

# What's Growing On?

## BASTROP COUNTY MASTER GARDENER ASSOCIATION

June 2023

**Save the Date!!!**

**Bastrop County  
 Master Gardener  
 Fall Plant Sale**

**October 7, 2023**

**From 9am until sold out**



## Gossamer Wing Butterflies

By Wizzie Brown

Gossamer winged butterflies, family Lycaenidae, are the second largest family of butterflies after Nymphalidae. There are over 6,000 species in the world with over 100 species in North America.

Adults are small, usually under 5 cm, brightly colored, and often metallic. Many species will have tails on the hindwing. Larvae are flattened and slug-like and have a gland that releases a sugary substance similar to honeydew that is used to “bribe” ants for protection. Lycaenidae is split into 7 subfamilies, 3 of which are not found within the U.S.- Aphnaeinae, Portiinae, and Curetinae.

Family Lycaeninae, the coppers, are found in northern and western U.S., are small in size with a brilliant coppery orange on the upper surface of their wings. These butterflies aren't seen too much within the state, but can be found in more northern regions.



The hairstreaks, family Theclinae, are common throughout the state. They get their name from the “hairlike” lines crossing on under surface of the wings. Most hairstreaks have slender

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tails on their hindwings. The tails on the hindwing are paired with eyespots to make it look like a false head which can allow the butterfly to evade predators. Tropical species tend to be brightly colored while ours tend to be mostly gray or brown. The patterns of lines and spots on the underside of the wings are used for identification. Hairstreaks are fast flying and tend to dart around erratically. Males will defend territory around their perch areas.



Family Miletinae, the harvesters, has one species, *Feniseca tarquinius*, found in North America and Texas. The butterfly is orange with brownish-black borders and spots on the upperside of the wings. The underside of the wings are pale orangish-brown with dark brown spots with whitish rings. This butterfly's caterpillar is carnivorous, feeding on woolly aphids. Adults eat honeydew from aphids as well as fluids from tree sap, carrion, and dung.

The blues, family Polyommatae, get their name from the blue upperwings of many of the males. Females are more brownish with wide, dark borders and blue towards the body. Species identification is confirmed by the pattern of spots on the underwings. Blues flight is more fluttery, but they are able to dart away when needed. Males often gather at mud puddles and wet sand to get moisture, salts, and amino acids.

For more information or help with identification, contact Wizzie Brown, Texas AgriLife Extension Service Program Specialist at 512.854.9600.

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## **BECOME A MASTER GARDENER**

**Registration is now open for the Bastrop County Master Gardener Intern Training.**

The Master Gardener Program is a volunteer development program offered by the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, designed to increase the availability of horticultural information and improve the quality of life through horticultural projects. Master Gardeners are trained volunteers working with Texas A&M AgriLife Extension to provide residents with information on environmentally responsible gardening and landscaping. They provide unbiased, research-based information, problem-solving expertise and educational opportunities to residents.

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What sets Master Gardeners apart from other home gardeners is their special training in horticulture. In exchange for their training, people who become Master Gardeners contribute time as volunteers, working through their local Extension office to provide horticulture-related information to their communities.

Since our inception in 2016 Bastrop County Master Gardener Association has trained 121 Bastrop County residents in horticultural best practices through the Texas Master Gardener trainee program. Our members work with local A&M AgriLife Extension Agents to offer education events for adults and children of Bastrop County.

Classes begin August 19, 2023, and run through November 11, 2023. The class will be a combination of virtual and in person classes on Thursdays and Saturdays. See schedule below.

For more information about the class contact us at [class@bcmga78602.org](mailto:class@bcmga78602.org) or go to our website at <https://txmg.org/bastropcounty/>.

Debbie Mikel, BCMGA Education Director

## 2023 Bastrop County Master Gardener Fall Class Schedule

DATE	TOPIC	TIME	Style/ Type
8/19/2023	INTRO TO BCMGA	9A-11:30A	in person
8/26/2023	EARTH-KIND	9A-1P	in person
9/2/2023	Labor day weekend	NO CLASS	
9/7/2023	SOIL AND SOIL NUTRIENTS	9A-1P	virtual
9/9/2023	PROPAGATION	9A-2P	in person
9/14/2023	PLANT PATHOLOGY	9A-1P	virtual
9/16/2023	VEGETABLES AND COMPOSTING	9A-1P	in person
9/23/2023	HERBS	9A-1P	in person
9/28/2023	TURFGRASS/ LAWN CARE	9A-1P	virtual
9/30/2023	GARDENING FOR WILDLIFE	9A-11A	in person
10/5/2023	WATER and IRRIGATION	9A-1P	virtual
10/7/2023	Plant Sale	NO CLASS	
10/12/2023	IPM/ENTOMOLOGY	9A-1P	Virtual
10/14/2023	TREE SELECTION & PLANTING	9A-11A	in person
10/14/2023	SUPERSTARS	11A-1P	in person
10/21/2023	SOIL BIOLOGY (SOIL FOOD WEB)	9A - 10A	in person
10/21/2023	HOME FRUIT AND NUT	10A-1P	in person
10/26/2023	LANDSCAPE DESIGN	9A-1P	in person
11/4/2023	FUNJI in the GARDEN	9A-1P	in person
11/9/2023	PLANT GROWTH	9A-1P	Virtual
11/11/2023	PROJECT REVIEW LUNCHEON BCMGA OVERVIEW	9A-1P	in person



# Organza Bags Make Seed Saving Easier

By Howard Nemerov

If you're trying to save seeds that disperse before you can harvest them, Organza bags are an inexpensive solution resulting in more plentiful harvests.

Organza is "a type of thin stiff cloth that you can see through."<sup>1</sup> It's used to make formal dresses, so it can also be folded and sewn into little pouches which are often used to contain small jewelry. These bags consist of synthetic fabric with a loose enough weave to provide airflow to prevent rot.<sup>2</sup>

## Native Milkweeds



The drawstring helps protect seeds, too. For the last three years, I've been growing *Asclepias asperula* (Antelope-horns milkweed) as a seed crop.<sup>3</sup> It can get frustrating waiting for pods to mature enough to harvest, while fighting off Milkweed Bugs that want to feed on the seeds. Last year, seeds with the most Milkweed Bug nymphs inside the pod had the lowest germination rates. If I arrived too late, wind already began dispersing seed.

Organza bags were the solution. By cinching the drawstring around the pod's stem, these bags greatly reduce Milkweed Bug damage. I no longer worried if I would arrive in time to harvest a mature pod. The picture at the left shows how the bag kept seeds in place for me to harvest.

## White Veined Dutchman's Pipe

I've been watching adult Pipevine Swallowtail butterflies for years as they nectar on large-flowered Aster-family flowers like Zinnias, but had no host plant available to make the garden a full-cycle habitat. While neither native nor xeric, I've been growing *Aristolochia fimbriata* (White Veined Dutchman's Pipe) because it's pretty and provides larval hosting for Pipevine Swallowtails (picture on right).<sup>4</sup>



As with Milkweed pods, it's been a challenge to harvest pods before they burst and scatter into the mulch. The pods seem to go from green to open overnight, and I've been lucky if I can save a dozen seeds per pod.

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## Volunteering

Master Gardeners volunteer in the community to teach others about horticulture. We follow the research-based recommendations of Texas A&M AgriLife Extension. Members who complete 50 hours of volunteer service in the year after training earn the designation "Texas Master Gardener." We use our title only when engaged in Texas A&M AgriLife Extension activities.

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Organza bags relieved me of the need to constantly check pods in an attempt to increase seed harvest. Now I can preserve the entire seed crop.

After harvest, I wash each bag with natural soaps, rinse in hot water, and dry. The dirtiest bags get a soak in bleach solution followed by rinsing and drying. These bags last many



seasons, providing good return on investment for a small initial expenditure. (For example, some native seeds can sell for \$3–5 for as little as ten seeds.) With varying sizes available, Organza bags could be used for a variety of seed saving projects.

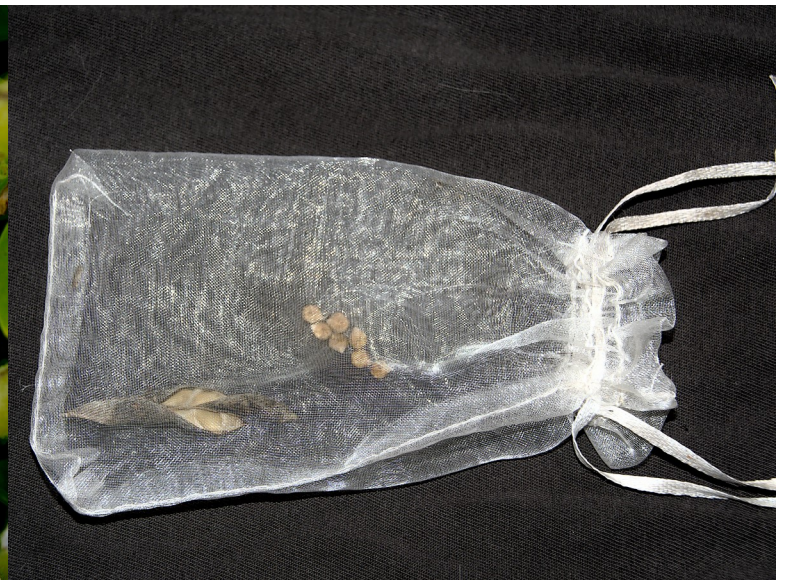
## Bluebonnets



I took the photo on left on April 25, showing ripening Bluebonnet (*Lupinus texensis*) seed pods.<sup>5</sup> When ripe, they “shatter” which means the two sides of each pod split apart and twist suddenly, scattering seeds as far as possible and creating an obstacle to saving seed to place plants in a new location.

The second photo (below left) shows a solution: plastic mesh Organza bags, which allow airflow to prevent mold/mildew yet remain tough enough to survive exposure to sun and weather.

Third photo (below right) shows how an Organza bag captured seeds when the pod shattered (May 15). No need to run out daily to see if pods have ripened enough to produce viable seed and “rescue” before seeds disappeared. This is the lazy way to harvest Bluebonnet seeds.



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*Halictus ligatus* - Ligated Furrow Bee nectaring on *Nemophila phacelioides*

## Texas Baby Blue Eyes

*Nemophila phacelioides* is a late winter/early spring native wildflower with pretty blue/lavender flowers that attract native pollinators when there's few nectar sources available.<sup>6</sup> I never saw seed until I began using Organza bags. I didn't even know what they looked like to identify them should I have found them lying on the ground.

Without Organza bags, this mystery would continue, but this year I identified fertilized flowers that were beginning to form a small, green pod within sepals that had begun folding into themselves, as if to create a tent to protect maturing seeds.

Perhaps due to a moist and cool spring, it took many weeks for pods to mature and dry. Without bagging, seed pods would have shattered and I never would have found the seeds. They don't look striking or pretty like some seeds, but almost look like detritus themselves!



Millimeters

## Flame Acanthus



Like *Nemophila phacelioides*, I never saw *Anisacanthus quadrifidus* var. *Wrightii* seed until I began using Organza bags.<sup>7</sup> This enabled me to recognize mature seed pods and harvest seeds for the first time. Like numerous other native plants, these pods shatter in order to spread seeds as widely as possible.

Plant species survive by colonizing an environment that's conducive for maturation and reproduction: A large grouping helps ensure survival of the species. As with *Nemophila phacelioides*, these seeds are rather drab and brown, making it



Millimeters

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easy for them to be lost amid fallen leaves and twigs.

## Conclusion

Organza bags empower gardeners to save seeds from their best-performing plants. Seed starting enables you to place more natives among your landscape, or share starts with neighbors to spread the word that natives perform well and are suitable in any landscape. Of course, look for more locally-grown natives at our Master Gardener plant sales, too!

[Photos by Howard Nemerov]

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup>“Organza.” Oxford Learner’s Dictionaries. Accessed July 9, 2022. <https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/organza>
- <sup>2</sup> Organza bag search. Amazon.com. Accessed July 9, 2022. <https://www.amazon.com/organza-bag/s?k=organza+bag>
- <sup>3</sup>“*Asclepias asperula*.” Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center Plant Database. Accessed June 15, 2023. [https://www.wildflower.org/plants/result.php?id\\_plant=ASAS](https://www.wildflower.org/plants/result.php?id_plant=ASAS)
- <sup>4</sup> *Aristolochia fimbriata*. North Carolina State Extension. Accessed July 9, 2022. <https://plants.ces.ncsu.edu/plants/aristolochia-fimbriata/>
- <sup>5</sup>“*Lupinus texensis*.” Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center Plant Database. Accessed June 15, 2023. [https://www.wildflower.org/plants/result.php?id\\_plant=LUTE](https://www.wildflower.org/plants/result.php?id_plant=LUTE)
- <sup>6</sup>“*Nemophila phacelioides*.” Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center Plant Database. Accessed May 17, 2023. [https://www.wildflower.org/plants/result.php?id\\_plant=NEPH](https://www.wildflower.org/plants/result.php?id_plant=NEPH)
- <sup>7</sup>“*Anisacanthus quadrifidus* var. *Wrightii*.” Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center Plant Database. Accessed June 15, 2023. [https://www.wildflower.org/plants/result.php?id\\_plant=ANQUW](https://www.wildflower.org/plants/result.php?id_plant=ANQUW)



## Predator versus Predator

As Molly Keck, Integrated Pest Management Program Specialist for Texas A&M AgriLife Extension, is wont to say: Nature isn’t nice.

Green Lynx spider (*Peucetia viridans*) and Robber Flies (species *Promachus hinei*) are both considered beneficial insects because they usually prey upon insects that chew or suck on your garden plants...but not always.

[Photo by Howard Nemerov]

