

The Crosby Arboretum

Mississippi State University Extension Service

Quarterly News Journal

Summer 2010

24.3

A CONVERT TO CONEFLOWERS

I'd like to introduce you to a very underutilized plant that will really be coming into its own over the summer months. Purple coneflowers are outstanding native plants that look great in the prairie as well as in formal designs. I personally think the purple coneflower is one of the best plants you can use in your garden. There are nine species of purple coneflower, or *Echinacea*, native to North America. The main species found in the trade is the Eastern purple coneflower. It grows up to 3 feet tall and wide, producing bright purple flowers with dark centers. The 2- to 4-inch diameter flowers bloom until frost. The foliage and stems have hairy surfaces that might remind you of medium-grit sandpaper.

Typically, coneflowers are large plants, with many being more than 3 feet tall and wide. This makes the coneflowers back-row plants in perennial beds or borders. But their back-row status does not make them second rate. Plant breeders have been busy with this species. Kim's Knee High is a 15- to 18-inch-tall and 12- to 15-inch-wide variety. Little Annie is a dwarf form that is 6 to 9 inches tall and 18 inches wide. It has 3 1/2-inch flowers that are a clear pink.

Though named for the color purple, breeders are selecting varieties with white, orange, yellow, red and almost every color in between. Summer Sky is one of the varieties with an outstanding new color. This bi-color coneflower has soft peach petals and a rose halo around the cone. The flowers are 5 inches in diameter and very fragrant. It is a good cut flower choice. Another new variety with outstanding color is Twilight, which has rose-colored petals surrounding a unique red cone. This is a heavily branched variety that is extra fragrant.



Coneflowers "steal the show" with their long bloom season, drought-tolerance, and wide range of colors.

Coneflowers may be the ideal plant for busy gardeners because they thrive on neglect. They tolerate a wide variety of soil types, from tight clay to sandy. Irrigation is only needed when the plants are newly set out. Once established, normal rainfall is sufficient except during extreme droughts. The crown of the plant is susceptible to rot conditions. This is not a problem in the summer but can become one during the cool, moist winter months. Mississippi gardeners can address this problem by planting coneflowers in raised beds, which helps keep the plant crown drier.

On the coast, the coneflower is a tender perennial because of the cool, moist winters, so use it as an annual. Divide coneflowers every three to four years, but be patient waiting for regrowth. Several varieties can be grown from seed, and the plants will re-seed themselves, becoming a weedy problem some seasons. Deadhead the flowers if this becomes an issue. Coneflowers are good companions for yarrow, bee balm, goldenrod, and black-eyed Susan. And be sure to plant a couple of extra plants to have enough for long-lasting cut flowers.

– **Gary R. Bachman, Ph.D.**
*Assistant Extension Professor of Horticulture,
Coastal Research and Extension Center,
Host of "Southern Gardening"*



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: Native Aquatic Plants for the Landscape

It is quickly approaching the time of year when the temperatures are hot, the humidity is high, and only the tough plants survive. Under these conditions, there are several native aquatic plant species that flourish and are interesting prospects for incorporating into the garden or landscape.

Pickerelweed (*Pontederia cordata*) is an excellent aquatic plant that adds color to the edge of any pond. Pickerelweed belongs to the water-hyacinth family and produces violet-blue flowers that bloom from May to September. On rare occasions, flower color of this plant may be white. Nectar attracts bees and butterflies. Pickerelweed grows best in full sun to part shade and is often found growing in areas with shallow water, such as ditches, marshes, pond edges, streams, and lakes. At least 3 to 5 inches of water is necessary for plant growth; however, this plant has been reported to grow in areas that contain as much as 1 foot of water. As suggested by the name, pickerel and several other fish species seek shelter within clumps of this plant. Stems provide dragonflies and damselflies a place to lay their eggs. Seeds are often eaten by ducks and even muskrats. Pickerelweed grows approximately 2 to 4 feet tall.

Several Louisiana iris species and hybrids exist in the south and are a favorite for the garden. Native species within this region include *Iris fulva*, *Iris brevicaulis*, *Iris nelsonii*, and *Iris giganticaerulea*. Louisiana iris grows best in full sun or part shade where soils are wet to moist and acidic. Flowers bloom in April and can be purple, blue, red, white, or yellow in color. For adequate bloom, Louisiana iris needs to be divided every few years. A reduction in bloom may occur if this plant becomes overly crowded.

Water-lilies are a classic for adding character to the water garden. The American white water-lily (*Nymphaea odorata*) has fragrant white flowers with yellow centers that open in the morning and close in the afternoon. Flowers bloom in the spring and summer months. It grows well in full sun, part shade, or even shaded locations. This plant can grow in shallow spots with as little as 3 inches of water or in deeper areas that contain as much as 6 feet of water.



Golden club in full bloom.

Ducks enjoy feeding on its green seeds. Yellow pond-lily (*Nuphar lutea*) is another great aquatic flowering plant that contains yellow flowers which bloom from April to October. This plant grows under similar conditions as the American white-water lily.

Two other interesting aquatic plants for use in the landscape include swamp lily (*Crinum americanum*) and golden club (*Orontium aquaticum*). Swamp lilies produce white and sometimes pink blooms which are fragrant. Blooms occur from August through October in part shade and even full shade conditions. This plant requires wet to moist soils and is moderately tolerant of salt spray in coastal communities. It grows approximately 1 to 3 feet tall. Another great aquatic plant for along the edge of ponds, in shallow streams, bogs, or swamps is golden club. As suggested by the common name, this plant has yellow club-like flowers that bloom in March and April. Leaves of this plant often float on the water surface and grow approximately 18 inches. Golden clubs thrive in part shade conditions where the soils are wet.

For those interested in incorporating these aquatic plants and others in the landscape, the Arboretum will have an Aquatic Plant Sale July 10 from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. Hope to see you there!

—**Janine Conklin, Ph.D.**
Director of The Crosby Arboretum and
Assistant Extension Professor of Horticulture
Mississippi State University



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CROSBY ARBORETUM VOLUNTEER REPORT

Another volunteer year has passed at the Crosby Arboretum. Attendance at meetings this year was excellent! Everyone came to the meetings eager to get things done. Regular volunteers Jean and Paul MacInnis, Bob Huskey, Jack Zawadski, Cindy Murchison, JoAnne Fleming, Joan Gauthier, Dave Schlauderaff, Joan Bruder, and Lecrease Hicks came to work! This year they potted and repotted over 300 trees to be sold at future Arboretum plant sales. These volunteers also assist staff by working in the ticket booth, weeding the Children's Garden, and other tasks.

The staff at the Crosby Arboretum would like to thank our volunteers for the exceptional work that has been completed this year. Because of their commitment to excellence in all they do, our large events such as BugFest in September, the Piney Woods Heritage Festival in November, Wildlife Day in March, and Strawberries and Cream in April were a huge success. Volunteers Dr. John and Peggy Guyton, Mary Cordray, Laura and Gordon Ousset, Jennifer Buchanan, Sharon Swope, Bethany Carlisle, and Board members Claudette Stewart, Fay Bright, Ruth Cook, and Lynn Gammill not only gave of their time, but travelled a good distance to do it.

Our Fall, Arbor Day, and Spring Plant Sales were extremely successful this year. We were able to purchase fewer plants from nurseries and sell more of our own propagated plants, thanks to donated seedlings from Board President Ruth Cook and diligent planting by volunteers. Volunteer activities also included projects such as digitally archiving historical documents by Lecrease Hicks and Cindy Murchison and weeding in the Children's Garden by Joan Bruder.

Thanks to our volunteers Dave and Janet Schlauderaff, the Arboretum had a presence at April's Nature Fest in Poplarville. Robert and Cindy Murchison also represented Crosby Arboretum at Gulf Islands National Seashore's Earth Day Festival, which had over 3,000 attendees! It is through events like these that we have a great opportunity to reach the public about our site and programs. Without our dedicated volunteers we



Volunteers have played a key role in many Arboretum events this year, such as the Spring Plant Sale.

would have missed these events, as they fell during one of our busiest times in the spring.

A very special thank you for an excellent job is extended to our LSU Intern, Garrett Newton, who assisted on a full-time basis from January to May with the pre-construction planning for our new Gum Pond Exhibit. Garrett has worked extremely hard in the time he has been here. Planning for this major Exhibit is off to a great start because of his work. Finally, we would like to thank our dutiful volunteer, Paul Breland. He works diligently for two days every week with the staff, come rain or shine.

Arboretum volunteers are a most invaluable resource that cannot be measured. Without our volunteers, the Crosby Arboretum would not function as well as it does. We look forward to a great new year, starting with our next meeting on Saturday, September 4, 2010 at 9:00 a.m. Have a wonderful and safe summer!

If you are interested in volunteering over the summer months, the Crosby Arboretum has a wealth of indoor volunteer projects, such as converting the Arboretum slide and photo Library to a digital archive. Please contact me at (601) 799-2311 for more information.

– **Robin Veerkamp**
Crosby Arboretum Volunteer Coordinator



MSU graduate students from the Department of Landscape Architecture presented the results of their design charette for the Gum Pond Exhibit in March.

GUM POND EXHIBIT UPDATE

The Gum Pond Exhibit remains in the pre-construction stages as summer approaches. Currently, the site of the gum pond has been cleared of its understory and flagged for construction. The first stage of the project will involve removing approximately 21 pine trees before excavation of the pond can begin. LSU Intern **Garrett Newton** worked with **Bob Brzuszek** and MSU graduate students on the project from January to May of 2010. Mississippi State University graduate students of landscape architecture completed the design of the gum pond and have submitted the project for two separate student design awards.

EAGLE SCOUT PROJECTS AT THE CROSBY ARBORETUM

The Arboretum was fortunate to have two Eagle Scout projects begin in May. **Josh Baber** and his Troop 81 crew from McNeil will be re-staining the gazebo in the North Savanna. Materials are being donated to the project by Air Products and Chemicals, Inc., and Sherwin-Williams. Also, for **Matthew Lander's** Eagle project, his Picayune Troop 2 crew are painting and restoring our twenty-five memorial benches.

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.

Please address correspondence to:
 Pat Drackett, Editor
 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.

Membership Application

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

_____ Student (send 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

Renewing? Memberships are for one year.

The Crosby Arboretum
 Mississippi State University
 P.O. Box 1639
 Picayune, MS 39466-1639
 (601) 799-2311

Crosby Arboretum Program Schedule

June - July 2010

June 2010

CHILDREN'S NATURE ART CONTEST

**Entries Received June 2 to June 30
Winners to be Announced in July**

Kids ages 6 through 12, draw your favorite insect, plant, wild animal, or nature scene on 8.5 x 11 inch paper and enter your drawing or painting in the Crosby Arboretum's Summer Art Contest! Please submit your artwork along your name, age, city, and state to the Visitor's Center. First place winner will receive a family membership to the Arboretum, second place winner will be given a \$25 gift certificate to the Gift Shop, and third place winner will obtain a 19 x 13 inch mounted hummingbird photograph by local photographer **John Young**. Selected drawings will be prominently displayed on a kiosk at the Arboretum.

KIDS' SUMMER NATURE CAMP

**Wed. - Sat. June 9, 10, 11, & 12
9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.**

Children ages 6 through 12 will enjoy this four-day camp, learning about the outdoors with fun hands-on lessons, games, and activities. They will leave camp with an increased appreciation and excitement for nature. Reservations required. Bring a sack lunch and drink each day. \$35 members' children; \$45 non-members' children. Limited to 15 registrants.



Members Gerald and Jackie Page learned how to construct a pine needle basket in Judy Breland's May program.

SUMMER NATURE SERIES

Join us for this four-part educational series and learn about native plants, insects, landscape design, and wildlife!

SUMMER NATURE SERIES, PART ONE NATIVE PLANTS FOR THE LANDSCAPE

**Saturday, June 26 (Adults)
10:00 to 11:00 a.m.**

Dr. Janine Conklin, Director of the Crosby Arboretum and Assistant Extension Professor of Horticulture, will start off this series with a native plant Arboretum field walk. Trees, shrubs, and herbaceous plant material native to the region will be discussed for use in the home landscape. Site conditions, ornamental features, and identification tips of several native plant species will be taught. Free for members, \$5 for non-members. Register by June 25.

AQUATIC PLANT SALE

**Saturday, July 10
9:00 a.m. to Noon**

Come early for the best selection of non-invasive aquatic plants, including hardy water lilies, Texas star hibiscus, Louisiana iris, spider lilies, lizards tail, and golden club. Many of these plants will be divisions from our exhibits. **Free admission!** Sale will be held behind the Visitor's Center.

SUMMER NATURE SERIES, PART TWO ENDANGERED WILDLIFE (Adult/Family)

**Saturday, July 17
10:00 to 11:00 a.m.**

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service administers the Endangered Species Act. **Diane Barth**, Education Outreach Specialist with the Southeast Louisiana National Wildlife Refuges Complex, will explore regional as well as internationally endangered species, and what the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is doing to improve their populations and habitats. Free for members, \$5 for non-members. Register by July 16.

Crosby Arboretum Program Schedule

July - August 2010

July 2010 (con't)

GOING BATTY! (Kids!)
Saturday, July 24
10:00 to 11:30 a.m.

Play a game of Bat and Moth, create a Batty Bat Book, and dine on a Bat Snack as you discover the role of bats in South Mississippi with Master Naturalist **Mary Cordray**. Children must be accompanied by a parent or guardian. All materials provided. Members' children \$2; non-members' children \$4. Register by July 22.



Alan Branbagen, Director of Horticulture for Missouri's Powell Gardens, conducted a field walk in March.

SUMMER NATURE SERIES, PART THREE
INSECT PREDATORS AND POLLINATORS:
FRIENDS OF THE FARMER AND GARDENER
Saturday, July 31 (Adult/Family)
10:00 to 11:00 a.m.

Blair Sampson, Research Entomologist with the USDA in Poplarville, will provide a hands-on session about insects that will focus on the valuable roles that insects play in supporting the ecosystem, not only in the home garden but on a much grander scale. Free to members and \$5 for non-members. Register by July 30.

Reservations: Call the Arboretum office at (601) 799-2311, to confirm all events and to make program reservations, as seating is limited. Programs are subject to change.

Physical Address: 370 Ridge Road, Picayune, MS 39466

Mailing Address: P.O. Box 1639, Picayune, MS 39466

E-mail Contact: drackett@ext.msstate.edu

Hours of Operation: Wednesday-Sunday, 9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.

2010 Admission Fees: Adults, \$5; Seniors (over 55), \$4; Children under 12, \$2; Members, free admission to grounds and programs.

Webpage: www.crosbyarboretum.msstate.edu. Lists programs and events, volunteer opportunities, Arboretum and Natural Area information, and news updates.



Native plant enthusiasts examine Cliftonia in peak bloom during an April field trip to Hillside Bog, a final treat in a great day of native plant walks and programs that were sponsored by the Mississippi Native Plant Society.

SUMMER NATURE SERIES, PART FOUR
HOME LANDSCAPE DESIGN AND
RENOVATION (Adults)

Saturday, August 14
10:00 to 11:30 a.m.

Learn the steps for analyzing your property and valuable tips for creating a low-maintenance and attractive landscape design with **Pat Drackett**, Crosby Arboretum's Senior Curator. Pat will discuss the basics of the landscape design process, and teach how to give your property a quick and inexpensive facelift. An overview of some outstanding plants for the landscape will also be included. Free to members and \$5 for non-members. Register by August 13.

MUSHROOM WALK (Family)

Saturday, August 28
10:00 to 11:30 a.m.

Bring your collecting basket and join **Dr. Juan Mata** who is back again this summer to treat us again to a guided mushroom walk of the Arboretum grounds. His students at the University of South Alabama have called him "the best biology teacher in the south." Please come and enjoy this time with him while learning about fungi's fascinating ecology, taxonomy, and relationship to mankind. Program is free to members and \$5 for non-members. Register by August 27.