

NEWS RELEASE

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Photo by Suzzanne Chapman

Donations Secure the Future of Imperiled Texas Plant

HUMBLE, TX – The Center for Plant Conservation (CPC) today announced that yet another of the more than 600 imperiled plants in the CPC National Collection of Endangered Plants has been fully sponsored, preserving America's native flora for the future. Thanks to generous donors, the Texas trailing phlox (*Phlox nivalis* ssp. *texensis*) is now fully supported, ensuring funds that help scientists bank this rare native plant's seeds, conduct research on the plant, and plan for and implement restoration to the wild.

Texas trailing phlox, a ground creeper with thin, needle-like leaves and pink to magenta to white flowers, is so vulnerable it was once thought extinct. A handful of remaining populations have since been found, and the species was federally listed as endangered in 1991. This Texas native is endemic to the Pineywoods region of southeastern Texas, where long-leaf pine savanna once dominated.

Researchers at Mercer Arboretum and Botanic Garden, a CPC participating institution in Humble, Texas, are working with other partners to restore this beautiful native wildflower to its original habitat.

Mercer's partners include the National Park Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, Texas Nature Conservancy, Sam Houston State College, the Garden Clubs of America, and others.

Horticulturists at Stephen F. Austin Mast Arboretum supply propagated plants for on-going restoration projects at the Big Thicket National Preserve in East Texas. Mercer botanists also work with colleagues from the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center, a CPC participating institution in Austin, Texas, to maintain a bank of wild-collected seeds that ensures the genetic diversity of future restorations. The Texas trailing phlox is on display in Mercer's Endangered Species Garden, where visitors often enjoy blooms year-round.

By collecting and securing seeds and cuttings from the few remaining wild populations, Mercer maintains the plant in the CPC National Collection, a bank of seeds, cuttings and other plant material from more than 600 of the nation's most imperiled native plants. Botanists in the CPC network around the country gather and catalogue these plant materials according to strict standards developed by CPC's science advisory council. The materials are then stored and maintained at the participating institution, preserving our options for restoration.

National Collection material is used to study the life cycle and germination requirements of these rare treasures, and plants propagated from the collection are used by botanists and researchers for private, state, and federal plant and habitat restoration projects. Sponsorship endows a fund that provides secure, regular payments to the institution caring for the at-risk plant.

Five botanical institutions care for most of the Texas imperiled plants in the national collection. Collectively, the Mercer Arboretum and Botanic Gardens, San Antonio Botanical Garden, The Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center, the Desert Botanical Garden and the Arboretum at Flagstaff secure material for over 40 Texas species that are at risk.

In April of 2002, Mercer's veteran native plant volunteer Carol Kobb led the way towards sponsorship of Texas trailing phlox with a gift in memory of her friend Millie Gaudino of Houston, Texas. Two months later the Mercer Society joined the fundraising effort with a generous donation of \$5,775.00 from River Oaks Garden Club in honor of their 75th Anniversary.

Throughout 2002 and early 2003, other interested individuals contributed to the funding drive, including another of Mercer's veteran native plant volunteers, David Berkshire, and Mercer staff members Suzanne Chapman in honor of her parents Ann C. Baumer and Derek Chapman and Anita Tiller in memory of her parents Ruth Lina and Werner Gerhard Tiller.

This October, the Mercer Memorial Trust helped the sponsorship drive with a donation of \$2,997.00 and on November 19th, after a year-long fund-raising effort, the Mercer Society completed full sponsorship for Texas trailing phlox with a final donation of \$678.00. The Mercer Society has pledged to sponsor one plant at Mercer in the National Collection each year.

The Center for Plant Conservation is dedicated solely to preventing the extinction of America's imperiled, native flora. CPC is a network of more than 30 of America's leading botanical institutions. By conducting conservation programs in horticulture, research, awareness and information exchange, CPC's network is striving to save America's rarest plants from being lost forever. For more information about the Center for Plant Conservation's work in Texas and around the country, please visit our website at www.centerforplantconservation.org.