



The Sabal

www.nativeplantproject.org

***Dyschoriste crenulata*, Wavyleaf Snakeherb, Acanthaceae**

--A spreading, drought-resistant
groundcover for southernmost Texas--

by *Christina Mild*
(www.RioDeltaWild.com)

Heep's Native Nursery has been propagating Wavyleaf Snakeherb (*Dyschoriste crenulata*) for some time now, providing yet another attractive groundcover for use in the Rio Grande Delta. "It blooms all year apparently," Heep notes. "But, it will be in bloom all morning, and not at all in the afternoon. I thought that maybe high humidity favored blooming. I dunno. It was in bloom one afternoon when a norther had just hit. Seems like it was real dry air."

Blooming period in the wild may be more limited. In **Manual of the Vascular Plants**

of Texas, Correll and Johnston describe the usual habitat as chaparral and brushland and the blooming period as March to May. Dr. Al Richardson widens that to spring and summer.

Dr. Richardson explains why one may not notice this delicate plant in the wild: "We don't ever see a lot of the plants growing, usually 1 or a few." Richardson, with Ken King, has been scouting the 4 southernmost counties for every possible plant species. "It grows in all 4 Valley counties," Richardson continues. His **Plants of the Lower Rio Grande Valley** includes a photo of *crenulata*, the only locally-native species of *Dyschoriste*, as plate 75, among other members of Acanthaceae. A few Scrophulariaceae with similar appearance are found on plates 74 and 75.

I've overlooked the plant, because of the grey-green foliage and small purple blooms, as a young specimen of Cenizo. Crenulate (wavy) leaf margins are a good

characteristic for distinguishing *crenulata*. Internet searching on this plant brings forth many hits, but paltry information and no photos of the living plant.

Available online, in full text, is the following: "A Monograph of the American Species of the Genus *Dyschoriste*," Clarence Emmeren Kobuski, *Annals of the Missouri Botanical Garden*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (Feb., 1928), pp. 9-90, doi:10.2307/2394069. The monograph includes a full description of each species, including *crenulata*, and a list of sites from which it was collected. Kobuski lists the distribution as south Texas, south into Tamaulipas.

The earliest collection Kobuski notes occurred in Brazos Santiago in 1899 by Nealley. A type specimen was collected on the road from "San Fernando to Jimeney" in the state of Tamaulipas, MX, 26-27 Feb. 1902 by W. E. Nelson.

USDA, NRCS plants online database lists the plant as a perennial.

The seeds are tiny. In **Flora of Texas** Cyrus Lundell describes seeds of this genus as follows: "capsule included in the persistent calyx, oblong-linear, glabrous, 2 to 4-seeded. Separated with difficulty at maturity into 2 valves, 1 to 2 seeds to each valve held in position by a retinacula; seeds flattened, suborbicular, mucilaginous when wet." Lundell also provided the most complete list of collection sites which I could find: Sebastian, Holly Beach Sacahuiste Flats, Resaca Levee, Yucca Island, El Jardin, Mission, Linn, Sam Fordyce, La Joya and Sauz Ranch.

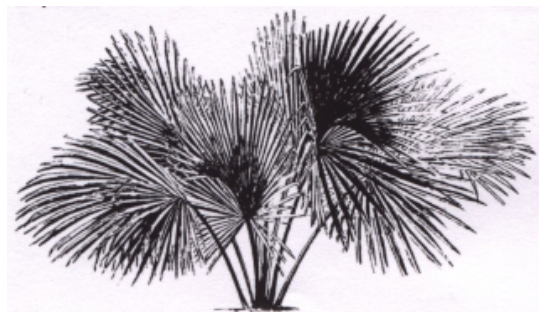
Ginger Byrum and Diann Ballesteros have tended Snakeherb in an entry garden at Ramsey Park and both have commented on how well it has grown. Ginger provided these comments: "I have it growing in pots in both shade and sun. It is doing great. Also, in the large pots, it hangs over the edge and is really pretty when blooming. The snakeherb we planted in the front Hidden Pond area at Ramsey has spread and makes a great groundcover. We've

even had it spread to the caliche, which is so hard we couldn't dig it up to transplant. It also does well with little water."

Thus, Heep's Nursery (www.heepsnursery.com) has provided us with yet another choice for restoring beauty to what surrounds us. This time it's a drought-resistant, delicate, grey-green spreading groundcover, capable of cheering many mornings throughout the year with small, light purple blooms. Did I mention that it's thornless?

About the author Christina Mild holds a M.S. in biological sciences. She can be contacted by email at mild.christina@gmail.com, physical mailing address 2901 Clifford Street, Harlingen, Texas, 78550-8542. Ms Mild, a frequent contributor to *The Sabal*, volunteers in native plant restoration and preservation projects and locally relevant natural history education [www.riodeltawild.com]

Technical assistance was provided by Mike Heep [www.heepsnursery.com]





***Dyschoriste crenulata*, Wavyleaf Snakeherb**

Native Plants Save Growers Money

by Horticulture Australia Limited

An integrated pest management strategy called *Revegetation by Design* could result in Queensland, Australia vegetable growers using fewer inputs and spending less time on pest control by removing exotic grasses and weeds near their crops.

Revegetation by Design advocates the integration of native vegetation with horticultural production systems, with a focus on replacing plants that host pests (commonly called 'exotic' weeds) with native plants that do not.

Replacing weeds with particular species of native plants has the potential to improve pest control for two main reasons. Firstly, many Australian native plants are not likely to be host plants for these exotic pests (90 percent of horticultural insect pests are exotic). Secondly, native plants can provide refuge for natural enemies of insect pests, i.e. beneficial insects.

A vegetable project completed in Queensland's Lockyer Valley in November 2006 has shown that exotic grasses surrounding crops predominantly harbour pests while native vegetation tends to provide a home for beneficial insects.

This one-year study explored the relationship between landscapes and insect populations, with a focus on native remnants and the land between the remnants and the crop.

The key message from the study, according to Commonwealth Science and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) scientist Dr. Nancy Schellhorn, to growers is to leave the native plants where they are and focus on removing the exotic grasses.

"The remnant is not providing a pest population, so it's not detrimental, but it seems to be providing some kind of habitat to beneficial insects," said Dr. Schellhorn.

Indeed, the native remnant vegetation could be up to 30 meters (approx. 100 feet) from the crop

and still provide a benefit in the form of habitat for beneficial insects.

While the 2006 project focused on assessing the existing vegetation, mostly taller trees, a 2007 project will attempt to identify lower growing shrubs that could be planted in revegetation programs and as borders on garden beds and paddocks.

In the next phase of research:

1. A desk top review or risk assessment will be carried out to determine when native vegetation is a risk to horticultural crops.
2. Experiments will be conducted to determine whether remnant beneficial populations produce quicker pest controls.
3. The community perception of native vegetation and pests will be assessed to determine what would prompt action from, for example, growers, residents and catchment management groups.

A secondary benefit of going the *Revegetation by Design* route would be the additional farm income gained through the sale of, for example, native seeds, cut flowers or bush tucker (food from the land e.g. berries). The introduction of more native plants would also help manage weeds and reduce soil erosion.

Project VG05014
Contact Dr. Nancy Schellhorn
CSIRO
nancy.schellhorn@csiro.au

This article was reprinted from the Autumn 2007 issue of HortLink a publication of HAL (Horticulture Australia Limited) 50 Carrington Street, Sydney, NSW 2000 Australia.

Editor's Note:

After talking with an Australian friend of mine concerning the definition of bush tucker, I got the following: "tucker" means food. If you like a

dish you say “it’s good tucker” ... Bush Tucker means indigenous food, in the truest sense, but nowadays most people are referring to some of the native ingredients (of which there are only about 5) which have become gourmet items. Things like wattle seed flour (where “wattle” means “acacia” in American), quandong (native bush peach - which looks nothing like a peach), illawarra plums (ditto), lemon myrtle (more the equivalent of the Italian herb “bay leaf”, but has a peppery citrus flavour), lilly pilly fruit (in texture like a rose apple, but bright purple and small/olive size, very perishable), bunyan nuts (from a conifer, the bunyan pine may be in the *Araucaria* genus) are used much like pine nuts, i.e. pesto, only they have far more carbohydrate than oil and about the size of a brazil nut. Lastly

warrigal spinach (which is actually a salt-tolerant succulent that grows on sand dunes, and tastes remarkably like spinach, only better). The classic which is now not really considered “bush tucker” is the macadamia nut. It’s gone out of grace because it is mostly grown by Americans, and mostly in Hawaii or on American owned plantations in Queensland. This could be a touchy spot with some Australian food industry people (but basically the Americans invested in and did the research on how to crack the incredibly hard outer shell and make the nut more amenable to mass production).



The plant image is Mesquite (*Prosopis glandulosa*), an example of an American 'bush tucker'.

Nature Happenings **Lower Rio Grande Valley, Texas**

For a comprehensive calendar of Nature Happenings go to RGV Nature Coalition at www.rgvnaturecoalition.org Scroll down to and click on Nature Events Calendar on right side

Sabal Palm Grove Sanctuary— Wonders of Nature. Call (956) 541-8034. Or go to www.tx.audubon.org/centers/sabal

Edinburg Scenic Wetlands and World Birding Center — **Bird Walks and Nature tours.** Native Plant Landscaping. 714 Raul Longoria Rd., Edinburg, TX (956) 381-9922.

Quinta Mazatlan - McAllen Wing of the World Birding Center— 600 Sunset Ave., McAllen, TX. Call Colleen Hook (956) 688-3370 for scheduled events

Bentsen Rio Grande Valley State Park WBC offers butterfly walks, bird walks, nature tours. Call 956-584-9156 for details and times.

Santa Ana NWR near Alamo offers **Nature Tram rides** with Interpreters at 9:30 a.m., 12 noon and 2:00 p.m. every day (956) 784-7500 or **Valley Nature Center** (956) 969-2475

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The Sabal is the Newsletter of the Native Plant Project and conveys information on the native habitat, and environment of the Lower Rio Grande Valley Texas. Co-editors: Gene Lester and Eleanor Mosimann. You are invited to submit articles for *The Sabal*. They can be brief or long. Articles may be edited for length and clarity. Black and white line drawings -- and colored photos or drawings -- with or without accompanying text are encouraged. We will acknowledge all submissions. Please send them, preferable in electronic form - either Word or WordPerfect - to: Native Plant Project, P.O. Box 2742, San Juan, TX 78589 or contact **Gene Lester at 956-425-4005 or g-el1951@sbcglobal.net**

See *The Sabal* and our 5 handbooks on our website:
www.nativeplantproject.org

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Native Plant Project Annual Membership Application Form **Dues are payable in January**

___ Regular \$15 per year ___ Contributing \$35 per year ___ Lifelong \$250 one time fee per individual. Members are advised of meetings, field trips, and other activities through *The Sabal*. Dues are paid on a calendar year basis. Send checks to Native Plant Project, P.O. Box 2742, San Juan, Texas 78589.

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Comments/ suggestions/ speaker recommendations should be sent to: Native Plant Project, P.O. Box 2742, San Juan, TX 78589 or contact G. Lester (956)-425-4005; g-el1951@sbcglobal.net

Native Plant Project Meetings – January 22, 2008. **Board meeting** at 6:30 p.m.; **General meeting** at 7:30 p.m. **Jim Everitt** will present his just published book, Weeds in South Texas and Northern Mexico: A guide to Identification, which he co-authored with Robert I. Lonard and Christopher R. Little. Mr. Everitt’s first books became recommended reading for anyone living in the Valley. This book, with its 188 photos of wildflowers (sorry, weeds) and grasses, is going to be another “must have” for everyone wanting to identify which plants are native and which are introduced.

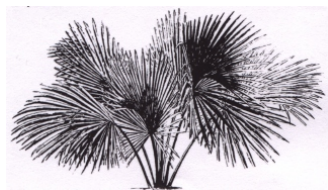
Board and General Meetings 2008:

January 22	March 25	May 27	October 28
February 26	April 22	September 23	November 25

SUMMARY OF THE MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETING - November 27, 2007

The terms of Directors Hagne, Hathcock, Lester, Martin, and Mosimann will expire in January. These directors will be notified that their term is expiring and asked if they wish to stand for re-election. Elections will be held at the NPP Annual General Meeting, which will occur after the January 24th Board of Directors Meeting.

Native Plant Project
P.O. Box 2742
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