Texas Gulf Coast Fern Society

June 2025 **Vol. 27 No. 06**

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. **Doors open at 1:30pm and regular meetings begin at 2:00pm on the 3rd Sunday of each month at the Judson Robinson Jr. Community Center, 2020 Herman Drive, Houston, TX, 77004. (713) 284-1994.**

A message from our President:

Hi Everyone,

A wise friend of mine reminded me of the importance of staying in touch and just checking in on each other. It makes everyone involved feel happy. I have always felt like that, I tend to check in on people from time to time. Might be only once a year (life does get busy) but I reach a point if feel I must check in. This month we get that chance in person! We will be having our Fern Society Summer Party! What better time to check in on all our friends so please if you have missed a few meetings for whatever reason, please come to the party so we can all get caught up with each other.

The party will be hosted by Bob and Anne Swanson's home, a map to their home and address will be further in the newsletter and a list of food that was signed up for at the last meeting so you can see where we need fill in. Looks like appetizers and sides are needed. **The party will Start at 1pm** we will visit a bit and then dig in. Please join us. Those that are single memberships remember you can bring a friend with you. **Mark the date, it is the 4th Sunday of June (22nd)**

July will be our meeting on Filmy Ferns, by Dan Yansura.

The field trip went very well. Thank you, Adam Black, for making the trip a memorable day. We saw several native ferns and lots of other plants too. We had good turnout and all went well. For those that missed the trip look at Ceils notes on the trip. Lots of photos.

I would like to welcome the new members that joined our society from the PlantCon event. We have a great bunch of members and you will feel welcomed from the very first meeting. Please come join us at the Party and get a head start on knowing everyone.

We have a great schedule for the remaining part of the year for our talks and activities including our fun project with ferns, we will get the dates set and all will be listed in the next newsletter.

I'm looking forward to seeing everyone.

See you soon,

Darla

Dues!

Dues for 2025 are currently being collected. 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).

2025 Officers and Committees:

President:	Darla Harris
Vice President:	Carolynne White
Secretary:	Ceil Dow
Treasurer:	Larry Rucker
Board Members-at-Large:	Anne Swanson
	Christopher Goodgame

Education Chair:	Darla Harris
Hospitality Chair:	Anne Swanson
Library:	Fred Robinson
Membership Chair:	Christopher Goodgame
Newsletter:	Christopher Goodgame
Spore Exchange:	Patrick Hudnall
Ways and Means:	Larry Rucker
Raffle, Store, etc.	Rick Dow
Web Master:	Malcolm McCorquodale
Welcoming at Door:	TBD

Field Trip to Watson Rare Native Plant Preserve

May 17, 2025

Texas Gulf Coast Fern Society

Field Trip to Watson Rare Native Plant Preserve located at 527 CR 4777, Warren, Teas 77664 in Lake Hyatt Estates.

Watson Rare Native Plant Preserve was founded by Geraldine Ellis Watson (1925-2012). She was a renowned botanist, author, artist and environmental activist. She played a leading role in the creation of the Big Thicket National Preserve.

Most of the water in the area comes from Hickory Creek. However, the small lake in the area is a man-made lake and fed by rain. The Preserve gets 50"- 60" of rain each year. All soils in the area are sandy. The volunteers create a controlled fire every December or January. This helps to control the growth of the underbrush. There are about 7 acres burned.

Adam Black led the tour and shared boundless information throughout the tour. Our Preserve guides were John Dillinger and his lovely wife, Terry. John has volunteered at the Preserve since 2018. Terry is a new volunteer.

Plants found in the Preserve:

Wild Ginger ***(Asarum canadense)*** is native to this area. It is known as Wild ginger because it has a fleshy rootstock that smells like the true culinary ginger, ***Zingiber officinale.***

Cinnamon Ferns (***Osmunda cinnamomea***), Virginia Chain Ferns (***Woodwardia virginica***), and Royal Ferns (***Osmunda regalis***) are the dominant ferns in this area.

Coastal Sweet Pepperbush ***(Clethra alnifolia)***, is a narrow, 6-12 ft., deciduous, multi branched shrub. Blooms appear in summer with upright clusters of fragrant white flowers. Flowers are followed by brown capsules which persist through winter.

Chapman Orchids ***(Platanthera chapmanii)*** are some of the most beautiful blooming plants in the area. They bloom July through September and bear an inflorescence of 30-65 bright yellow and orange flowers arranged in a dense terminal raceme. Populations are located in wet meadows, roadside ditches, and pine flatlands.

Grass Pink Orchids (***Calopogon tuberosus***) bloom in May at the Preserve. The prominent hairs, the beard, on the lip identify it. It is grown in pineland bogs. It is known as Grass Pink because of the long, narrow, grass-like leaves. It grows 2 1/2-4 feet tall, with 2 or more flowers arranged along the stem. The blossoms are fragrant, rose-pink to pale orchid and are about 2 inches across. (see photo).

The Pale Pitcher Plant (***Sarracenia alata***) thrives in wetlands, particularly hillside seepage bogs in longleaf pine savannas.

Sundews (***Drosera sp.)*** are native to East Texas. The Sundew prefers acidic soils and is found in flatwoods, seepage bogs, and other damp areas.

Southern Maiden Hair Fern (***Adiantum capillus-veneris***) were found in low moist areas.

A Screech Owl nest was situated high in the canopy of a tree.

Grape Fern ((***Botrychium biternatum***) and the Cutleaf Grape Fern (***Botrychium dissectum***) are common in East Texas and are often found in wooded areas, especially where the soil is moist and shaded.

Native Fringe Tree (***Chionanthus virginicus***) is a small understory tree growing to 25 feet tall, with a slender trunk to 6" in diameter and upright branches that form a loose, irregular crown. Grows in loamy soils in the East Texas woodlands and generally grows in the shade of other trees.

Fraser Magnolia (***Magnolia fraseri***) is not native to East Texas but is grown as an ornamental tree. It grows best on rich, well-drained soil. It blooms with very large showy white flowers and large-leaved, coarse-textured foliage.

Ashe's Magnolia (***Magnolia ashii***) is a small deciduous tree with a broad, round top. It has leaves 2-3 feet long and sometimes a foot wide. They are wider near the tip than at the stem. The 6" blossoms are fragrant, creamy white, cup-shaped, opening out flat as they mature. This is a rare species of very local distribution. It is named for its discoverer, William Willard Ashe (1872-1932), pioneer forester of the United States Forest Service.

Old Man's Beard Clematis (***Clematis drummondii***) is a woody climbing vine with attractive flowers that are long blooming followed by feathery seed clusters.

Species is named for Scottish botanist, Thomas Drummond.

Scurfy Pea **(*Psoralidium tenuiflorum*).** Blooms with deep purple flowers that are mainly pollinated by small bees.

Singlestem Leather-root **(*Orbexilum simplex***), has lavender flowers and are found in the sandy soils of west Louisiana and east and southeast Texas.

Pyramid Magnolia (***Magnolia pyramidata*)**, is a slender, semi-deciduous tree that grows to 10-20 ft. Flowers are 3-5", showy, creamy-white and exude a strong turpentine scent.

Louisiana Iris is usually disease-free, blooms March-April & comes in an array of colors. Some varieties are native to Texas.

White Hardy Water Lily (***Nymphaea odorata***) is commonly known as the American White Waterlily. It is a perennial plant that thrives in medium to large ponds and lakes. It has solid green floating pads with blooms that are fragrant and pure white.

Red Milkweed **(*Asclepias rubra***) is the food source for the Monarch butterfly larvae. Grows in moist to wet acidic soils.

White-topped Sedge (***Rhynchospora colorata***), display striking whitish bracts that make it appear as if it has showy, daisy-like flowers.

Grass Leaved Lady's Tresses (***Spiranthes praecox***), is a member of the orchid family & native to Texas. It grows an inflorescence of up to 40 white or rarely green flowers. The inflorescence is covered in small hairs, and the labellum has distinct green veins. It can be found in dry to moist prairies, meadows, pinelands, and occasionally bogs.

Pineland Hibiscus (***Hibiscus aculeatus***), is a native Texas perennial wildflower with showy flowers that bloom from late spring to fall, transitioning from cream to yellow to pink. It thrives in moist or wetland habitats.

Red Chokeberry (***Aronia arbutifolia***), is a multi-stemmed shrub that can grow 6-12 ft. tall & commonly found in wet woods or swamps. In spring, multitudes of flat-topped clusters of white, five-petaled flowers with red anthers are displayed. In autumn, the berries mature to bright red, pear-shaped fruit. The name comes from the fruit's astringency, which makes the mouth pucker.

Jack-in-the Pulpit (***Arisaema triphyllum***), is found in rich, moist, deciduous woods. The flower is an unusual green and maroon striped spathe surrounding a fleshy, maroon-colored spadix that bears tiny, embedded flowers. The showy, bright red berries have the consistency of ripe tomato, and are an attractive food source for birds such as thrushes, rodents, etc.

Water-spider Orchid **(*Habenaria repens*)**, is a member of the Orchid family. The inflorescence has 10-50 f arranged in a densely flowered raceme. The sepals are light green and the petals and lip of each flower are a greenish white. The labellum is lobed with a spur up to 13 mm in length. Habenaria repens blooms throughout the year in wet ditches, meadows, marshes and along shorelines.

Southern Maiden Hair Fern
Adiantum capillus-veneris

The Pale Pitcher Plant
Sarracenia alata

Grass Pink Orchid
Calopogon tuberosus

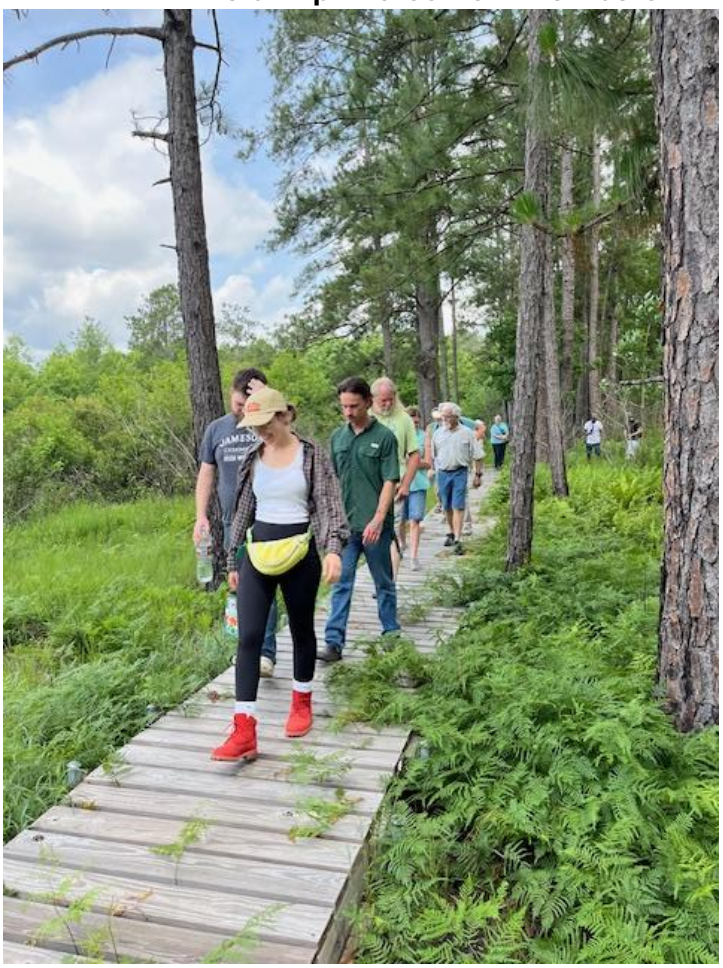
Geraldine Watson's home amongst a field of Bracken

Respectfully submitted by Ceil Dow.

Red Milkweed
(Asclepias rubra)

White Hardy Water Lily
(Nymphaea odorata)

WRNPP Field Trip Photos from Members



Cinnamon Fern
(Osmunda cinnamomea)

Royal Fern
(Osmunda regalis Regalis)

Southern Wood Fern
(Pelazoneuron kunthii)

Netted Chain Fern
Woodwardia areolata

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/

The May Meeting

May 18, 2025

Texas Gulf Coast Fern Society

The meeting was held at 2:00pm at the Justin Robinson Community Center in Hermann Park. The meeting was called to order at approximately 2:16pm by Darla Harris. Approximately 15 members were present. The "Go to Meeting" was streamed to members who could not make it to the in-person meeting. Two additional members attended the meeting online.

Membership fees are due now. Dues are $15 per couple, $10 for a single person and $5 for a student.

Anne & Bob Swanson have volunteered to host the June party. It will be held at 1pm on Sunday, June 22, 2025, at the following address:

5227 Starkridge Drive, Houston, Texas 77035

Westbury area, near Chimney Rock and West Belfort.

Diane & Patrick Hudnall will host this year's Christmas party.

This year's craft idea will need to be solidified soon. The July meeting will be on "Filmy Ferns".

The Plant Con show will be held on May 31. We will need someone to man the membership booth. Anne & Bob Swanson volunteered as well as Chris Goodgame.

Darla Harris noted that there were several ferns sighted on the field trip to Watson Rare Native Plant Preserve:

Woodwardia, ***Botrychium***, ***Ophioglossum***, ***Ligodium*** (Climbing Fern), ***Osmunda cinnamomea*** (Cinnamon Fern), ***Polystichum acrostichoides*** (Christmas Fern), ***Adiantum capillus-veneris*** (Southern Maidenhair Fern), ***Osmunda regalis*** (Royal Fern).

There were few mosquitos and it was an overall pleasant day. We explored Ms. Watson's private home that she built herself. It was in a beautiful quaint setting situated in a field of ferns.

Ferns, Lycophytes & Horsetails of Uruguay

Presented by **Adam Black**

Adam Black is the Director of Horticulture and Plant Conservation at Bartlett Tree Research Labs & Arboretum in Charlotte, North Carolina. He does research projects in Texas and around the world with a conservation focus. Surprisingly, it is easy to get plants out of Uruguay. Argentina & Brazil are more difficult. At the Bartlett Tree Research Laboratories Facility, they like to grow the plants outside. Some Tropicals can be grown there too.

He flew into the city of Montevideo, Uruguay. The trip was held in March & April of 2024. His companions were Roderick Cameron, Mark Weathington - Director of JC Raulston Arboretum, Andres Berruti - Botanist and Katie Bartush.

They traveled first to a man-made lake nearby that was surrounded by prairie. Some of the plants found there were:

Skeprostachys sp. is a greenish white terrestrial orchid.

Dorstenia brasiliensis is a member of the Ficus family with a round, cup-like receptacle that shoots seeds outward.

There were no ferns growing in the prairie. However, there were ferns growing in a ravine with a moist microclimate. ***Pleopeltis pleopeltifolia*** was found growing on the limbs of large trees. ***Asplenium sellowianum*** & ***Adiantum raddianum*** were found growing on the ground there.

Next, they traveled to Buria yatay. There were palms everywhere. Uruguay has established laws preventing

the removal of any palm trees. They eventually made it to the Uruguay River. There, they saw the following plants:

Cheilanthes micropteris is a tiny fern with sori tucked under the lip of the frond.

Dryopteris sp. and ***Pleiopeltis minima*** were growing down the face of a cliff.

Adiantopsis chlorophylla has a plastic feel to the frond.

Anemia tomentosa has a wide range. It is commonly cultivated. It has a forked fertile frond.

Traveled to the Northwest corner of Uruguay where they saw Rheas, an ostrich like bird, all over the area.

The topography got hillier. There were forests in the ravines and savannahs on top of the hills. Lots of Queen Palms were found there even though temperatures get down into the teens.

Selaginella sp. Found on some private property in the area.

Rumohra adiantiformis is found everywhere in Uruguay.

Pleopeltis lepidopteris is also found here. Its unique characteristic is that it is hairy.

Ilex paraguaiensis or Yerba Mate is the most cold hardy so wholesalers want it. It is a plant species of the holly genus native to South America.

Microgramma squamulosa is a cool fern that grows on trees. Fertile fronds & infertile fronds have a pretty veination pattern.

Anemia phyllitidis is totally hairless and glossy looking. Needs perfect drainage & a rock garden environment.

Doryopteris torentzii is a common fern in the area.

Niphidium crasssifolium is a strap-like fern. A lot of people grow it in Los Angeles.

There are 4 – 5 dominant ferns that grow in the ravines of the area like ***Dicksonia sellowiana***. These tree ferns only grow in very specific locations. It is a slow grower but grows into very large tree ferns. They are guarded because people want to steal them. ***Rumohra adiantiformis*** and ***Doryopteris lorentzii*** also grow here. ***Microgramma squamulose*** covers tree limbs.

There were ferns growing in the grottos. ***Doryopteris triphylla*** has thumbnail size fronds. When light hits it, they turned a luminescent blue. Fronds feel like plastic. They like to grow in mossy areas on rocks.

On top of the hills is a dry environment so there are a lot of cacti. The top of the hills look like Mesas because they are flat on top. The soil is Jurassic sandstone. There are endemic species that only grow in this area. ***Pleopteris lepidopteris*** likes really dry & rocky areas. ***Cheilanthes micropteris*** is a delicate tiny fern that grows in between the stems of cactus. ***Adiantopsis dichotoma*** is a teen tiny fern that grows here.

Other plants that grow in this area include ***Cypella fuscata*** which is a yellow iris. ***Erythrina crista-galli*** is a relative of the Coral Bean. It is the national flower of Uruguay.

Rodphiala (syn. ***Zephranthes***) ***bifida*** is the Oxblood Lily. There are ***Zephranthes*** all over the area.

Near the Brazilian border growing in the limestone outcrops, they saw ***Araucaria angustifolia*** which is a cousin of the Monkey Puzzle Tree.

Blechnum sp. is very common growing on the rocks.

Eryngium pristis is called the Rattlesnake Monster because it is thorny and grows in a basket shape.

Butia odorata grows here and is commonly cultivated in the U.S.

Along the coast, grow ***Colletia paradoxa*** which does not have true leaves but instead modified stems with lethal blades. Further along the coast, they found ferns growing in the cracks of rocks like ***Selaginella sellowii***, ***Collettia spinosissima*** and ***Adiantopsis tweediana***. They also saw ***Equisetum giganteum***, the giant horsetail which can grow to 10' & 15' tall. Got to a site that was very salty and ***Selaginella sp***. was growing in the salty water.

They settled at the hotel and cleaned the seeds before flying home. The group plans a second trip in February 2026. They will travel to different areas and private land. There were a lot of dormant plants because of a local drought.

Question & Answer

Q. How is transportation there?

A. Rented a car and it was easy to get around.

Q. Did you stay in tents?

A. No. They stayed in local hotels. So much easier to clean seeds and press herbarium specimens.

Q. How long did you stay?

A. 9 days.

Q. Does the government ask for reports?

A. Botanists work with the University so the government is OK with sharing material. It is just an exchange of knowledge. Unfortunately, the government there is not doing anything to preserve the plants or care about plant conservation.

Q. Since cold fronts can get into the teens, is this an average winter?

A. Not sure about temperature variants. Adam wants to go down there in winter. He has only been there in summer to get the best variety of seeds.

Q. What do you collect?

A. We are not focused on any particular plant group.

Q. How do you propagate seeds?

A. Initially, we germinate in containers. We have lots of greenhouses. In our arboretum, we are trying to do geographic plant collections. All plants grouped together according to country. Eventually we will have a conservatory.

Q. Is you research facility open to the public?

A. No. It is not open to the public but we are open to plant geeks. Unfortunately, he is not there a lot of the time.

Q. Is the Bartlett Tree Research Labs & Arboretum still family owned?

A. Yes. Its owner is a plant geek. He is 80 years old and funds plant expeditions. His nephew will take over eventually.

Larry Rucker won the plant raffle for a beautiful ***Doryopteris noblis.***

Respectfully submitted by Ceil Dow

Door Prize:

Larry Rucker wins the door prize, a Doryopteris nobilis!

From the Library:

Ferns: Lessons in Survival From Earth's Most Adaptable Plants; by Jacob Suissa and Fay-Wei Li; Hardie Grant Books; 2025; 192 pages; illustrated by Laura Silburn.

by Bob Swanson

This month's book is so cool I feel sorry for those of you who don't actually read my book reviews.

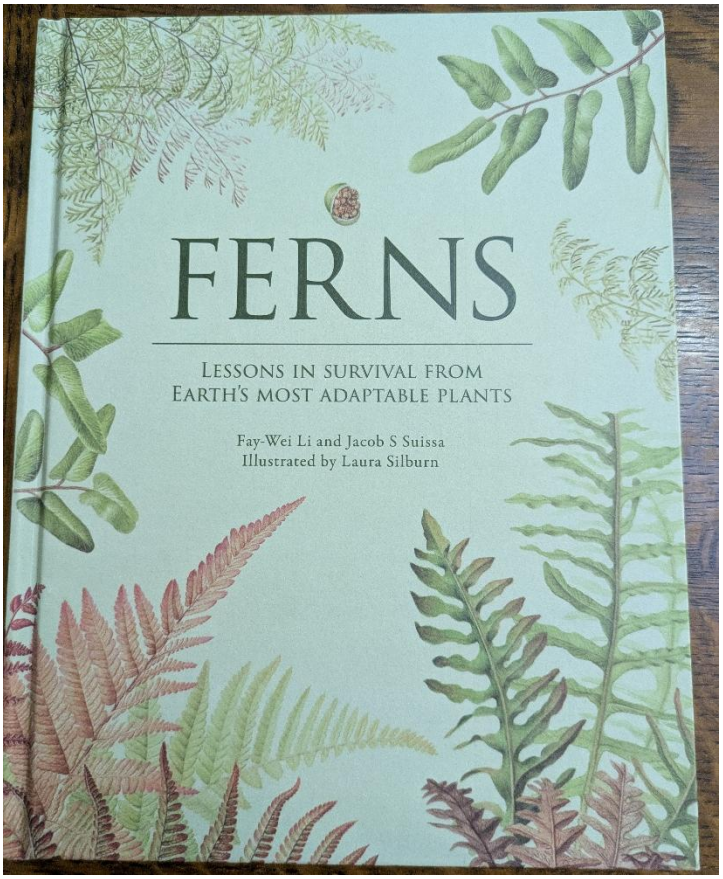
"Ferns: Lessons in Survival From Earth's Most Adaptable Plants" was published last month. This one is not a garden guide or an encyclopedia. It's a celebration of the natural history of ferns. We get information on paleobiology, a note that the word 'bracken' is from the Old Norse language, a chapter on ferns that are weeds, a description of Victorian-era Wardian cases (the first terrariums), and even a fern named after Lady Gaga.

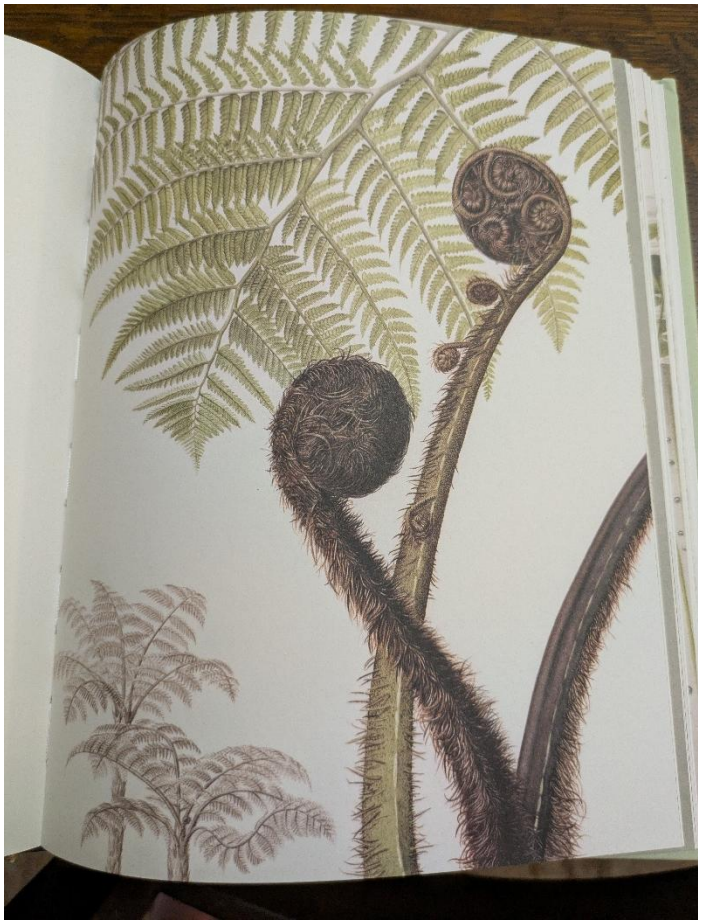
We learn that ferns have impressive genome lengths. The average flowering plant has 32 chromosomes. The average fern has 121. Ophioglossum reticularum has well over 1,400!

They throw in quotes from Martin Luther, Charles Darwin, Frederick Nietzsche, and this from John Muir: "Only spread a fern-frond over a man's head and worldly cares are cast out, and freedom and peace come in."

This book is beautifully made on very nice paper. The illustrations are lovely. Go buy this one from your independent local bookstore. I got mine at Brazos Bookstore*.

*This is not an affiliate link. No compensation will be received.





Name Change

Southern Wood Fern, which is a Texas Native, has gone by the name ***Thelypteris kunthii*** for a long time and now has a new name: ***Pelazoneuron kunthii***. So, change your name tags!

A Study of Platyceriums

By Darla Harris

Platycerium grande

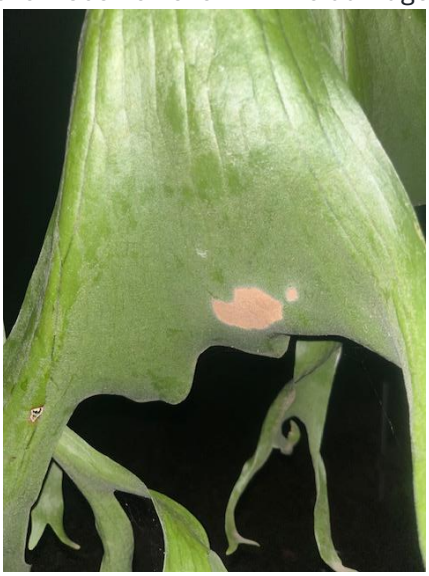
To continue with our study of Platycerium we will continue with the giant 4 we covered P superbum last month now for P grande.

Platycerium grande is a large fern that is endemic to the Philippines. The fern is often confused with P. superbum and the easiest way to tell them apart is with their fertile fronds. The grande has two spore patches on each set of fertile fronds, where the superbum has one.

The photo I posted here is of my own plant and it has only one showing per frond as it is a young fern still.

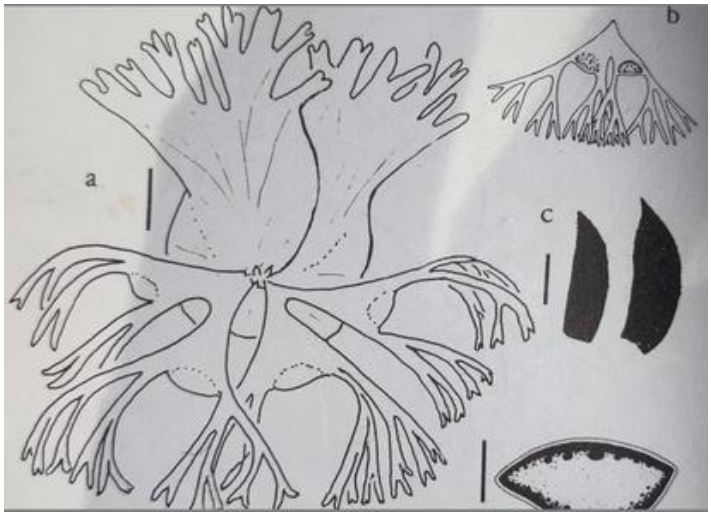
Growing P grande is pretty easy it likes bright conditions and warm climate, it does need to be protected from a freeze as does the other giants. My grande has been down to the low 30s however with no damage but not a freeze.

Platycerium grande with a spore patch



P. grande spore patch at night

P. grande



P. grande sketch

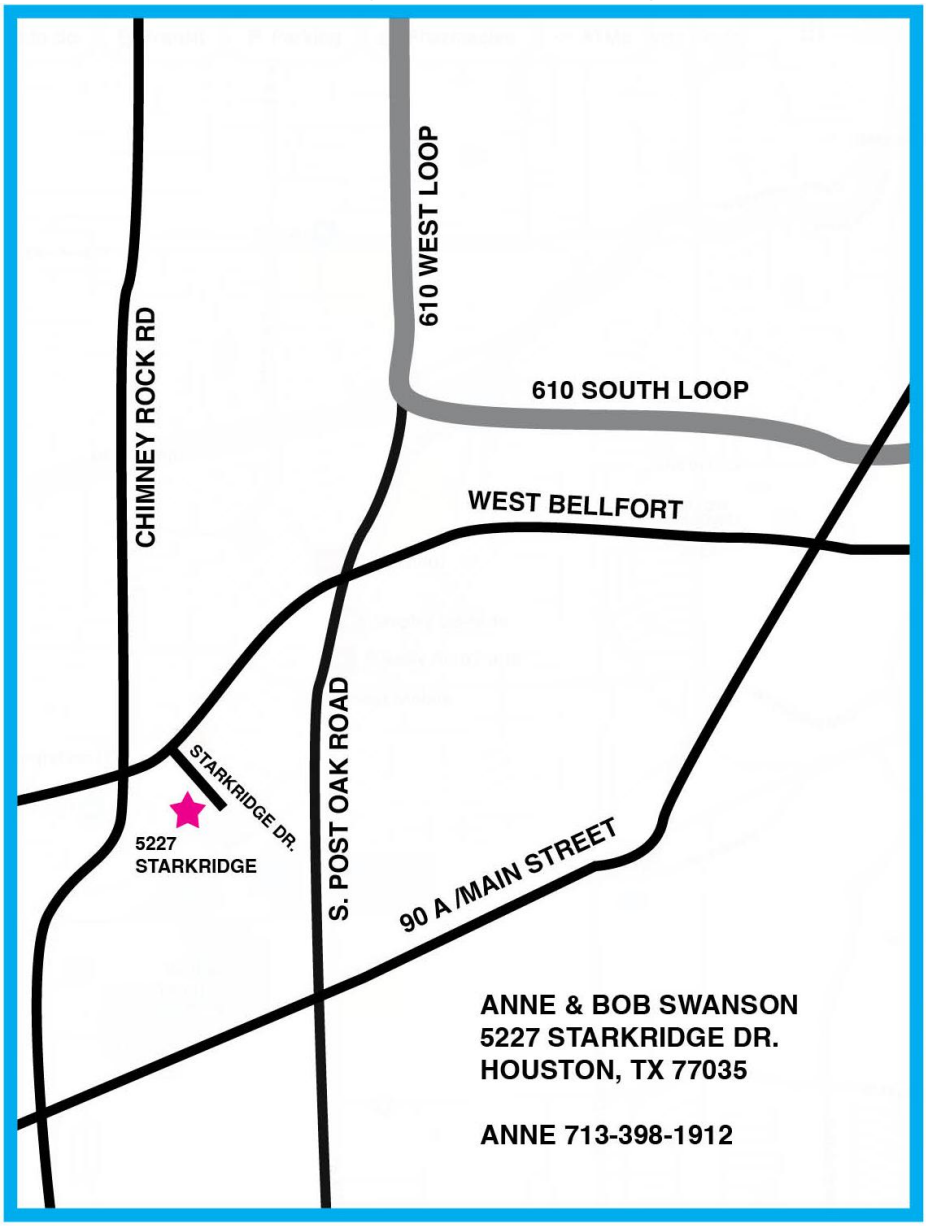
Food Signup List and Maps to the June Party

Currently the signups for food are:

Ceil & Rick Dow	Pasta Salad, Tiny Strawberry Pies, Tiny Cheesecakes
Larry Rucker	Pork Sliders
Carol Smith	Beef Brisket
Pat & Diane Hudnall	Chicken Enchiladas, Brownies
Darla Kinman Harris	Shrimp Popper Appetizer
Anne & Bob Swanson	Paper Goods, Beer/Wine/Beverages/Ice

The party will be hosted by Anne and Bob Swanson at their home at:

5227 Starkridge Drive, Houston, Texas 77035
On Saturday, June 22nd, 2025, at 1pm.



Below are a coupe of maps from the Judson Robinson Community Center