

From The Editor...

"You cannot go through a single day without having an impact on the world around you. What you do makes a difference and you have to decide what kind of difference you want to make." – Jane Goodall

A few weeks ago I was volunteering at the San Antonio Botanical Garden and my supervisor had something "special" to show me. As is usually the case, her opinion of "special" in the natural world mirrored mine when she showed me some very cool looking pipevine swallowtail caterpillars. These were a little different than what I was used to seeing since they were red and orange instead of the usual Halloween colors of black and orange. The red ones were also hanging out on (but not eating) a tropical milkweed plant rather than the usual Dutchman's Pipe. (Note: A 29 page article on Pipevine Swallowtails I found on a University of Florida website stated that the red color may be due to increased temperature variations – see: <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/in1170>). I then came across the "usual" (black and orange) caterpillar on a pipevine plant and enjoyed seeing him/her munch, munch, munch away. That reminded me that I now have my own Dutchman's Pipevine plant that I started from seed, nursed through the winter indoors and then moved outside in the spring. When I got home, I checked on it and saw that it was producing its first flower! Unfortunately, it didn't bloom completely, which I am attributing to the unusually highly humid days we've had this past week? Nonetheless, I thought it might be fun to share some new photos of the caterpillars, my (sort of) blossoming plant and an updated version of the article I wrote about Dutchman's Pipevine in 2015. Enjoy – and please consider sharing some photos with your fellow MGs of what you've discovered in your garden this spring! Please send them to: briggskm@yahoo.com with a story or brief explanation.

The variety of Dutchman's Pipe (*Aristolochia fimbriata*) that I have has an unusual bloom shaped like Sherlock Holmes' smoking pipe, which attracts pollinating flies with an odor similar to the smell of rotting meat. The leaves are a round-heart shape with a white marbled veiny appearance. It is suitable for gardens in USDA zones 7a - 11 and prefers sunny to partially sunny locations, although it will tolerate shade. Unlike a lot of *Aristolochia* species, which require a vertical structure (like a trellis) for support, *A. fimbriata* only gets to be about two feet long and acts like a ground cover, but can be allowed to cascade from a container with proper pruning. In other species of *Aristolochia*, plant height is generally 15-30 ft. and can spread 15-20 ft.. Flowers bloom late spring to early summer and late summer to early fall. During the Victorian Era, climbing versions of this plant were popular for providing shade in arbors and porches due to the thick canopy of leaves that certain larger species will provide in a single season. Additionally, due to the pipe shape of the flower, it was thought to look similar to a human fetus, and so was used medicinally as an aid for childbirth – hence it's other common name of "birthwort."

Besides providing a cool respite from a hot sunny day, or acting as an attractive ground cover, Dutchman's Pipe also plays an important role in being one of approximately 11 U.S. native varieties of pipevine (*Aristolochia*) which are the host plant for the Pipevine Swallowtail butterfly (*Battus philenor*). Part of the joy of tending to this plant recently was watching the development of the Pipevine caterpillars that remind me of aliens from a distant planet. They are VORACIOUS eaters (similar to the appetites of human teenagers), so be prepared to watch them munch through quite a lot of foliage (it is recommended to grow multiple vines!). However, the payoff is a garden full of beautiful Pipevine

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butterflies! As an added bonus, our area is part of the Pipevine's favored range, with three or more broods produced seasonally. According to an article reproduced from American Butterflies magazine (Vol. 9: No. 2, Summer 2001) on the North American Butterfly Association (NABA) website, although Pipevine Swallowtails had quite a large range during Victorian times when Dutchman's Pipe was a popular garden plant, like many other species of butterfly, its range has decreased over the years. The NABA, through its "Pipe-dream Project" would like to increase both the numbers and range of the Pipevine Swallowtail by encouraging gardeners to plant pipevine (similar to the push for planting milkweed for the Monarchs). There are several pipevine species that can be found in a variety of areas in Texas: *Aristolochia tomentosa* (Woolly pipevine); *A. Serpentaria* (Virginia pipevine); *A. pentandra* (Marsh's pipevine); *A. reticulate* (Texas pipevine); *A. erecta* (Swanflower pipevine); *A. coryi* (Cory's pipevine) - a Texas species found in the Trans-Pecos and Edward's Plateau; and, *A. wrightii* (Wright's pipevine). Obviously, it is encouraged to plant native varieties of pipevine to get the best results in growth, however, *A. fimbriata* is an Argentinian variety that I started from seed that has done quite well for me (in a container).

As gardeners we're ultimately looking for beauty, so to me there is nothing more beautiful than a butterfly that has alighted onto an equally beautiful favorite plant. I hope this might encourage some of you to plant some Dutchman's Pipe (or any butterfly nectar or larval host plant) to attract some additional beauty into your garden.

Your Editor,
Kimber Briggs



Top L-R: My container *A. fimbriata*, new bud, and flower

Bottom L-R: *B. philenor* chrysalis, two color versions of *B. philenor* caterpillar, Pipevine Swallowtail adult butterfly

Photos: Kimber Briggs

