

useful wild plants, inc.



# Update

Vol. 14, No. 4  
Winter 2014

## UWP news

### ROLLOUT OF VOLUME 4

Volume 4 of *Useful Wild Plants...* is being printed now in Hong Kong by C&C Joint Printing, Ltd. The final batch of fold-and-gathered page proofs arrived so we could give approval to bind.

The schedule provided by Vivian Wu, our production contact in Hong Kong, indicates that Volume 4 will arrive in Austin in early August. Earlier in the production process, we had thought the shipment would be here in the spring, but as we were working with a new team at C&C and had to solve some technical mismatches between their and our versions of the layout and pre-press software programs we use, it will arrive a few months later than originally expected. Now that we have a better idea of about when we will have books in hand, we are exploring having book-signings in several cities and will let everybody know when those are scheduled.

We're going to need more storage space for Volume 4. This is the time in the life of the organization to be thinking about a permanent structure. As we shift gears to give attention to a campaign to raise funds to finish the work on the encyclopedia, our first priority must be toward finding a larger space. We are literally out of room, even for Volume 4, and the costs for all kinds of spaces in Austin, Texas, have caused Austin to transition from being one of the lowest cost-of-living cities in Texas to being the highest. We welcome any ideas you may have on this subject. This conversation has been going on for a while now, and some of you reading this Update will find this a familiar topic.

### THE BEST LAID SCHEMES O' MICE AN' MEN GANG AFT AGLEY

We originally projected a spring arrival for Volume 4. But the seasoned C&C team that we collaborated with to refine the production process on volumes 2 and 3 was replaced by a new group of

people who, while highly skilled, hadn't had experience in working with the complexities of this project. We had to work out some technical mismatches jointly between software versions. So we are pushing the signings originally planned for spring into the fall. We are hearing from donors in several cities about plans to celebrate the arrival of Volume 4. We will let everyone know when these are on the calendar.

### OUCH! WHY GRASSBUR IS ON VOLUME 4'S COVER

As those of you who have volumes 1, 2, and 3 have noticed, each volume has a different species featured on the cover, contributors page, and endpapers. For Volume 1 it was *Aquilegia longissima*, longspur columbine, which is a rare and beautiful member of the West Texas flora. For Volume 2, it is *Berberis swaseyi*, the rare Swaseyi barberry endemic to the Texas Hill Country whose yellow flowers in spring fill the air with a heady, transcendent perfume and whose tart-sweet fruits color the shrub a glowing orange-pink and far surpass agarita (*B. trifoliolata*) in flavor. Volume 3 has *Carya illinoensis*, the pecan, common but special, being the state tree of Texas. And Volume 4 has *Cenchrus incertus*, the ubiquitous and but very friendly grassbur. Why is a plant that seemingly has no redeeming value the feature species of Volume 4? For one thing, the seed is high in protein and was eaten by prehistoric peoples. Archeological evidence shows that they ground the burs, spines and all, and ate the meal. For another, the UWP Grassburs, our volunteer group, also stick to things and make themselves noticed on behalf of the Useful Wild Plants Project.

### IN FROM OUT OF TOWN

UWP had the pleasure of meeting with Dr. Rodolfo Dirzo, originally the Bing Professor in Environmental Science at Stanford University, where he teaches ecology courses and leads the Dirzo Lab

Continued on page 3



Volumes 1, 2, and 3 with proof sheets and cover for Volume 4



Scooter Cheatham, Norman Lewis, and Stan Roux discuss the future of plant research

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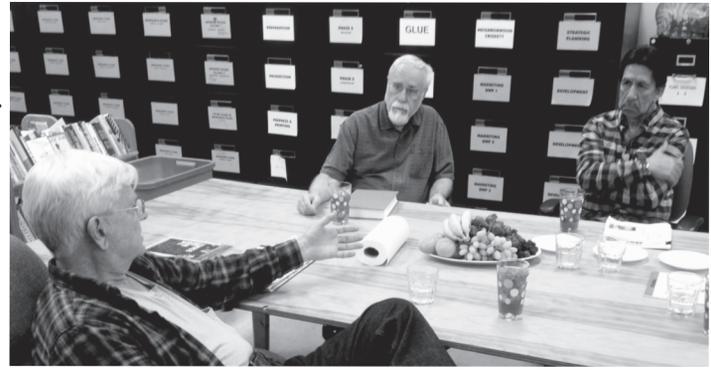
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Weedfeed alums Tamsie Ringler (c) and Maris Strautmanis (r) visit UWP

in the Department of Biology. Dr. Dirzo was in Austin to lecture at UT Austin and UWP's vice president Dr. Stan Roux brought him to the office for a visit, that was all too short, given the conversations about the future of botanical and biological research that got started but not completed. Dr. Dirzo is the author of many articles and book chapters on botanical diversity, tropical ecology, and plant-and-animal interactions and was quite pleased to find that the 1980 article he coauthored with John L. Harper, "Experimental Studies on Slug-Plant Interactions: II. The Effect of Grazing by Slugs on High Density Monocultures of *Capsella bursa-pastoris* and *Poa annua*" from the *Journal of Ecology*, had been cited in Volume 3 of *Useful Wild Plants*....

Professor Norman Lewis, Director of the Institute of Biological Chemistry at Washington State University, visited recently. Dr. Lewis is Regional Editor of the journal *Phytochemistry*, was president of the American Society of Gravitational and Space Biology, and is president of the Phytochemical Society of North America. He studies biochemical and medicinal plant biosynthetic pathways, and his lab discovered the "dirigent" proteins, which dictate the stereochemistry of a compound synthesized by other enzymes. This led to identifying anticancer compounds such as podophyllotoxin (from *Podophyllum*) and its derivative etoposide. He also does research on renewable bioproducts and energy from vascular plants and studies phenylpropanoid metabolites, which provide structural reinforcement to plant tissue. These metabolites act as phytotoxins against fungi, bacteria, insects, and herbivores and have pharmacological (including anticancer) activities in humans. They also store organic carbon, thus serving as a carbon sink.



Scooter Cheatham, Stan Roux, and Rodolfo Dirzo ponder the future of plant research

Bill and Jan Neiman visited UWP HQ one recent Saturday while in town on business. They own Native American Seed, which is an exceptional source of seeds for scores of native plant species. Based in Junction, Texas, they harvest seed from all over Texas and beyond and have over 125,000 customers throughout the U.S. Finding and collecting the seed of so many plants is a non-stop job, so our paths cross theirs much less often than we would like, but when they were in Central Texas recently for a seed sale, they came by for a short visit before turning around to head west for a conference in Santa Fe. If you are thinking of planting native grasses, forbs, or wildflowers, check out the website of this native and homegrown company at [www.seedsources.com](http://www.seedsources.com). You can order seed in quantities from packets to pounds and select individual species or seed mixes tuned for your particular region. They also support UWP by offering the volumes for sale in their beautiful and informative catalog, which is a tremendous source of planting and ecological information.

Weedfeed alums Tamsie Ringler and Maris Strautmanis were in Austin for a few days in December. They took several Weedfeed classes back in the 1980s and enjoyed the classes, with their trips to Big Bend, so much that they had brought their son Lauris on a trip over some of the same territory. We enjoyed seeing them immensely and having an opportunity to recall some of the adventures from those classes.

### BECAUSE THE PLANTS CAN'T SPEAK...

All of us must. In February, UWP president Scooter Cheatham gave a talk to the Garden Club of Houston, helping kick off their

Continued on page 4



UWP president Scooter Cheatham speaks to the Native Plant Society of Texas's Spring Symposium at UT's Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center in April.

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**COMING UP**  
Nuts! Matt White's three part series on pecans  
Kim Ludeke on why mapping plants is vital for  
the future  
UWP's ace taste testers sample wild fruit jellies  
provided by herpatologist and botanist Richard  
Worthington

WINTER 2014 Vol. 14 No. 4

**4** of **4**

Continued from page 3

new meeting place at the Hermann Park Conservancy. We are most appreciative for Susan Garwood's suggestion that Scooter speak to GCH (which sponsored species in two of the *Useful Wild Plants* volumes), and we want to thank Clayton Erickson for hosting the lovely dinner the evening before, Kingsley Von Helms for all that she did to make the dinner so delightful, Susan and David Miclette for providing accommodations, and Susan Horne for the logistical efforts and attention to detail in making things run smoothly. The members of the Garden Club of Houston are very knowledgeable about the ecology of southeastern Texas and actively support community, conservation, and educational programs in the region. And just before the meeting started Scooter got a huge surprise when Renvia Lander, formerly of Houston and now of her hometown of Cuero (his home town too) showed up with her daughter Melissa Moss, with whom we have worked at GCH's Bulb and Plant Mart. Renvia's mother, Bess Jernigan, was Scooter's fifth grade teacher and she encouraged his interests in research, science, and the arts (we can all see where that led!).

The Native Plant Society of Texas also invited Scooter to give a presentation at their Spring Symposium held at the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center. His talk on the role of native plant organizations in maintaining botanical knowledge generated some lively questions and follow-up inquiries.

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