



Texas Gulf Coast Fern Society

April 2005

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<http://www.rwsarchitects.com/fern.htm>

**Next Regular Meeting: Sunday, April 17 at 2:00 p. m. – Houston Garden Center in Hermann Park,
1500 Hermann Drive, Houston, TX 77044 – Phone: (713) 529-3960**

A message from our President:

Hello, everyone:

With the days now longer and the weather nicer, I'm sure each of you have been out in your yards getting everything ready for this year. Joe and I have been very busy.

We are sorry to have missed the field trip in March. Just hearing all about it from the members that went we know we missed out on a wonderful fern display. Joe and I ended up with last minute vacation plans and took off to South Africa. We were able to drive around and put about 3200 Km on rental cars. We took in a couple of Botanical Gardens - one in Cape Town and the other in Durban. We were able to see a lot of their native tree ferns such as *Dregii*. We stayed in Durban with Peter and Pat Strong. They have a Tree fern nursery where they grow about 20 different type tree ferns from spore, plus a few other ferns. We were given a tour and the "how-to's". Peter and Pat have been exporting to Europe for years and Joe and I should be added to their list for export within a few months. We took lots of pictures to share our experience.

Please take note of this upcoming special event:

"Moody Garden Gulf Coast Gardening Expo" April 23rd and 24th. We are scheduled to have 3 tables to sell plants and have a membership booth. This was open to the different societies around Houston so this should pull in real plant people. Hours are 10:00a - 4:00p both Sat and Sun, with set up 7:00 - 10:00a Sat. We need volunteers, to work the sale, but we also need plant donations. If you have some extra ferns at your house and are going to Moody Gardens, please bring them to the next meeting. If you are going to miss the next meeting please call me for pick up at 281-733-5564. The address of Moody Gardens is One Hope Blvd., Galveston, TX for those who may not know.

Also, we will be having a brief board meeting after our scheduled meeting on Sunday the 17th.

I'm looking forward to seeing each of you at the next meeting,
Darla

In Memoriam: Jack Duncan

It is our sad duty to report the passing of one of our members, Jack Duncan.

Jack had been a member of our society for several years and loved hardy ferns. He had been a member of the Alabama fern society prior to moving to Houston and joining our society. He had been battling diabetes for several years. Jack was such a good fern lover. He will be deeply missed by all who knew him.



Officers and Committees:

President:	Darla Harris
Vice President:	Martha Burg
Secretary:	Patsy Geiger
Treasurer:	Al and Susan Peacock
Board Members at Large:	Ted Richardson, Cecil Strange, Jr. and Larry Rucker
Membership Chair:	Cecil Strange, Jr.
Newsletter:	Paul Geiger
Library:	Patrick Hudnall
Raffles:	Jean Keiser
Hospitality:	Lulu Mae Leonard
Welcoming at Door:	Emma Lee Payne



We enjoy having you as a member. Spread the word – encourage someone you know to visit us - we always have room for more!

Membership dues:

Individual:	\$10.00
Family:	\$15.00
Student:	\$5.00



April Refreshments:

Refreshments for our next meeting will be generously furnished by Jean Keiser and Emma Payne. Come out and enjoy!



Our Next Guest Speaker – April , 2005

Martha Burg announces that our guest speaker for this month is **Bob Patterson**, General Manager of Southwest Fertilizer, 5828 Bissonnet, Houston, 77081.

Bob has provided us the following bio:
Has been the GM of SW Fertilizer for 15 years.



Grew up in Houston (Sharpstown), attended Sharpstown High School and has a Bachelor's degree in Political Science (you read correctly) from the University of Houston.

Member of the Houston Rose Society, Hibiscus Society, Plumeria Society.

Served on the Scott's Advisory Board as well as VPG (Fertilome/ Hi Yield).

Member of TAN (Nurseryman) and TALC (Landscape Contractors)

Has completed the Harris County Master Gardener course.

President of the Friends of Linkwood Park Council.

President of the Knollwood Village Civic Club

Active in Church (St.Lukes Presbyterian Church)

Has spoken to over 100 groups in the Houston area.

Married with 2 dogs.



Field Trip Reports: March 19, 2005

We are blessed with two reports on the field trip. The following report was submitted by Walt Hesson:

A small, but enthusiastic band of pteridologists set out on a clear March morn in search of numerous native ferns. The site, **Little Thicket Nature Sanctuary**, is located some ninety minutes North-east of Houston. Located on 655 acres of diversified E. Texas vegetation, some 400 plant species have been found on the property.

The goal was to locate and identify some fourteen species of fern. Traversing several trails was facilitated by our hosts, Calvin and Connie Blakley of the Outdoor Nature Club. Calvin's skills in maneuvering a tractor and trailer assisted immeasurably.

The first fern found was one of the Grape Ferns (*Botrychium dissectum*) Considerable variation is found in this genus and the two species found in this area, *B. dissectum* and *B. biternatum* can provide for a difficult call - especially, when there are two forms of *B. dissectum*.

Moving on into a ravine known as "The Chasm," a multitude of Netted Chain Fern (*Woodwardia aerolata*) and Virginia Chain Fern (*Woodwardia virginica*) were seen. The *W. virginica* has only recently been found at this location - it has normally been found farther East. Rainfall of the past year has provided for a bountiful crop of moisture loving ferns.

At the next stop along a small stream, Cinnamon Fern and Royal Fern (*Osmunda cinnamomea* and *regalis*) were found. It was surprising that greater numbers of Southern Shield Fern (*Thelypteris kunthii*) were not seen. Along the trails a few specimens of Resurrection Fern (*Pleopeltis polypodioides*) were seen growing terrestrially and epiphytically. An unusually large specimen was observed in one location.

In ravines, large communities of Lady Fern (*Athyrium filix-femina*) held forth in greater numbers than most had ever seen. On well drained slopes many Christmas Ferns (*Polystichum acrostichoides*) were viewed displaying there dimorphic characteristics. Try as we would, we couldn't locate the Sensitive Fern (*Onoclea sensibilis*) which is sometimes confused with the Netted Chain Fern. Fertile fronds were not visible this early in the season.

During the lunch break a search (on hands and knees) was conducted for the tiny Adders-tongue (*Ophioglossum crotalophroides*), but it was not to be found.

Later in the day in some of the drier habitats, great numbers of Ebony Spleenwort (*Asplenium platyneuron*) were found. Surprisingly, only a few specimens of Bracken Fern (*Pteridium aquilinum*) were located.

The Japanese Climbing Fern (*Lygodium japonica*) was not found, which is very unusual in this habitat. Considered by many to be an invasive weed, many have been intentionally destroyed.

By mid-afternoon, with a score of eleven found to fourteen searched for, a happy, but tired group headed back to the city.



Following is a report by Larry Rucker:

Our March meeting was a fieldtrip to the **Little Thicket Nature Sanctuary**. It is a magnificent 700 acre piece of property 11 miles west of Cleveland Texas.

I want to thank Walt and Carolyn Hesson for setting up the trip and a special thanks to Calvin and Bonnie Blakely for being our guides.

Seven of us Fern Society members and the Blakelys took off into the woods on a beautiful Saturday morning and Mother Nature showed us her bounty. Walt commented that due to the wet winter that this was the most ferns that he had ever seen there. It was truly amazing how huge seep areas were literally covered in Netted Chain Fern and the banks of the creeks were loaded with wonderful tufts of Lady and Southern Shield Fern.

We enjoyed our picnic at 12:30 and then loaded back on the tractor trailer and took back out into the woods to see what else we could discover. How quickly time travels when your having fun and before we knew it it was 4:00PM.

In all we found 10 different species: Cutleaf-Grape Fern, Cinnamon Fern, Royal Fern, Christmas Fern, Bracken Fern, Southern Shield Fern, Ebony Spleenwort, Lady Fern, Netted Chain Fern and Virginia Chain Fern.

Cecil, Malcolm, Susan, Al and I had a truly wonderful experience and we all hope that Walt and Carolyn will consider taking us again.



NATIVE PLANT SPRING SYMPOSIUM 2005:

"Those other native Texas plants - Sedges, Ferns and Fern Allies, Cacti and Succulents and Grasses"

This program was presented in late February by Ladybird Johnson Wildflower Center and Native Plant Society of Texas. Nearly two hundred people attended on an inclement, rainy day.

Walt and Carolyn Hesson conducted two fern work shops which were well attended. Natural history, life cycle, morphology classification and identification were addressed, with major concentration on some of the lesser known ferns of Texas, primarily the *lithophytic* species.

Characteristics of some of those rock loving *pteridophytes* were reviewed in the display of some forty images.

Questions received were indicative of the growing interest in the ferns and fern allies.