically if desired.

Please address correspondence to: Pat Drackett, Editor
pat.drackett@msstate.edu
The Crosby Arboretum
P.O. Box 1639
Picayune, MS 39466

Mississippi State University does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, age, disability, or veteran status.

All contributions are tax deductible to the extent allowed. For more information call: (601) 799-2311 or print form online.

_____	Student (send copy of student i.d.)	\$ 15.00
_____	Individual	30.00
_____	Family	40.00
_____	Donor	100.00
_____	Patron	250.00
_____	Benefactor	1,000.00
_____	Business	
_____	Sweetgum	100.00
_____	Sassafras	250.00
_____	Live Oak	500.00
_____	Bigleaf Magnolia	1,000.00

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____ Phone _____

Renewing? Memberships are for one year.



The Crosby Arboretum

Mississippi State University Extension Service
P.O. Box 1639
Picayune, MS 39466-1639



**MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY™
EXTENSION**

Crosby Arboretum Program Schedule

December 2015 – January 2016

December 2015

GALLERY OPENING



“Majestic Monarchs”

WINTER EXHIBIT: PAINTINGS BY GAIL SHEASBY

Saturday,
December 12

10 a.m. to Noon

Gail Sheasby captured our attention last spring at the Arboretum’s Spring Art Show with her stunning acrylic painting, “Blue Heron Stalking Dinner.” Gail hails from the West Bank of New Orleans, LA and has been painting and studying art for over 25 years in oil, acrylic, watercolor and colored pencils. Her favorite subjects to paint and draw, besides her grandchildren, are the lovely bayous, oaks, cypress trees and wildlife so indicative of South Louisiana and Mississippi. Free admission.

THIS EVENT CONCURRENT WITH OUR

HOLIDAY OPEN HOUSE

Saturday, December 12

10 a.m. to 3 p.m.



Take a deep breath during the busy holiday season and recharge at the Crosby Arboretum’s annual open house celebration! Join us for good cheer and light refreshments, and browse the gift shop and the crafts and artwork of local artisans. Free admission.

January 2016

PRESCRIBED BURN DEMONSTRATION

Thursdays and Fridays in January
and February, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Assist with, or observe fire management techniques during prescribed burning of the Crosby Arboretum’s Savanna Exhibit with Certified Burn Manager **Terry Johnson**. Call the office by 9:00 a.m. to confirm that the burn will proceed, and to register. Program will proceed only if weather conditions are favorable. Wear old clothes/boots, and bring a lunch. Admission is free. Persons under the age of 18 must be accompanied by an adult.

WINTER BOTANY FIELD WALK

Saturday, January 16, 10:00 to 11:30 a.m.

Enjoy a walk through the Arboretum’s exhibits with MSU Extension Forestry specialist **Dr. Glenn Hughes**. Learn how to identify tree and shrub specimens in the winter by characteristics of their twigs, buds, and bark. Call to register by January 15. Members free; non-members \$5.

PINECONES & PEANUT BUTTER CHILDREN’S WORKSHOP

Saturday, January 16, 1 to 2 p.m.

Birds and other wildlife often need extra food in the winter for fuel and warmth. Children will enjoy making tasty delights such as peanut butter pinecone feeders and mixing up “bird butter” to attract birds and other wildlife to your backyard. All materials provided. Cost: members \$3; non-members \$5. Call to register by January 15.



October’s table centerpiece workshop with MSU Extension Professor **Dr. James DelPrince** was a hit with participants.

Crosby Arboretum Program Schedule

January - February 2016

January 2016 (Cont.)

FORGE DAY: BLACKSMITHING & METALWORKING DEMONSTRATIONS

**Saturday, January 30
10 a.m. to 2 p.m.**



Join us for a day of metalsmithing demonstrations by area craftsmen. Learn techniques and tips to get started in metalworking and try your hand at the forge (Must complete a waiver form prior to participating; safety equipment for participants provided.) Browse items for purchase. Knife sharpening. Members free; non-members \$5, and \$2 for non-members' children.

TEACHERS WORKSHOP: FLYING WILD

**Saturday, February 20
10 a.m. to 3 p.m.**

Flying WILD introduces students to bird conservation through standards-based classroom activities and environmental stewardship projects and encourages schools to work closely with conservation organizations, community groups, and businesses involved with birds to implement school bird festivals and bird conservation projects. This interactive K-12 workshop will be taught by Mississippi Museum of Natural Science Outreach Educator, **Sabrina Cummings**. Bring a brown-bag lunch. CEU's are available. Please call the office at 601-799-2311 to register by February 17.

RESIDENTIAL SOIL TESTING: GET READY FOR SPRING PLANTING!

**Saturday, February 27
1:00 to 2:00 p.m.**

Winter is an excellent time to have your soil tested in preparation for spring planting projects. Pearl River County Extension Agent **Dr. Eddie Smith** will discuss the importance of soil testing, and actions you may take to correct specific conditions. Participants will also learn about the different soil types found in Pearl River County and other nearby counties. Program is free to members; the cost for non-members is \$5. Register by February 26.

February 2016

ARBORETUM WINTER FIELD WALK

Saturday, February 6, 1:00 to 2:00 p.m.

Walk the grounds with Arboretum director **Pat Drackett**, and experience the subtle natural winter beauty around you. Learn about native plants with winter interest, and ways to incorporate them into your home landscape. Members free; non-members \$5. Register by February 5.

ARBORETUM ARBOR DAY NATIVE PLANT SALE



Saturday, February 13

10 a.m. to 3 p.m. (Members Admitted at 9 a.m.)

Grab a cart and choose from a great selection of native trees and shrubs at our Arbor Day Native Plant Sale. Knowledgeable volunteers will be on hand to assist with plant questions and offer advice on plant selection for your site. **Free Admission.** Use Service Entrance.

Reservations: Call the Arboretum office at (601) 799-2311 for questions, and to make program reservations.

Physical Address: 370 Ridge Road, Picayune, MS 39466 (Note: GPS directions to the Arboretum are often inaccurate; please see our website for detailed directions.)

Hours of Operation: Wednesday - Sunday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

www.crosbyarboretum.msstate.edu



Programs of Mississippi State University Extension Service are open to all people, without regard to race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, veteran status, sexual orientation, or group affiliation. If you have questions regarding MSU Extension's non-discrimination policies, contact: Judy Spencer, Chief Human Resources Officer, P.O. Box 9603, Mississippi State, MS 39762, (662) 325-3713. MSU Extension will provide reasonable accommodations to persons with disabilities or special needs. Please contact the Crosby Arboretum office at (601) 799-2311 or s.lowe@msstate.edu prior to a program or event to request reasonable accommodation.