

Foreword

Over the years our state's ecology has been affected by many changes. New dams, turnpikes, urban sprawl, forestry practices, highway right of way mowing, and excessive use of herbicides are just a few of the activities that have had a profound impact upon our state's native vegetation, many within my lifetime. Concerned Oklahomans founded the Oklahoma Native Plant Society (ONPS) in 1987 with the goal of encouraging the study, protection, use, and appreciation of our native plants.

Many of our citizens are unaware of the unique geographic and biological characteristics of Oklahoma. Botanists and ecologists have debated where Oklahoma should be placed on the biodiversity scale. States such as California, Texas, North Carolina, and Florida have more species. California and Texas have more bioregions. When you consider our geographic location, numbers of species, and bioregions, Oklahoma is considered by many to be number three in terms of biodiversity. Many Western and Eastern, as well as Northern and Southern species intermingle here. Our extensive river system, moving primarily from the Northwest to the Southeast, further divides the state into unique regions.

The sand dunes and the Great Salt Plains are classic examples. Early explorers and botanists made extensive use of these waterways, Washington Irving and Thomas Nuttall are two of the most prominent. The state's elevation and annual rainfall amounts change as you move from west to east, resulting in different bioregions across our state.

As a youngster growing up in Oklahoma City, I would often spend time with a map of Oklahoma and wonder about the regions in our state. Black Mesa, the high plains prairies, the forests of eastern Oklahoma, and the Ozark, Quachita, Wichita, Quartz, and Arbuckle Mountain regions were some of the areas I would dream of someday visiting. Eventually, through family vacations, ecology field trips in college, and my association with ONPS, I was able to visit many of these places. Our state is truly diverse. Much of my appreciation of this is due to my associations with ONPS and as a student in Harriet Barclay's ecology class.

The new *Field Guide to Oklahoma Plants*, by Ron Tyrll, Terrence Bidwell, and Ronald Masters has an excellent introductory section covering the ecogeography and vegetation of Oklahoma. This guide has fine maps and explanations on the geography, soils, and vegetation types. Rolling hills, plains, and unique mountain regions characterize the state. Six forest types are recognized: Oak-Hickory, Oak-Pine, Post Oak-Blackjack Oak, Loblolly Pine, Cypress Bottoms, and Bottom land (Flood Plain). Dr. David Stahle, from the Tree-Ring Laboratory at University of Arkansas, states that the Cross-timbers region (Post Oak-BlackJack Oak) in Oklahoma is one of the largest remaining old growth forests in North America. Our state also consists of Tallgrass, Shortgrass, and Mixed grass prairie regions. The field guide recognizes five different Shrub-Grassland types; Sandsage Grassland, Mesquite Grassland, Shinnery Oak-Grassland, Stabilized Dunes, and Pinon-Juniper Mesa.

The *Oklahoma Native Plant Record* has covered some of these areas in past issues. It is becoming an excellent forum for discussing our state's unique diversity. Much of the Journal's success goes to those original ONPS founding members, whose foresight and concerns about our state have been an inspiration to us all. This Journal is a monument to their efforts. I encourage everyone to support and contribute to its success.

James Elder
ONPS President
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