



BRIT's March 1st Brown Bag Kicks Off Butterflies in the Garden!

Join us on **Tuesday, March 1**, from **noon – 1 p.m.** for a special Butterflies in the Garden Brown Bag featuring Gail Manning, entomologist and education team leader at the Fort Worth Botanic Garden. Learn about milkweed and the garden's involvement in the citizen science programs Monarch Larva Monitoring Project and Monarch Watch (butterfly tagging). Get an update on Fort Worth's conservation efforts and find out three things YOU can do right now to help monarchs and advance our knowledge about their annual migration.

Bring your lunch and bring a friend and help us kick-off this year's Butterflies in the Garden! For more information about the **BRIT Brown Bag Series**, please visit this [Brown Bag webpage](#).

For more information about **Butterflies in the Garden** which will open on March 1, please visit our [Butterflies in the Garden webpage](#). To purchase your tickets, please visit the [box office](#).

Special Maya Forest Exhibition

This year the Fort Worth Botanic Garden has chosen the Maya Forest as the theme for their Butterflies in the Garden festival. In conjunction with this event, BRIT's own Mayanist, Resident Research Associate Dr. Grace Bascopé, has planned a BRIT Atrium display featuring five trees of the Maya Forest. There will be herbarium specimens, photos, books, and artifacts that explain why these plants were important to the Ancient Maya and how they are still being used in the Maya world today. The plants featured are:

- The sacred ceiba tree (*Ceiba pentandra*)
- Chocolate tree (*Theobroma cacao*)
- Copal incense (*Protium copal*)
- Chicle (*Manilkara zapota*)
- Calabash tree (*Crescentia cujete*)



BRIT will also have Maya-themed activities for children in the Tree House. In addition to the BRIT materials, Grace also designed a Maya textile display in the Conservatory of the Botanic Gardens, and you can find lots of Maya items for sale in the Trellis Gift Shop, including things made by the Maya women of the village of Yaxunah in the state of Yucatan, Mexico. All the profits go directly back to these artisan women so they can afford to send their children to school.

Spring Gallery Night at BRIT, March 19

The Fort Worth Art Dealers Association Spring Gallery Night is Saturday, March 19th, and BRIT will be playing host to *Call and Response*, a new, collaborative show by Texas artists Carol Ivey and Deborah Mersky. Join us in the Madeline R. Samples Exhibit Hall from 4 p.m. – 9 p.m. for the opening reception of this unique and exciting show. Drinks and light hors d'oeuvres will be served 6 p.m. – 8 p.m. For more information about *Call and Response* please visit [here](#).

Seasons of Stories,
Seasons of Science



What's Happening with Bella at BRIT

Bloom with Bella the Begonia

Join Bella for an interactive read-aloud and family-friendly activities that provide fun explorations of art, nature, and science!

Bella's Story Time: Saturday, March 5 (10:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.) - Free

Bella's Book Club: Tuesday, March 1 (10:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.) - Free to BRIT Members/\$10 per non-member family.

For more information, please contact [Kimberly Whitlock](#) at 817.546.1958.

Green Revolution: #ExplorationEveryday

Join the Green Revolution Team as we embark on a new year of explorations. Green Revolution began 2016 with an enriched mission of cultivating the next generation of environmental leaders, and our Agents of Change are ready to answer the call. Join us in our mission of supporting these young community leaders by using Green Revolution's new hash tag (#) "ExplorationEveryday" when posting pictures and academic articles of our environment to your social media accounts such as Facebook. Simply make your post and enter #ExplorationEveryday to show your support of Green Revolution's Agents of Change. Also don't forget to like us on Facebook, and please follow us on Twitter and Instagram by searching for the name Green Revolution. Let's show our Agents of Change we support them and their mission to create change in their community through environmental stewardship.



Coding with Texas Instruments

Elementary and secondary teachers enjoyed an evening of coding, data collecting, and data analysis during the February Teacher Tuesday. Texas Instruments' Donald Tunstall and Paschal High School's Cassie Whithorn led teachers through a series of engaging activities that provided opportunities for students to collect and analyze data using real-world applications. Cassie, a certified T3 instructor (a designation from TI awarded to specially qualified educators), shared with the teachers an engaging and simplistic system for coding.

April's Teacher Tuesday – Mathematical by Nature – will focus on Pollinator Math!

Purchase Your Rain Barrel & Compost Bin Through April 4

Get ahead of your summer watering by purchasing one or more 50-gallon rain barrels during the spring online sale sponsored by BRIT and the City of Fort Worth. The sale is open to all North Texas area residents at the reduced price of \$72.50. Also available are 65-gallon compost bins for \$67.50. Both can be purchased online with a credit card [here](#). The sale runs through April 4, 2016.

The pick-up day is Saturday, April 9, from 9 a.m. to noon in BRIT's upper two parking lots located inside the BRIT/Fort Worth Botanic Garden complex, 1700 University Drive, Fort Worth, Texas.

For more information, please contact [Chris Chilton](#) at 817.332.4441, ext 218.



Re-Discovering Wild Orchids

In early February, BRIT Biodiversity Explorer Sula Vanderplank traveled to the coastal wilds of Baja California, Mexico, in an attempt to relocate a population of native orchids – chaparral rein orchids (*Piperia cooperi*). The population is the only one known on the mainland of Mexico and had not been seen in a decade, despite repeated attempts to relocate it. After driving to the appropriate habitat, approximately 10 plants were found on north-facing slopes growing with ferns, mosses, wild onions (*Allium praecox*), and the coast jepsonia (*Jepsonia parryi*). The plants are currently just rosettes of leaves, but in April they will likely have clusters of green flowers on a taller inflorescence. Though it's considered common elsewhere (California), this orchid is rare in Baja California, and this newly relocated population is threatened by development and

agricultural conversion.

The Devil's Cigar (Texas star fungus)

While botanizing in the Fort Worth Nature Center in early winter, Resident Research Associate Bob O'Kennon happened across some brown-black, finger-like structures growing near the base of a dead cedar elm. This was after the prodigious rains the area received in late 2015. He collected samples, showing them to Resident Research Associate and mycologist Denis Benjamin, who immediately declared that he had no clue as to their nature, but planned to pursue their identification with microscopy. By chance, Harold W. Keller, another Resident Research Associate and noted expert on slime molds (Myxomycetes), walked by the office as they were puzzling over the specimen. "That's a devil's cigar," he said excitedly, "a fungus so rare that it has only been described from a few sites in Texas and, curiously, in Japan." Dr. Keller had found a similar collection in River Legacy Park (Arlington) some years ago and had written articles about this enigmatic fungus for Texas Parks and Wildlife and the journal *Mycologist*. It is known as *Chorioactis geaster*, a unique genus, distantly related to other Ascomycetes like the morel mushroom. It begins as a hollow cylinder, from which the spores are ejected with an edible puff. As it matures, the dark brown tube splits open into a star shape. Interestingly, it has most often been seen when El Nino rains follow drought years. The sites have been carefully marked and will be visited in coming seasons to follow the fungus' fruiting behavior. There is still much to learn!

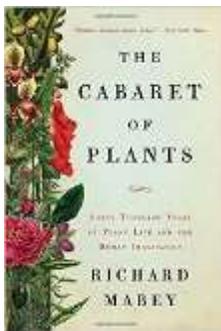


Mixed Breeding Systems in the Snowdrop Plants

Peter Fritsch was lead author on a paper published in January in the journal *Systematic Botany* focusing on an unusual breeding system in the snowdrop plants (*Styrax*). Normally, plants have both male (stamens) and female (pistil) organs in the same flower (termed "hermaphrodites"). Our native Texas snowdrops have this breeding type, for example. However, rarely hermaphrodites and female-only flowers will occur in the same species (termed "gynodioecy"). Fritsch et al. show that in a group of Neotropical plant species, gynodioecy originated twice from hermaphroditic ancestors, both times resulting in much smaller flowers than their hermaphroditic relatives. They discuss the implications of this discovery for our understanding of plant breeding systems, and revise the taxonomy of the group. One of the authors of the paper was an undergraduate summer intern.



Figure caption: *Styrax pedicellatus* (Styracaceae) from the Chapada Diamantina in Minas Gerais state, Brazil. The flowers are ca. 4 mm wide.



And Now for Something Completely Different...TheBRIT Reads Book Club!

Do you love to read and are you interested in all things botanical? If so, then please join us in the BRIT Library on **Monday, April 18**, from **noon – 1 p.m.** for the first meeting of the **BRIT Reads** book club. This casual group will meet the third Monday of each month, January – November, and will discuss a new, botanically related book at each meeting. Our first book will be *The Cabaret of Plants* by Richard Mabey which has been described as "a rich, sweeping, and wonderfully readable work of botanical history... that explores dozens of plant species that for millennia have challenged our imaginations, awoken our wonder, and upturned our ideas about history, science, beauty, and belief."

The Cabaret of Plants is available through online retailers, [Barnes and Noble](#), and the [Fort Worth Public Library](#). For more information about the **BRIT Reads** book club, please contact [Laura](#)

[Venhaus](#) or 817.332.4441, ext. 259.



Underground World of Mushrooms

BRIT is pleased to announce that Dr. Denis Benjamin, BRIT Resident Research Associate and author of two popular works on mushrooms (*Mushrooms: Poisons and Panaceas* [1995] and *Musings of a Mushroom Hunter* [2010]), will be reprising his popular workshop "The Underground World of Mushrooms" on Saturday, May 7. This half-day workshop will introduce participants to the wide variety of mushrooms that exist in our own backyard, the Cross Timbers ecosystem of North Central Texas. Join Denis and become acquainted with the Kingdom of Fungi and learn proper methods for collecting and photographing samples.

If you missed this popular workshop last spring, you'll already know that you need to sign up quickly since space is limited! For more information about this class visit our [webpage](#).

Underground World of Mushrooms - Saturday, May 7, 8:30 a.m. – noon
\$10 members/\$15 non-members

To Buy Now Call Keri Barfield at 817.332.4441, ext. 213!



BRIT VOLUNTEERS are SUPERHEROES!

Holy botany, Batman! There were a lot of caped crusaders at the annual volunteer appreciation party. Once again, the BRIT staff dressed in costume for a visual representation of how much we appreciate our volunteers. Guests enjoyed sips, snacks, conversation, and a video recapping all of our volunteer super adventures from 2015. The total number of hours given by our volunteers would impress all of Gotham City: 8,018 to keep BRIT's mission alive. BRIT is grateful to have such dedicated and SUPER volunteers who help us spread our love of plants to the public by engaging preschoolers at story time, inventorying and filing our specimens, cataloging books in the library, sorting press journals, refining databases, and so much more!



Our 2015 Sustainers, who each donated over 200 hours in one calendar year, were revealed at the party: **Dan Caudle, Pamela Edmondson, Craig Elam, Charles Gardner, Gus Guthrie, Marylou Lindsey, Tim Mason, Diane Pierce, Kay Stansbery, and Kay Yount**



March 8 at 7:30 p.m. BRIT Atrium Doors Open at 6:45 p.m.

After a season of sold out casual concerts at Avoca Coffee, the group has moved to the Botanical Research Institute of Texas (BRIT) Atrium. Ample free parking, table seating, and a cash bar will be available. Guests may bring



their own snacks.

Hall Ensemble welcomes pianist Alex McDonald for an evening of exquisite chamber music. Alex will join Jennifer Chang for the Brahms Violin Sonata No. 1. Also on the program is the Mozart E-flat piano quartet and the Hermann Goetz quintet.

Ticket Information: www.hallensemble.org; 817.456.3584
hallensemble@sbcglobal.net

MARCH

1st - Brown Bag; Bella Book & Nature Club
1st - First day of Butterflies in the Garden 2016 (BITG)
5th - Bella Story Time; Teach Tank; public tour; plant ID
18th - *Call and Response* exhibit opens
19th - Spring Gallery Night
22nd - Teacher Tuesday
25th - closed for Good Friday
3rd, 10th, 17th, 24th, & 31st - BRIT tours at 1:30 p.m.

APRIL

2nd - Bella Story Time; Teach Tank; public tour; plant ID
3rd - Last day of Butterflies in the Garden 2016 (BITG)
4th - Rain barrel sale ends
5th - Brown Bag; Bella Book & Nature Club
9th - Rain Barrel Pickup Day (9-noon)
18th - BRIT Reads book club
19th - Teacher Tuesday
7th, 14th, 21st, & 28th - BRIT tours at 1:30 p.m.

Additional information can be found at brit.org.

Botanical Research Institute of Texas (BRIT)

1700 University Drive | Fort Worth, Texas 76107-3400
Phone: 817.332.4441 | Fax: 817.332.4112

Open Tuesday to Friday from 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. and First Saturday of the month from 9 a.m. - Noon
Tcrole@brit.org to receive this by email.