



August 2023

Vol. 25 No. 8

<http://www.tgcfernsoc.org>

Our meeting this month will be “blended” by meeting in-person at the Judson Robinson, Jr. Community Center (2020 Hermann Dr., Houston, 77004 and/or via *GoToMeeting* – member’s choice.

TGCFS MISSION STATEMENT

Organized in 1998 by a group of fern enthusiasts (a.k.a. fern lovers, fernies, pteridologists), to cultivate, foster and promote interest in ferns and fern allies, the TGC Fern Society presents educational programs including “how to” sessions, presentations by local, national and internationally known fern experts, and field trips and tours-thus providing a forum for fern enthusiasts to visit, learn, share plants, ideas, information, and have a good time. A very informative monthly newsletter is published for members, and special events include presentations to other groups, fundraiser events, and a year-end holiday season party. **Regular meetings are held at 2:00 P.M. on the third Sunday of each month at the Judson Robinson Jr. Community Center, 2020 Herman Drive, Houston, TX, 77004. Phone (713) 284-1994.**

A message from our President:

Hi everyone!

First off, I want to comment on this heat wave we have been in now for a while. I hope everyone is being careful and not getting too hot. This is seriously hot and even though we are used to hot summers here in the Houston area, this is setting records. As we get older, we need to know our bodies don’t process the heat the way it did when we were younger. Stay hydrated with water, and other fluids, but we must have our water. Our bodies are made up of 70% water and we have to have it at our cell level, kidneys etc. to stay healthy. Stay cool during the hot part of the day. If any of you are having issues with air conditioning or needing help in anyway, please let me know! We want everyone to be safe!

I know this extreme weather we have been experiencing the last couple years has taken a toll on some of our plants and certainly has been a bit depressing. I know I’m watering every day, with Joes help, and we still have plants that are saying enough already. For us, our ferns over all have gone through this well. I guess that why they are in the oldest plant group is because they know how to survive. I did not say they were happy but they are hanging in there. So don’t get depressed this summer, our ferns will reward us once things cool down and they are all happy again. Just don’t overwater them. That will kill them!!

On a lighter note, I hope everyone enjoyed listening to Darryl Ruprecht on his discussion of the *Platycterium*s of Australia and Papua New Guinea. It was interesting to hear the explanation of the staghorn vs the elkhorn, Aussie style. As a refresher, the big single *Platycterium* is the staghorn *P. superbium* and the elkhorn is the one that pups the *P. bifurcatum* and then the *P. veitchii*, the silver elkhorn. I

know that is so confusing for us, and why we use the botanical names. For those that ordered his book, you got a great discount and the books will be in before the meeting, I hope. They arrived in the US on 27 July and still have not cleared costumes. The shipping came out to \$12 for those that bought.

This month’s meeting has been requested by many of our members that participated in a project we did a few years ago. Ceil and Rick Dow will be leading this project. It will include a PowerPoint presentation. Also, they will be bringing the supplies and will be teaching everyone how to make stepping stones with ferns pressed into the cement to add to your fern gardens. It really is a lot of fun and a nice take-home to enjoy for years to come. So, wear clothes that can get dirty and we will have a blast!!! If you have a favorite fern you want to press for your project, select a very thick leaf so it can sink into the cement and hold its form. I will be bringing a selection of fern fronds for you to choose from as well. This is fun and a great time to visit and learn more about ferns.

The fern society has lost our hospitality chair. Larry Rucker has stepped down from this duty. We/I would like to thank Larry for taking on this position since we returned to meeting in person. We have eaten very well this past year and a half, but the board decided that to reimburse Larry for expenses each month may not be in line with our 501c3 non-profit requirements. If anyone can show the board this could be allowed, please bring the documentation in so we can review it. Larry was spending up to \$60 a month and it really was getting expensive for him to continue. We are looking for a chairperson. Keep in mind, Larry cooking was not required! What we do need is a chairperson that will make sure everything is covered by our membership. A

good signup sheet and maybe a follow-up phone call to make sure everything is covered. Food and developing friendships had always been a big part of our society. We share plants and knowledge, but over a nice bite to eat. I hate to see us not have that part of the meeting. This month's meeting is Pot Luck so we need everyone to step up and bring something including something to drink. Drinks have been a problem for a long time. So, you might want to plan on bringing what you like to drink and an extra to share. If you want to call me and let me know what you would like to bring that's great too. 281-733-5564 Darla

As you are aware our membership chair stepped down back in March at the height of renewals. Beth Ayer stepped up to fill in until we get a replacement. Beth is treasurer and had done membership for many years. However, she let me know at the board-meeting last month she will be stepping down and we need someone to take over membership. This is a big job, I know. I'm thinking that maybe we should make it a position with two people working on it. This would be through the end of this year unless you would like to continue with it for next year too. **This is a must have chair! We must have someone volunteer to take this duty on.** Your name will go on the membership form and the renewing members and new members will give you their dues and any updates to their email, phone etc. information. Then you will relay the money to the treasurer and keep track of who is current and who is delinquent. If you can do this on a spreadsheet it would be easily given to the next membership chair. We have a current excel list that is up to date. If you can do it on an excel sheet then by hand can be done too. **We need this job filled ASAP.** Please phone me for further information. 281-733-5564; Darla Harris.

We have posted our meetings for the remaining part of the year, and we have already got a good start for next year with programs and projects!

We would like to get a volunteer for the December party. Please!

Remember that societies are as good as we make it and it takes everyone to help!
For those local that still have not started to attend in person again, we do miss you!! You are missing out on lots of ferns and friendships!!

For those that are not well right now, know we are thinking of you!!

Can't wait to get you back to the meetings so we can give you a hug!!

See you soon!!! Take care and stay hydrated,
Darla



Sunday's Topic:

Hands-on Project: Garden Steppingstones with Fern Impressions

Project leaders: Ceil and Rick Dow



Calendar of Events for Remainder of 2023

Darla advises the following events planned for this year:

September: Hardy ferns for the Houston area - native and other. To be presented by Darla Harris
October: Field trip to Mercer - lead by Jacob Martin, greenhouse manager

November: Agloorpha / Drynaria with Demo station on dividing. Examples of several. Darla Harris and demonstration by Patrick Hudnall

December Party: TBD. Still need a host.



Dues!

Dues are still payable for 2023.

Your dues may be paid in person at a meeting or sent by mail to: Beth Ayer (hopefully temporarily), 5815 Portal Dr., Houston, TX 77096.

Checks should be payable to: **Texas Gulf Coast Fern Society (TGCFS).**

If you have any questions about the status of your dues, please contact Beth Ayer at either: beth.ayer@yahoo.com or 713.729.0994 (landline; you may leave a voice mail message) or Alicia Baker – See attached Membership form for further information.



2023 Officers and Committees:

President:	Darla Harris
Vice President:	Patrick Hudnall
Secretary:	Ceil Dow
Treasurer:	Beth Ayer
Board Members-at-Large:	Ruby Adams Ken Warren
Education Chair:	Darla Harris
Hospitality Chair:	TBD
Library:	Fred Robinson
Membership Chair:	TBD
Newsletter:	Paul Geiger
Spore Exchange:	Patrick Hudnall
Ways and Means:	Larry Rucker
Raffle, Store, etc.	Rick Dow
Web Master:	Malcolm McCorquodale
Welcoming at Door:	TBD





2nd Quarter 2023 Treasurer's Report
April 1, 2023 to June 30, 2023

Income:

Dues: \$230.00
 Raffle: \$206.00
 Donations: \$38.01
 Interest: \$5.15

Expenses:

Program Expense: \$361.00
 Plants/Books: \$50.00

Balance on 06-30-2023: \$14,902.11
 Balance on 12-31-2022: \$14,691.46
 Net gain for 2Q23: \$68.00
 Net gain/Loss for 2023: \$210.65

Beth Ayer



The American Fern Society (AFS)

The American Fern Society is over 120 years old. With over 900 members worldwide, it is one of the largest international fern clubs in the world. It was established in 1893 with the objective of fostering interest in ferns and fern allies. It exchanges information and specimens between members via their publications and spore exchange.

AFS non-professional membership (\$20) includes access to the Spore Exchange and subscription to the Fiddlehead Forum.

Professional membership (\$40) includes the benefits above plus access to the American Fern Journal.

Please note that donations to the AFS are not tax deductible.

To find out more about the Society and/or join, visit <https://www.amerfernsoc.org/>



Minutes of Blended Meeting via "GoToMeeting" and In-person
July 16, 2023

Texas Gulf Coast Fern Society

Meeting was held at 2:00pm at the Justin Robinson Community Center in Hermann Park. Members unable to attend the in-person meeting could still participate through the "GoToMeeting" app.

President, Darla Harris, called the meeting to order at 2:03 pm. She thanked all those in attendance both in person and online. There were approximately 15 members present. There are 101 members in TGCFS currently. There were 140 members pre-Covid. During Covid, no dues were collected. Dues were resumed in 2022. In September, TGCFS will be 25 years old.

We need someone to host the December Holiday party. Malcolm McCorquodale volunteered his home again.

Online listeners are Jolanda Nel from South Africa. She has presented to the TGCFS before. Mauro Hoijemberg is from Argentina.

July 2023 Fern of the month:

Osmunda regalis var. spectabilis or American Royal Fern is a Texas native from the Panhandle to East Texas. Europe and Japan has Royal ferns too. This plant likes to be a bog plant and can grow in shadier areas. This fern will not grow inside. It looks like a maidenhair fern. It is deciduous but returns in March when the weather warms up.

Staghorn Ferns from Australia by: Darryl Ruprecht

He has written the book, "King of the Ferns": the Australian staghorn evolution. It is a reference book of tried and tested ideas, techniques, and processes to help the reader successfully grow staghorns from spore to adult. His next book will be : 'The Queen Staghorn' – A Platycerium journey through New Guinea. An intriguing experience through the interiors of both Papua New Guinea and Western Papua in search of the giant staghorn they call the Queen Platycerium wandae.

He helped his father grow plants in the family greenhouse. One day, they realized that they didn't really need a greenhouse because of the temperate climate in their area. He collected 30-40 staghorns during his time serving the army. He left the service and opened a pub. He kept the staghorns in the outside area of the pub so everyone could enjoy them. Eventually, he retired from the pub and started writing his book. The book took 5 years to finish.

Staghorns are the aristocrat of ferns. The Giant King Fern, Angiopteris evecta, has the spore frond ever found at 8 meters in length. Platycerium wandae is considered the largest of the Platyceriums. It grows close to the equator. Platyceriums are epiphytes and grow high up in the trees.

A common wives' tale is to place a banana behind the shield to fertilize it with micronutrients. Fertilizers also have micro nutrients. Yellow bananas attract unwanted insects. If you must throw a banana behind the shield, then use a black banana because insects do like it as much.

Common names used to describe Platyceriums are Staghorns, Elk Horns, Moose Horn Ferns. A P. bifurcatum rootball can hold 17 times its weight in water. Platycerium superbum came from the name Platy meaning broad, Cerus meaning horn and superbum meaning superb. All Platycerium have small white hairs that feel like felt. Do not rub the leaf because it wipes off the little hairs.

Shield fronds vs. fertile fronds: Sterile fronds are basal fronds and nest fronds. P. grande has 2 spore patches on its fertile fronds. State of quiescence: P. superbum grow 2 shield fronds in quick succession then grows very slowly to protect itself in cold weather.

P. bifurcatum is also known has the Australian Elkhorn. Fronds are thin, long, and the ends are split. Some fronds split twice. Fronds grow outward. Multiple buds form a

colony. Shields turn brown which is a natural state. It grows in all types of forests even on trees at the beach.

P. hillii is also an Elkhorn. Grows in North Queensland and New Guinea. It has short stocky fertile fronds. Grows closed up because it lives in a rain forest jungle & this prevents it from getting too much water.

P. veitchii, the Silver Elkhorn Fern has silvery velvet hairs. Fertile fronds are long but erect. Grows in a desert climate with very hot temperatures. The silver hairs soak up water and repel light.

Buds of *P. superbum* and *P. veitchii*: Staghorns have one bud. Elkhorns have many buds and can form many colonies.

P. superbum 'cabbage' or dwarf Cabbage Stag is not a separate species from *P. superbum* but a different form or variety according to DNA analysis.

P. superbum grows on the fringes of the rain forests and *P. biforcatum* grows in the inside depths of the rain forests.

Problems with *Platycerums*: Aphids grow among the fronds. Spiders prey on the aphids. But spiders eat only 5 or 6 aphids a day so alcohol wipes are an easy remedy to swab down the aphids. Wash the alcohol off the fronds with a fine mist of water.

White scale should be removed promptly. Ants carry female scale to frond. Remove white scale and the brown female scale. Ants eat the honey dew that the scale creates. The granular form of Bayer Rose Food with systemic insecticide will get rid of the scale. Repeat about every 6 weeks on staghorns. Do not use it unless you see the scale. Can also use white label Orthene. Dip the fern in the Orthene and the scale is immediately killed. Bird's Nest Fern also susceptible to scale.

Seaweed & Fish Emulsion is a good fertilizer for Staghorns during the growing season.

Any Staghorn can get sun burned if grown in full sun. Even *P. veitchii* needs to be acclimated to full sun if brought out after winter.

Platyceriums are so popular because even though they are endemic to Australia, they are easy to grow and easy to propagate. It has also been in tissue culture for approximately 30 years.

His website is <https://kingoftheferns.com/> where fern enthusiasts can purchase his book.

July 16, 2023

TGCFS Board Meeting

President: Darla Harris, Vice President: Patrick Hudnall, Secretary: Ceil Dow, Treasurer: Beth Ayer, Board Members-at-Large: Ken Warren, Hospitality Chair: Larry Rucker, Library: Fred & Betsy Robinson and Web Master: Malcolm McCorquodale were present. Ruby Adams was absent.

*Regarding collecting member dues, there is a credit card issue. Checks are problematic. People want to use credit cards for dues but the credit card fees are too expensive. It

is 30 cents per transaction and up to 4% per transaction which is about \$1.04 for dues. If the member wishes to use their credit card, then they can pay the extra money and do not have to mail it in.

"Square" allows the ability to send an invoice. "Stripe" is not "point of sale". If doing point of sale like a box store or Mercer March Mart, most people want to swipe a card. PayPal is also an option. As a seller, PayPal want an extra fee to use it. PayPal also sends an invoice.

There needs to be a decision on which one to use. Darla uses Square and never had a problem. Square also gives you a transaction list every month. We do not want Venmo because they are having security problems. TGCFS will start in October which gives a little time to see which application is best. The next board meeting will decide on which service to use.

*Malcolm McCorquodale is looking at getting a new server for the TGCFS website.

*Patrick Hudnall brought up advertising. Ceil Dow will contact Brenda Beust Smith and give her information with this year's schedule.

*Refreshments: We need to scale back on food. We average 20 members attending the meeting. We were allotting \$25.00 for Larry Rucker's food supplies. However, Beth Ayer says that most 501C do not provide refreshments. Beth argues that if you do something that benefits the members, then it disqualifies the society from being a 501C. If something is expensive, then the members can be charged minimally.

We have money in the bank and we can be using it to get people to come back in person again. Patrick said that if no one brings anything then we go hungry. He doesn't come to the meetings to eat.

Larry says we always have been able to reimburse for supplies like paper goods. Beth does not want to pay \$25 for food supplies. Members are not bringing food to the meetings as much as they did pre-Covid. Unfortunately, Larry spent \$72.00 out of his own pocket for the party food supplies.

We need a new Hospitality Chair that will call members and remind them of the dish that they have signed up to bring. Another idea is to have 2-3 different people each month in charge of bringing refreshments and it is their responsibility to bring that month's refreshments. Refreshments create camaraderie. There will be no more \$25.00 reimbursements for food supplies.

Patrick motioned to reimburse Larry \$72.00 for the party refreshments. Ceil Dow seconded the motion.

Respectfully submitted by Ceil Dow.



Library

Please be reminded about the very nice collection of books in our library. It's easy to borrow a book for your use and home study. Please contact Fred Robinson, our Library

Chairperson. And please remember to return the books in a timely manner to allow others equal access.



June 2023 Door Prize

Bill Strawbridge was the lucky winner of a *Ocniopteris gibba*, aka: "Silver Lady".
Congratulations, Bill!



Fern of the Month - August 2023

Microlepia strigose – Lace fern

Submitted by Darla Harris

(Photos by Darla)

A lovely woodland fern without the spreading. Grows to about 2.5' tall and can be evergreen for the Houston area in normal winters. Cold winters like 2021 will go down and comes back in early spring.

Does well with morning sun and partial the rest of the day. Can be grown in full shade as well. Likes regular water in well-drained soil. Can be grown in a container too.

