

The Crosby Arboretum

Mississippi State University Extension Service

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BEEBALMS AND HORSEMINTS (*Monarda* spp.) OF MISSISSIPPI

By Dr. Wayne Morris, Associate Professor of Biology, Troy University, Alabama

The cheerfully-colored and fragrant beebalms and horsemints (*Monarda* spp.) are members of the mint family (Lamiaceae), and they are endemic to North America. Twelve species have been recognized; of these, eight are found in at least some of the southeastern states. Mississippi has three species, and these primarily bloom during the summer months: wild bergamot (*Monarda fistulosa*), the most common and widespread species in the state, horsemint or spotted beebalm (*M. punctata*), especially in sandy soils in the southern part of Mississippi, and lemon beebalm (*M. citriodora*) of prairies near places like Starkville. Generally speaking, many mints can often be recognized by this suite of characteristics: square stems bearing opposite (paired) leaves and brightly-colored flowers (frequently blue to bluish-purple or white, but also yellow, pink, or red) with bilateral symmetry. Regarding the latter characteristic, an imaginary line can only be drawn through the flowers one way to have mirror images on each side. Also, flowers frequently have honey guides (or nectar guides), which are conspicuous spots or stripes that serve as landing instructions for potential pollinating agents such as bees.

Wild bergamot (*Monarda fistulosa*) is a perennial found in upland meadows and open woods that can be three feet tall (sometimes taller). The lavender (to pink) flowers are in solitary clusters that are only at the tops of the stems. The bracts (modified leaves) that subtend the flower clusters can have hues similar to the flowers. The upper part (lip) of each flower has a group of white hairs at the distal end. Wild bergamot would do well in cultivation at many sites in the northern two-thirds of Mississippi, perhaps farther south.

Horsemint, or spotted beebalm (*Monarda punctata*), like wild bergamot, is a perennial up to about three feet tall. There are



Wild bergamot (*Monarda fistulosa*) Image courtesy of www.SoutheasternFlora.com.



Lemon beebalm (*Monarda citriodora*). Image courtesy of www.SoutheasternFlora.com

multiple flower clusters along the same stem in this species. Bracts below the flowers are pinkish to purplish to white, and the flowers are yellow to off-white with purple spots – what a colorful contrast! In my opinion, this species is a great choice to grow in well-drained gardens in coastal Mississippi and elsewhere.

Lemon beebalm (*Monarda citriodora*) somewhat resembles spotted beebalm, but lemon beebalm is an annual and more restricted in its range in Mississippi. As a wild plant, it is most often encountered in prairies, especially in the northeastern part of our state. Lemon beebalm has several flower clusters along the same branch. The hairy bracts that form a cup-like arrangement around the flowers are very long and sharp-pointed and are similar in color to the pink to white flowers (flowers also have purplish spots).

Leaves of species of *Monarda* have been used in teas. Native Americans used the teas to treat symptoms of colds, for stomachaches, and for digestive problems. During colonial
(Con't on Page 5)



Michael Wayne Morris, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Biology, Troy University, Troy, AL. Dr. Morris was employed at the Crosby Arboretum in the summer of 1986 through Dr. Sidney McDaniel, MSU Professor of Botany, while working on his M.S. at MSU.



The Crosby Arboretum Mississippi State University

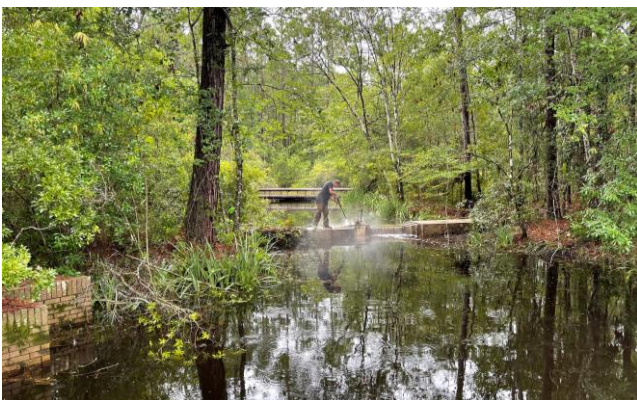
A regional arboretum representing the native flora of the Pearl River Drainage Basin in Mississippi and Louisiana.

Picayune, Mississippi, USA

Director's Notebook:

Over the past month we have had many “comings and goings” at the Arboretum. This began with the June retirement of **Terry Johnson**, manager of buildings and grounds for 24 years, along with his wife Julie who worked part-time in customer service. We have hired two new customer service team members, **Robin** and **Lynne**, profiled here. We are so glad they are here! Another change is the transition of marketing and events coordinator **Nickie Smith** to provide her services on a contract basis rather than as a MSU employee. While you may not see Nickie as often, she will continue building our social media presence and assisting with select events and fundraisers. Part-time maintenance employee **Scott Fabacher** has been working full-time when possible to continue with our building and site upkeep until the vacant position is filled. We are sincerely grateful to the volunteers who have been instrumental in helping Terry with construction and maintenance projects and to those who have offered to continue doing so. Thank you, **Frank Jackson, Tom Heim, Dave Schlauderaff, Tom Heim, Robert Johnson, and Chris Schneidau and Judy Swartzter**. The Green Team volunteers continue to do marvelous things in the greenhouse and pollinator garden, and help with propagating plants for our sales, which generate revenue for operating expenses. We are very grateful to **Mason and Janet Gordon** for their kind gift of \$5,000 toward our propagation program, so that we can purchase much-needed equipment and supplies to “grow” this effort! Thank also to **Doug Goodwin**, and the lovingly homegrown **Froggy Bottom Natives** he has been donating to our sale stock. We are grateful to all of you who are not named, who keep us moving forward. It is through the support of volunteers, members, and friends like you we are able in turn to serve others.

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



*Part-time maintenance worker **Scott Fabacher** recently pruned the vegetation near Pinecote Pavilion, opening a pleasant view of the once-hidden concrete weir he is pressure-washing here. Scott is performing site maintenance tasks to “keep up appearances” during our search for a new building and grounds person.*



New team members Robin Veerkamp (L) and Lynne Hampton (R)

Meet the New Crosby Team Members!

Robin Veerkamp:

“I am a long-time resident of Picayune and teach Art/PE at the St. Charles Borromeo Catholic School. I love educating people of all ages about Art and have been doing it for many years both in the classroom and in the field with nature sketching classes. I was an employee at Crosby Arboretum from 2001 to 2013. I enjoy being in nature and drawing plants and landscapes the most. I find the Arboretum a place of enormous inspiration when drawing and painting in color pencil. There are infinite objects of beauty there that inspire my drawings in my sketchbooks as well as my framed fine art pieces. I incorporate nature and ecology in my Art classroom, as well, to inspire the generations to come to appreciate the beauty around them. Whether they pursue Art or any one of the Biological or Botanical Sciences, I hope to be my students’ inspiration. My daughter, two granddaughters, and my parents are all residents of Picayune and I love them very much. I love animals and have many cats and one wonderful dog named Georgia. I look forward to returning to the Crosby Arboretum. I am excited to be back in the MSU family and hope to do a great job!”

Lynne Hampton:

“I moved back to the Gulf Coast, from California, about a year ago. The people of Pearl River county have made me feel very welcome. I have had the pleasure of volunteering with Master Gardeners from the Pearl River County Extension. I soon signed up for Dr. Eddie Smith’s Master Gardener training program and am now a Master Gardener intern. I first met Pat Drackett at the while helping at one of the Arboretum native plant sales. I was delighted when, one day, she offered me the opportunity to apply for a part-time position. Having begun a few weeks ago, I already feel at home. The staff have given me a warm welcome and made me part of the team. As I have now been tasked with assisting in the care of this amazing wetland ecosystem, I am honored and grateful to be playing a part in the continued growth and development of the Crosby Arboretum.”



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

MONARDA (Con't from Pg. 1)



Horsemint, or, spotted beebalm (*Monarda punctata*) Image courtesy of www.SoutheasternFlora.com

times, physicians used horsemint (*M. punctata*) as a digestive aid, diuretic, and stimulant, among other applications. Oil from horsemint has a high concentration of the antioxidant and antiseptic thymol (named after the related commercial mint thyme, *Thymus vulgaris*, native to the Mediterranean region of Europe and the Middle East), and horsemint has been grown in the United States as a source of thymol, especially during World War I. Leaves of the Appalachian Oswego tea (*M. didyma*) have been used to flavor meats. The fragrance of wild bergamot (*M. fistulosa*) has been compared to bergamot orange, and I personally think the smell is reminiscent of oregano (*Origanum vulgare*), another mint native to the area around the Mediterranean Sea. Oil from lemon beebalm (*M. citriodora*) has been employed as a pomade to make hair stay in place and to give hair a smooth and shiny appearance.

As one of the common names suggests, beebalms attract bees. In recent times, bees need all the help they can get! Therefore, growing species of *Monarda* in residential gardens would provide a food source for one of our most important groups of crop plant pollinators. One of the staple crops of Mississippi, cotton, produces more fiber when visited by bees than when not visited by bees. In addition to bees, all three Mississippi *Monarda* species are frequently visited by butterflies, and both wild bergamot and lemon beebalm are also known to attract hummingbirds. Among the butterfly species that visit spotted beebalm is the Pipevine Swallowtail (*Battus philenor*).

The three *Monarda* species in Mississippi generally need open, sunny areas to sites that are only partially shaded. They do best in well-drained soils (to medium soil moisture) and require good air circulation because they are prone to powdery mildew and rust. However, wild bergamot (*M. fistulosa*) is somewhat resistant to powdery mildew. If you have tried to

grow the strikingly crimson-flowered Oswego tea, or beebalm (*M. didyma*) in the Deep South and have not been very successful, that is likely due to the fact that it is only native as far south as the southern Appalachians in northern Georgia. In place of Oswego tea, you might try cardinal flower (*Lobelia cardinalis*) in wet to moist garden areas statewide, or scarlet sage (*Salvia coccinea*) in moist but well-drained to somewhat dry soils if you live in southern Mississippi, or scarlet calamint (*Clinopodium coccineum*) if you have dry, sandy soils and reside along the coast. These alternatives would also provide food for hummingbirds, and the latter two are also mint species.

- Dr. Wayne Morris

Donations Honor Katherine Moak Furr



Katherine Furr in 1988 at the Strawberries and Cream Festival

Donations from “the friends of Katherine Moak Furr” have been received in honor of their friend and mentor, on this occasion of her 95th birthday on July 25. The funds will be used for a restoration project that will renovate a Fay Jones bridge located in the Arboretum’s Slough Exhibit, and for the construction of a Fay Jones bench in her honor. Katherine grew up in Neshoba County, Mississippi near Philadelphia but she considers Picayune her home, having lived here for over 70 years. She began her teaching career at Picayune Memorial High School in math, quickly changing to her teaching courses in the school’s Business Department. In 1958, she was selected as Mississippi’s Senior High Teacher of the Year. Katherine is a longtime friend of the Crosby family and was instrumental in building community support for The Crosby Arboretum in its early years and is also a current volunteer. She was on the Arboretum’s first board of directors and also was its first registrar. On March 22, 1986, The Crosby Arboretum Foundation presented Katherine with The Katherine Moak Furr Volunteer Award, recognizing her for outstanding volunteer service that “made a significant and lasting contribution to the purpose and goals of The Crosby Arboretum”, a volunteer recognition that is continued today.

TERRY JOHNSON RETIRES AFTER 24 YEARS WITH THE CROSBY ARBORETUM



From left to right: Julie and Terry Johnson, Mary Donahue, Frank Jackson, Patti Murphy, and Nickie Smith.

On Saturday, June 25, 2021, nearly one hundred persons gathered on the Pinecote Pavilion to wish Terry and Julie Johnson the very best as they embarked on “Act Two” of their lives. After twenty-four years of managing Crosby Arboretum’s buildings and grounds and constructing many of the site’s trails, exhibits, and structures, Terry retired June 30. We also bid a fond farewell to Julie, who worked part-time in customer service. It was an absolute perfect day. The attendees enjoyed exceptional weather and great music, while sharing stories and much laughter. It was wonderful to see that so many friends were able to be here to celebrate Terry and Julie’s next chapter.



Terry Johnson recently gave Lynn Crosby Gammill a tour through the Arboretum exhibits on our brand new 6-seater golf cart, funded by the 2020 Annual Appeal to Crosby Arboretum members. Terry and Lynn are shown here in the south pitcher plant bog, and they couldn’t have picked a better time to visit, as so many Mississippi wildflowers are at their most stunning in the hot and humid summer months!

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Membership Application

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 ID)	\$ 15.00
_____	Individual	30.00
_____	Family	40.00
_____	Donor	100.00
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_____	Benefactor	1,000.00
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_____	Sweetgum	100.00
_____	Sassafras	250.00
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