



November 2023

Vol. 25 No. 11

<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!

The last six weeks or so has been really interesting, weather-wise. We came off the record-breaking highs for the month of October to mostly end summer. Then we had a couple days of fall, to drop right into winter with a near freeze and frost, and bounce into spring-like weather. My ferns are pushing new fronds like it’s the beginning of spring. Go figure! Growth I will take no matter what the calendar tells us! I hope everyone is experiencing the new growth on plants we thought might have succumbed to the unprecedented heat we went through this year. Well, we have winter to go, so don’t unbuckle your seat belt yet!! I do hope it’s a nice one though!

It was great seeing so many on the field trip!! It was our best attended since the pandemic so I hope we are back!! Jacob Martin really gave us a great tour and it was just a beautiful day! The plants were a bit stressed out from summer, but it was nice to know that, even with the small army they have they were still able to keep our plants happy.

We did get our officers elected for this coming year. So, everyone that was not there to vote, got elected! Check with me for what office you were elected to! Just kidding. We had a great response for taking on the board offices this year, as I hope we will have again next year. First, you’re stuck with me one more year. Darla Harris – President, Patrick Hudnall – Vice President, Ceil Dow -Secretary, Larry Rucker – Treasurer, Ruby Adams and Christopher Goodgame - Board at Large. Thank you everyone for serving the Society!!

This month’s meeting will be presented by Ceil and Rick Dow! our much-anticipated stepping stone with embossed ferns! For those on the field trip you got to see what had

inspired this project when we did it the first time many years ago. This will be fun and it’s always nice to visit and take something home with you! Don’t forget to dress for mess!!!

We would like to welcome another new member to our Society that joined at the Houston Garden Club Bulb and Plant Mart Patty Ahern.

We will be having our end of the year party at Malcolm McCorquodale’s home which is very centrally located. Mark your calendar for 17 December at 1pm and think about what you would like to bring as a food item. We do not have an official hospitality chair at the moment to head this up so please just let me know. We will have a sign-up sheet at the November meeting. Everyone else can email or text me. Remember those that are a single member you are welcome to bring someone with you as a guest. We will have our gift exchange which should be a fern or plant related item. We would like to keep the dollar amounts in the \$15-\$25 range.

Our January and February meetings are all set to teach us more about fern reproduction from spore. We will study the process and how it works in January, and have a hands-on class in February.

Christopher Goodgame is our new membership chair. Please make sure you have a membership form and a PO Box for him to mail in your renewals. It is posted on the Website and should be attached with this newsletter... We have a good bit of next year planned as far as talks and projects but if you have an idea please get with Patrick or myself and let us know what it is!

I’m looking forward to seeing you at the meeting in November. It will be in-person and virtual. We will be having a Board-meeting after the November program. Take care everyone, Darla



Dues!

Dues for 2024 are currently being collected. If your 2024 dues have been paid you should have received an email from Beth Ayer in September. If you have any questions about the status of your dues, please contact Christopher Goodgame at: chris.goodgame@protonmail.com.

Your dues may be paid in person at a meeting or sent by mail to: Christopher Goodgame, PO Box 66116, Houston, TX 77266. Checks should be payable to: Texas Gulf Coast Fern Society (TGCFS).



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:	Christopher Goodgame
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



Minutes of Field Trip Meeting October 15, 2023 Texas Gulf Coast Fern Society

Meeting was held at 10:30am at Mercer Botanic Gardens. The meeting was called to order at 10:35 pm by Darla Harris. Approximately 18 members present in person. Before the tour began, a business meeting was held to elect officers. Unfortunately, Cecil Strange has come down with Covid and is now in rehab facility in Pasadena. He will be unable to fulfill his duties as Chair of the Nominating Committee.

Slate of Officers for 2024:

President: Darla Harris
Vice President: Patrick Hudnall
Secretary: Ceil Dow
Treasurer: Larry Rucker
Board Members-At-Large: Ruby Adams & Christopher Goodgame

Ceil made a motion to accept all nominations. It was seconded by several members. The vote was unanimous.

The November meeting will feature “How to Make Stepping Stones”. This is a hands-on activity where members will create a 14” stepping stone with fern impressions. This activity will be tutored by Rick and Ceil Dow.

Jacob Martin led the tour throughout the gardens highlighting special plants and gardens. Jacob has been the Greenhouse Manager for MBG for 8 years.

*At the fountain in the main entrance is a beautiful pond. One day, a lady shows up to donate a 150 koi! Unfortunately, blue herons like to feast on them.

*The Papaya is dioecious. If neglected, it becomes male plant. If pampered, it will become a female plant. Cold tender. Plant it out in late February to get it to produce fruit that will ripen by end of season.

*The original Holly tree that Thelma Mercer grew is in decline. They are trying to save it along with all of the old specimens that Thelma and Charles collected when the property was their home.

*Maiden Hair Ferns really struggled in this year’s heat. Maiden Hair Ferns go dormant in the heat and are just now popping out. Thelma Mercer planted a Maiden Hair Fern which is still growing well. The Prehistoric Garden was developed around it.

*The Rumohra fern is originally from Yucca Do Nursery.

*Giant Leaf Anthuriums are planted in the first bed of the Tropical Garden. They are dug up before a winter freeze.

*Some tropical plants like the Red Tree Fern are covered with giant pots in the winter instead of digging them up.

*There are 5 native species of the Lime Pricklyash planted throughout the gardens.

*There is also a natural hybrid of a Castor Bean plant. Leaves are gorgeous with displays of deeply cut leaves. It has become well established.

*There are several varieties of bananas both edible and ornamental.

*The Buddha Belly Bamboo needs time to develop swollen nodes. Unfortunately, it has been severely frozen back but returns weakly in the following season.

*The Buddha Belly Jatropha is removed from the garden and overwintered in the greenhouse where it blooms profusely. It does lose 2/3rd of its leaves because it doesn’t like being moved.

*The Queen Crepe Myrtle is covered in fat pink blossoms. Treat these like Hibiscus. There are two varieties in the garden, a pink and a purple variety. Jacob takes cuttings every fall to ensure that he has plants just in case they do not return after a severe freeze.

*Plumbago plants are the easiest blue flower to grow in the landscape.

*Almond Verbena is very popular with park visitors because of its heavy fragrance.

**Ficus religiosa* or Bodhi tree is a sacred fig because Buddha sat under it when he attained Enlightenment.

Legend has it that it is bad luck to trim it. No gardener trims it because they don't want bad luck.

*Big Mike Banana or Gros Michel Banana was once the most popular banana variety in the world exported all over the world and grown in Central America. Unfortunately, in the 1950's, a Panama disease devastated the crop. *Fusarium oxysporum* is a fungus that causes a wilt. It was mu

*Tropical Magnolia is a fragrant, orange flowering. It grows well even if frozen back.

*Neem Oil Tree is considered one of the miracle trees of the world. Every part of the tree can be used. Can come back after a freeze. When taking cuttings, the middle section of the woody parts root & grow more easily.

*Mercer is currently remodeling the Bog Garden. They have built a beautiful waterfall with creative concrete work. They will plant many different varieties of ferns to make it look more natural.

**Amorphous paeonifolius* or Elephant Foot Yam has brain-like flowers in the spring. The corms are used as edible food crops in some Asian countries.

*Japanese Painted Fern is planted in a bed that stays very wet. Unfortunately, because the bed is so wet, the Camellias that are grown there are not thriving. Mother Ferns are also planted in this garden. They do well there and seem to be very hardy.

*Tongue Ferns have slow-growing, creeping rhizomes. The rhizomes grow on top of the ground.

*Rigid Lace Fern grows short & tight. Jacob wants to plant more of it in the garden because of its texture.

*Dwarf Chinese Elm makes great bonsai because of its tiny leaves.

*For various reasons, some Cycads seem to die but return even after 2 years so don't give up on them.

**Acer skutchii* or Guatemalan Maple Tree is supposed to be a hardy tall Maple. It took this year's heat very well.

*The Loblolly Pine situated behind the Big Chair in the Children's Garden is supposed to be 105 years old.

*The Wine Cork Tree has spongy bark. The bark is harvested every nine years.

*Dwarf Loblolly Pine is actually a Witch's Broom. Witch's Brooms are abnormal growths in the branches of the Loblolly Pine tree caused by pests, diseases or mutations. When glancing upward into the branches of the Loblolly Pine tree, witch's brooms are often distinguished by the dark green, compact branches with shorter needles and smaller cones. Some gardeners shoot these branches down and root them to make a dwarf Loblolly Pine.

(In the 1960's, North Carolina researchers grew the seeds of a Witch's Broom to find that the offspring developed into the dwarfed trees. The dwarfs only grow to 20' where the standard grows to over 60'.)

*Starfish stapelia or starfish cactus eventually becomes root hardy. Blooms look like an ugly starfish.

*Plant or scatter Bluebonnet seeds now.

*In the native bog garden, there are 3 species of moss: Spanish Moss, Ball Moss & Bailey's Ball Moss. Bailey's Ball Moss grows in the King Ranch area. It is a threatened species because of a loss of habitat. They are taking precautions so that it will be saved on the King Ranch.

*Tea Tree Oil survived over several years of severe freezes. It took this year's heat well. It survived many floods and droughts.

*Monk's Pepper Tree or Chaste Tree was used by monks of long ago. They used the dried seed husks to decrease libido.

*Worm Wood has been used to treat intestinal worms as far back as Ancient Egypt. It is taken as an extract or teas. Leaves produce the oil and extract is derived from the entire plant.

After the tour of the gardens, the entire TGCFs group drove over to the new MBG greenhouse complex. There are 3 distinct greenhouses: The Tropical House, Color House and Production House.

*The Tropical House contains tropical orchids, ferns, gingers, Costus specimens, anthuriums, bromeliads and rare Alocasias.

*The Production House is where he roots, grows then moves out of the area so that plants are hardened off.

*The Color House is where the four-inch color plants are grown to be planted in the display gardens.

*The water of the house in the greenhouses comes out at 7.6 ph and 700 psi. It is city water. The old greenhouse complex used well water which was superior to today's city water.

Jacob kindly gave plants away at the end of the tour.

Some members gathered together for lunch at the La Cabana restaurant on FM 1960.

Members present at the Mercer Botanic Gardens tour:

Pat Hudnall
Anne & Bob Swanson
Barbara Stewart
Malcolm McCorquodale
Ken Warren
Carol Smith & Larry Smith
Chris Goodgame
Claudia Leffler
Fred Robinson
Betsy Robinson
Jacqueline Smith
Larry Rucker
Darla Harris
Joe Harris
Rick Dow

Respectfully submitted by Ceil Dow.



New Member:

At your first opportunity, please welcome our newest TGCFS member: **Patty Ahern.**

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/>

Fern of the Month - September 2023

Phymatosorus scolopendria

Submitted by Darla Harris

(Photos by Darla)

The Australian species (*Phymatosorus scolopendria*) has been in Hawaii so long it is considered by many as a native, then again, all Hawaii was a lava-formed island in the Pacific so what could be native. I feel most if not all plants there were brought in one way or another. Spore dispersal is a likely way it could have gotten a good foot hold there. This lovely, robust fern grows just about anywhere, from new lava fields to dense forests. It can be easily spotted everywhere as it is used all over the islands, nestled within resort landscaping.

The P scolopendria is native to tropical and subtropical old-world areas. It is from the warmer areas of the world being a zone 10 and higher for its cold tolerance. In nature it grows as an epiphyte in areas that can have seasonally dry times.

It likes bright light and can be grown in a lot of sun down to dappled shade. It is a slightly acid fern, growing about 1-2feet tall and about the same size wide. Does well in a hanging basket. It has a nice green rhizome that the fronds sprout out of. The leaves are of thick nature and sturdy and works well as a potted indoor plant for winter or year-round.

Worth growing for sure!



The Mercer Gardens Field Trip
Photos by Darla Harris and Betsy Robinson



The above pictures depict honored members of both Mercer Botanical Gardens and the TGCFS.

