useful wild plants, inc.

Update

Vol. 15, No. 4
Winter 2015

UWP year end wrap-up

2015 RECAP

2015 has been about getting Volume 4 of *Useful Wild Plants...* finished and into peoples' hands. We've made lots of trips to the post office and had a lot of people come by to pick up copies.

WHO BUYS THESE BOOKS ANYWAY?

We get that question a lot. About 40% are institutional buyers – libraries, universities, research labs, arboreta, etc. The other 60% are individuals – people who want thorough information about a subject in which they have an interest.

WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING

They are saying things like "It is one of the best, most comprehensive books on plants I've ever seen anywhere." "The scope of work is magnificent." "It certainly is an awesome work." "We work with the public and use your books as a reference."

A RIVER *RUSHED* THROUGH IT!

Part 1 — The Texas Hill Country (aka Flash Flood Alley)

by Steve Speir

In recent years Texas, especially the Hill Country and Houston, has experienced unprecedented flooding. The increased human population in both areas has brought lots of impervious cover and caused the removal of native vegetation that once modulated the water flow and protected river banks from erosion. In Part 1 of A River Ran Through It, Steve Speir addresses the efforts to educate people about what can be done in the Hill Country to help lessen future flood damage. Part 2 will cover the Houston area.

The enormous damage done by the 2015 Memorial Day floods that unleashed the destructive force of the Blanco and Colorado rivers did millions of dollars in damage to river residents in Wimberley, San Marcos, and Austin. Lives were lost and mile after mile of Hill Country river bank was changed forever.

Bill Neiman, who runs Native American Seeds in Junction, Texas, on the Llano River, wants people to remember that "it's all hap-

Continued on page 2

Emily Neiman

Riparian Recovery workshop

Emily Neiman

Fischer, Texas, bridge damage

Continued from page 1

pened before and it will happen again someday." But he stressed that there are things that can be done right now to help the riverbanks recover and to mitigate the damage caused by future "channel changers."

Within hours of the waters receding Bill joined with habitat experts Steve Nelle and Mark Lundy in a series of Riparian Recovery workshops to help landowners along the rivers adopt a smart approach to long-term recovery. A riparian area is the area where the shoreline meets the water. A healthy riparian area is essential to protecting water quality, preventing erosion, and providing nutrients and habitat for fish, fireflies, and other wildlife. A summary of their ideas and videos can be found on the Native American Seed web site at www.seedsource.com.

"We've just seen flood water pull hundred year old cypress trees out of the ground and much of our riparian vegetation stripped away," Neiman said. "It's not to going to recover overnight but if we take a smart approach that respects nature it will recover in time."

Neiman stressed that the pressure on land owners from homeowner associations to keep their property mowed and manicured right up to the water line contributed to the river's destructive damage. He said that over time the constant mowing and trimming and pruning of the trees that anchor the shoreline and the removal of dead limbs have made it impossible for riparian areas to withstand the immense turbulence of a flash flood.

"It's all about plants and not all plants are equal," he said. "When you remove natives like sawgrass (*Cladium jamaicense*), sedges (*Carex* sp., *Cyperus* sp.), and other plants with deep root systems

Continued on page 3

UWP says thanks!

TO EVERYONE WHO JOINED UP, HELPED OUT, PITCHED IN, AND GAVE THEIR ALL FOR THE CAUSE IN 2015

NEW AND RENEWING MEMBERS

Clayton Erikson ♦ Travis & Cathy Green ♦ Donny Hamilton ♦ Cora Lee Hughes ♦ Lola Jennings ♦ Sonje B. & Ken Johnson ♦ Richard A. Kallerman ♦ Duane & Laurie Leach ♦ Patricia & David Lewis ♦ Kevin C. Magavern ♦ Lynn Marshall ♦ Jean Mather ♦ Wendy L. Matthews ♦ Lucy McCall ♦ Judy McGray ♦ Paul Montgomery ♦ Native Plant Society of Texas -- Fredericksburg Chapter ♦ Deborah Nevins ♦ Steve Oldroyd ♦ Ron Patterson ♦ Mary Lee Plumb-Mentjes ♦ Paul Primrose ♦ Charmaine Richardson ♦ Sharon Roos ♦ Neil Shorthouse ♦ Dianne Simpson ♦ Randy Smith ♦ Ishmael Soto & Cynthia Leigh ♦ Stephen Speir ♦ Roy Stewart ♦ David Sullivan ♦ Cynthia Swain ♦ Robert A. Taylor ♦ John Tobe ♦ John T. (Ted) Whatley ♦ Gordon White

SPECIES AND SEED SPONSORS

Evelyn Bochow ♦ Rita Hall ♦ Stan Roux ♦ Charles & Betti Saunders Foundation Fund of Austin Community Foundation for the Capital Area

GRANTS AND GIFTS

Thomas Bochow Donor Advised Fund – East Texas Communities Foundation ♦ The Brown Foundation, Inc. ♦ The Bayou Fund ♦ Beyond Reynosa Foundation ♦ Susan Vaughan Foundation

GOODS AND SERVICES

Alan Langford of Alert Security ♦ Drs. Walter and Memory Lewis of Washington University and the Missouri Botanical Garden for their contribution of hand-blown glass laboratory equipment ♦ Richard Worthington for the astounding books he gleans from estate sales and mysterious shops in the El Paso area

UWP GRASSBURS

And a huge thanks to the many volunteers who have pitched in in ways large and small, one time or many, front and center or behind the scenes.

Bill McCullough

Bill Neiman with *Tripsacum dactyloides* (Eastern gamagrass) roots for transplanting

Bill McCullough

Bill Neiman digging *Tripsacum dactyloides* (eastern gamagrass) roots

TOM J. MABRY

1932 — 2015

Leadership is a quality hard to define, but we all know it when we see it. Tom Mabry, who died last November, was a leader *par excellence* at the University of Texas, certainly among the best I ever observed. Tom's leadership was especially evident in his pioneering scientific discoveries in the field of phytochemistry and in his chairmanship of the Department of Botany.

Tom's leadership in the field of phytochemistry was universally recognized. Professor T. W. Goodwin, a star in the field from the University of Liverpool in England, acknowledged Tom as the "Father of Modern Phytochemistry in the United States." Tom helped organize the Phytochemical Society of North America in 1966 and was its first President. His research teams generated over 600 publications, and he co-authored 15 books in the field. He directed the dissertations of scores of Ph. D. students, many of whom went on to prominent careers in academia. In recognition of this extraordinary productivity, Tom was appropriately honored with numerous awards, including an American Chemical Society Award for the "Application of Chemistry to Food and Agriculture," the "Pergamon Phytochemistry Prize," and a Guggenheim Fellowship.

As the Chair of the Department of Botany for eight years Tom's leadership was characterized by both graciousness and decisiveness. Although he had little tolerance for the aimless meetings administrators sometimes have to attend, he knew how to work the system and extract from the University the kind of support for the Botany Department that was needed to keep it ranked number one in the United States. While Chairman, Tom was instrumental in establishing several faculty endowments, which have helped continue to keep plant biology strong in the decades since his chairmanship. Briefly stated, Tom was always pro-active for the Department, yet his successes always seemed effortless, and his graciousness and *joie de vivre* sustained a high morale among the faculty during his entire tenure.

Tom, we thank you for your many gifts to Plant Biology. Your spirit continues to inspire the many students and faculty who were lucky enough to know you.

Stanley Roux

Professor of Molecular Cell and Developmental Biology,
Department of Cell and Molecular Biology, University of Texas at Austin

Scooter Cheatham

Tom Mabry at UWP in 2013

BEET IT

Love them or hate them, the one thing people can agree on about beets is that they are red. But for most of eternity, nobody knew why they were red. What gave beets their intense color? It took this man to figure that out.

Tom Mabry solved the riddle of what makes beets red (and also prickly pear tunas and the bracts of bougainvillea flowers) in the early 1960s while at the University of Zurich,. He named this new class of unique indole-derived pigments "betalains " after *Beta vulgaris*, the root vegetable everyone loves to hate, Shortly thereafter he became head of the new "Plant Chemistry " program in the Department of Botany at UT Austin, where he then taught for 42 years. Coincidence? I think not.

Continued from page 2

that can go down as much as fourteen inches and you replace them with St. Augustine, which has a two-inch root system, it simply can't withstand the rush of water. It's not able to do the heavy lifting of anchoring the soil and holding a river bank together when it's hit with 10 to 15 inches of rushing water. "We live in one of most flash flood prone areas in the country. That's why some are now calling it 'Flash Flood Alley,'" he said.

Neiman recognized a need for a seed product to help anchor the riparian area soil and aid in the recovery. His team used their extensive plant knowledge to come up with a "Riparian Recovery Mix," a blend of 37 native grass and wildflower species to help rebuild stream bank buffer zones and recreate a natural riparian area. "It's designed to replenish the soil and help hold back the next big river surge. A mix of stable perennials and annuals from our inventory of 178 different seeds," he said. "It's the best we've got." The new Native American Seed mix can be ordered on-line at www.seedsource.com.

Useful Wild Plants of Texas
2612 Sweeney Lane
Austin, TX 78723

Nonprofit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Austin, TX
Permit No. 402

Coming soon!

SPEEDY WEEDFEED

A field class on the edible, medicinal, and useful wild plants of Central Texas. Sunday, May 15, 2016, 1:30 -- dusk

Call or email for tuition and registration information.

WINTER 2015 Vol. 15 No. 4

UWP's Mission

To promote the understanding, appreciation, stewardship, and sustainable use of wild plants through programs of conservation, education, research, publication, and entrepreneurship.

Focus

To create and maintain a comprehensive knowledge and information base, a platform from which to launch further research on native plants. This vast body of knowledge will be of service to scientists, horticulturists, ecologists, teachers, park rangers, hobbyists, and others, and ultimately will be accessible in several forms, including the multi-volume encyclopedia, an interactive database, CD-ROM, and films. This is the most complete economic botany work produced for any region in the world.

Projects and Programs

- *The Useful Wild Plants of Texas, the Southeastern and Southwestern United States, the Southern Plains, and Northern Mexico*, a multi-volume work
- The Alluse Database
- Independent Studies with UWP
- The "Save the Human Libraries" project to preserve vanishing knowledge through video- and audio-taped interviews
- "Landmark Landscapers" project to interview horticulturists and naturalists who are bringing the best of the natives to the market for use in landscaping
- "Plug Into Your Planet," to help students evaluate their impact on the planet through their choice of possessions

Join UWP and help save the "rainforest" in your own backyard.

Annual Membership

- ❑ Sustaining ($100)
- ❑ Family/Household ($50)
- ❑ Individual ($25)

Sponsorship

- ❑ I'll Sponsor a Species in Volume 5! ($1000)
- ❑ I'll be a Seed Sponsor in Volume 5! ($500)

Contributions

I'd like to make a contribution of $ _____

in honor of / in memory of _____

To become a member or to otherwise contribute, fill in the blanks and mail this form or an approximation thereof to 2612 Sweeney Lane, Austin, TX 78723.

Thanks!

Name: _____

Biz/Co/Institution: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ E-mail: _____

Credit card #: (MasterCard or VISA) _____

Expiration: _____ Signature: _____

Useful Wild Plants, Inc. ♦ 512-928-4441 ♦ 512-928-8091 (fax)
info@usefulwildplants.org ♦ www.usefulwildplants.org