



# Texas Gulf Coast Fern Society

June 2006

Vol. 8, No. 06

<http://www.tgcfersoc.org>

**Next Regular Meeting: Sunday, June 18, 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:

Hi Everyone!

It's certainly a hot summer here again, but wasn't that soaking rain we got last week much needed?

Our weather sure does make growing ferns a challenging exercise! I find one thing I have to guard against the most is thinking that potted ferns have gotten enough water, when in fact they have not. It's hard to believe that with 7 inches of rain the plants could still not have an adequate amount of water!! Other than the heat and its influence, another major factor is our humidity level. It has been going up and down and when we get under that 70-80 percent level, some of the finer leaf ferns take a beating. I have to make sure my Tree and Maidenhair ferns are getting enough moisture both in the pot and in the air to keep their fronds from crinkling. Setting the pot in a saucer with pebbles and water will help achieve this, but I find setting the plant down in water, tends to water log the root system and I have had bad luck with this. Larry Rucker, on the other hand, sets his potted tree ferns down in the water and has great luck. Part of the difference is the potting medium. I tend to be busy and away from home a lot so I tend to use soil that will stay moist that extra day. One thing to remember too is potted tree ferns can get root bound pretty quick, and will require more water.

I want to thank Walt and Carolyn Hesson for a great presentation on ferns most of us have not seen before. It was amazing to see some of the growing conditions these beautiful ferns can survive in. You would have thought only a rattlesnake would live there! I'm glad I don't live under those conditions, though some of those ferns would have been great to grow. Oh well, we can't have everything. Or can we???

Our guest speaker for the June meeting will be a tree expert with an emphasis on "urban tree growing". I know this is going to be a great meeting. For those whose yards are too sunny, maybe you will hear about the perfect tree to plant your ferns under. I know I'm lining up my questions.

In July we will be doing another hands-on program on Staghorns. We'll be dividing large, ball type Staghorns to make new plaques and we'll give out information on how to grow a large ball yourself. For TGCFS members, supplies will be provided free of charge, but, although we welcome as many non-members as can come and join our Society, we will request a fee to cover the cost of supplies. This will be great fun, and will be very informative.

We will also have a new plant of the month for members to try growing.

I'm looking forward to seeing each of you,

Darla



### Membership dues:

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

Our Treasurer will be available to collect dues and membership applications at our meetings or you may mail your payments to:

Cecil Strange, Jr.  
12002 Palmton  
Houston, TX 77034

Please make your checks payable to Texas Gulf Coast Fern Society or simply TGCFS.

Members: - Spread the word – encourage someone you know to visit us - we always have room for more!

### 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



### New Members

The May *Newsletter* incorrectly and incompletely identified one of our new family members. The correct names are:

**Laurie and Shiela Skov and son, Russell**

Your editor regrets the error.





### Library

We encourage you to take advantage of the great resource of information available in our library. At each meeting there are take-home sheets that contain a brief review of available books. Also at each meeting is a wide variety of books and videos available for immediate checkout.



### Refreshments

Refreshments for the June meeting will be provided by Ted and Jean Richardson.

Thanks to Sandy Chase, Lulu Mae Leonard and Larry Rucker for supplying the delicious refreshments at the meeting in May.



### Speaker for June

Our speaker for the June meeting is Margarate Swearinger, an arborist with Urban Harvest. "M.C.", as she is fond of being called, is going to elaborate on the benefits of the urban forest and the value of even a single tree in an urban landscape.



### Fern of the Month for May 2006

By: Patrick Hudnall:

At May's meeting, plugs of *Pteris (nipponica)* 'Albolineata' were provided to all members present. They are a small to medium fern with short to medium creeping rhizomes. *Pteris albolienata* is distinguished by a pale band of tissue on both sides of the pinna midrib. It has an open and spreading habit. These ferns are native to Japan and are not tropical in nature. They are hardy in the Houston area. These ferns have naturalized in parts of Florida. Like many ferns they should be given less water during cool and cold times of the year. Ref. *Fern Grower's Manual*, Hoshizaki & Moran.



### More on Spores

An Update by Patrick Hudnall:

A couple of months ago the TGCFS held a workshop on growing ferns from spores. We were generously provided with spores by Donna McGraw. Members and guests had the opportunity to inoculate three cultures, each with spores from *Aglamorpha heraclea*, *Platyserium coronarium*, and *Microsorium mesmembranii-folium*. Progress on the spores were shown at the May meeting, and it was determined that the germination rate from member to member was uniform. The best results were found on the *P. coronarium* cultures with plantlets in the 10-20ea range. Both the *A. heraclea* and *M. mes* had very limited germination, generally less than 5. I consider these results, while not especially good, typical for spore of unknown age. I strongly encourage members to experiment on their own using whatever spore is available from uncommon ferns. If you are going to go through the effort to raise ferns from spores, grow plants you wouldn't find at Home Depot. However, if you have had very poor results thus far, I encourage you to try using spore from *Cyrtomium falctum*, *Microlepidia strigosa* or one of the *Pteris* species to help build your confidence and workout problems as these are strong and fast growing from spores.

Like any small plant it is best to hold the moisture and light levels steady during development. Keep an eye out for formation of any mold or algae in your culture and address it ASAP. Also, keep an eye out for fungus gnats whose larvae damage young roots. Use fungicides and algacides as appropriate and yellow sticky paper or *Bacillus thuringiensis* for the gnats.

Usually when the small plants, either prothalli or sporophytes, are large enough to handle with tweezers, they can be transplanted into a larger container. Prepare your container by sterilizing it with boiling water. I use a planting mix of about 25% perlite and 75% pure milled peatmoss. I recommend pouring boiling water through the mix or moistening it with bottled water then microwaving it. I usually use 6" square Tupperware type containers or plastic shoeboxes. Once your set up is sterilized, use tweezers to separate little clumps of plantlets about the diameter of a pea and plant them into your mix level with the soil. Keep the little plants moist while working. When you have moved all the plants into your container mist the plants well and you can seal the top with plastic stretch wrap. Your mix should be kept moist but not wet.

At this stage of growth growing the plants under artificial light seems to work well, but if you have a north or northeast facing window placing your container near the window may work well. If you have a perfect seal you may not have to water for months. But I have had best luck misting the little guys every few weeks. Again, maintain the mix moist, not wet. And keep in medium light as too much light will promote algae and too little will promote fungus. Too much light and they will burn; too little light and they will die.

There are a great many ways to grown ferns from spores. I highly recommend reading about the process in one of the Society's books that you can check out of our library or in your own, such as the *Fern Grower's Manual* by Hoshizaki & Moran.



### Attention, Attention, Attention!!!

Darla wants to remind anyone that took tickets for the Orchid Society event at the George R. Brown Convention Center in May that you must either return unsold tickets or bring in the money. Any unaccounted for tickets will have to be paid for by us, out of our treasury. So, as this notification applies, search deep!

