



the Phlox Phlyer

Columbia Basin Chapter, Washington Native Plant Society • P.O. Box 221, Richland, WA 99352 • <http://www.wnps.org/cbasin/>

Greetings from the Chair – *Bob Fortman*

We again participated in the annual two day Tumbleweed Music Festival in Richland in September. We had a large and diverse display and many of the people at the Festival stopped and talked with us about native plants. We answered questions, offered advice for restoration activities and sold plants and literature. The interest in native plants continues to be impressive. Special thanks to Janelle Downs and Donna Lucas for providing the plants for display and sale. Working the display were Janelle Downs, Donna Lucas, Murrel Dawson, Marita Lih, Mary Ann Simmons, Carol Coker and Greg Park. Mickie Chamness provided us with a much needed canopy for keeping us in the shade. This is our second year in a row that we have participated in the Festival and I think it is an effort we should continue.

The Tri-Cities folks joined with the Walla Walla folks for a hike up the east side of the Wallula Gap on September 15. We had a good display of snow buckwheat and hoary aster on a windy day. Following the hike we gathered at the McNary environmental center for lunch and wandered through the native plant display at the center. We also enjoyed watching birds and turtles from the bird blind on the pond. There were equal numbers of participants from each group. (I mention this to correct an item from last month's newsletter. The majority of members in the Columbia Basin Chapter of the Native Plant Society come from the Walla Walla subchapter.)

September Meeting Highlights – *Laura Maier*

Eight from Walla Walla and nine from the Tri Cities met Saturday Sept. 15 at 9 AM for a hike near the Wallula Gap National Natural Landmark, on an old road that begins one mile east of Wallula Junction, near the old yellow brick telephone building. Hikers of all ages arrived, including two parents with a jogging stroller, in case their child became tired of walking, and a spirited 85 year-old individual. The hike for a mile and a half up the old wagon road was mostly moderate, with a few steep places, until reaching the broad flat lithosol top, which offered a view of Lake Wallula and beyond. The wind was strong; windbreakers were a blessing. It was hazy morning, so we didn't see the Blue Mountains or Steptoe Butte this time.

On September 15 we knew we would see plenty of yellow-blooming green rabbit brush, which we did. We expected to see the bluish-purple hoary tansy aster, *Machaeranthera canescens*, and it was blooming prolifically in and near the old road. The snowy buckwheat clumps became larger as we walked up the hill. Closer to the top of the road, the *Eriogonum niveum* clumps perhaps were 18 or 20 inches in diameter. The tiny white snowy blossoms were prolific in each clump. Someone suggested that the few late summer rains contributed to this "best of show" display of *Eriogonum niveum*.

This really was a forensic expedition. Forensic, because we spent our time deducing spring blossoms from dead leaves and seeds. While we enjoyed the early fall blossoms, we spent more time examining the dried remains of spring plants. Of course the sagebrush mariposa in the field near the telephone building had long ago disappeared. We enjoyed the attractive shape and structure the blue flax (*Linum perenne*) seeds and noticed many other the seeds, besides the ones in our socks. We found abundant piles of white wooly pods containing seeds of *Astragalus purshii*. We examined the dried thin leaves of a low phlox and the two-inch stems and dried calyx of a cushion daisy, possibly *Erigeron poliospermus*. Dried contorted balsamroot leaves predicted possible blossoms in spring, 2008.

Of course there were many grasses up on the hillsides - plenty of blue-bunch wheat grass and also some Sandberg's blue grass. On this area, burned about ten years ago we found some sagebrush. Sagebrush can take 30 years to return to a burned area. But after a mile on this wagon road, we came across a patch of *Artemisia tridentata*. Perhaps the fire skimmed over this section, leaving these few clumps.

We enjoyed the diverse hidden treasures and great views we found following the old farm road on Section 36, DNR land as currently recorded by Walla Walla County, and "Wallula Junction State Park" as printed on the 1950's Metsker's map.

After the hike, most of us joined the picnic group at the tables near the construction of the new McNary Wildlife Educational Center. We were delighted with the new portable hand washing device beside the port-a-potties. Most of the Walla Walla group had never been to the McNary Center before. After eating, we walked down to the blind to view the birds. In fact, we so focused on the birds that one of us said: "look at the turtle" and we all asked "Where?" On the log, beside the birds. We were so focused on the birds, we were blind to the turtle.

Salvage and restoration

Tri-Cities

Before long the weather will turn cool and moist enough to start thinking about planting some native plants out into the wild. Those of you who have been helping with the North Leslie Groves Natural Area will finally get the opportunity to do something constructive instead of destructive! Depending on the weather and a few other logistical details, we'll be sowing the native seed and planting some natives into the area we've been working so hard to clear of weeds. There may also be the opportunity to plant some natives at Horn Rapids Park. If you're interested in helping with either of these, please send Mickie Chamness an email message so that she can let you know the date, which will be later in October or more likely in November. mickiec@charter.net

Camas Meadows Natural Area Preserve

Rare Care, the Seattle Garden Club, Tacoma Garden Club and Department of Natural Resources are cosponsoring a one-day project to plant native plants. The project will reduce channelization within the meadow and help prevent bare ground from becoming occupied by nonnative species. Are there 5 Rare Care volunteers who will help plant 4,000 plugs, including Columbian monkshood, mule-ears, slender cinquefoil, tufted hairgrass and meadow barley? Seeds for plants were harvested from plants on-site to maintain genetic integrity of local plant populations, then germinated and grown out by a local native plant nursery. When: Monday, October 15, 2007. Where: Camas Meadows Natural Area Preserve, south of Peshastin, east of Highway 97. Carpool available – meet at the Center for Urban Horticulture, Seattle, at 7:15 a.m., return by 6 p.m. **RSVP by October 8** to rarecare@u.washington.edu or 206-616-0780.

What's Blooming – Mary Ann Simmons

Hoary aster (*Machaeranthera canescens*) is a perennial aster in the sunflower family (Asteraceae) with lovely purple blooms that contrast against the golden blooms of rabbitbrush in the late summer and fall. "Machaer" is Greek for "sword" and "anther" is Greek for "flower". Together they refer to the sword shape of the anther tips for species in this genus. Canescens is Latin for becoming gray and refers to the color and hairs. Although at first glance, you might confuse this purple aster with diffuse knapweed (*Centaurea diffusa*), the leaves and flowers are actually different than those of knapweed.

The first specimen of this plant was collected between October 15 and 28, 2005 by Lewis and Clark on the banks of the Columbia River, and the hoary aster was first described as *Aster canescens* by the German botanist Frederick Pursh in his monumental Flora Americae Septentrionalis of 1814. Hoary aster blooms in September and October and has bright bluish-purple to pink ray flowers at the tips of the main stem or side branches. The tiny seeds carry a tuft of white bristles called a pappus. The alternate leaves are narrow and spine-tipped at the apex. Hoary aster is found in open, dry habitats from lowlands to more than 3,000 m in the mountains. It is found over much of western North America from British Columbia south to southern California and east to North Dakota. Hoary aster is presently blooming along the Badger Mt trail.



The **Phlox Phlyer** is the newsletter of the Columbia Basin Chapter, Tri-Cities and Walla Walla, Washington Native Plant Society.

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Upcoming Events

Tri-Cities

October 3, 2007, Wednesday, at 5:30-6:30 p.m. –Native Plant Walk. Join Janelle Downs for a plant identification walk along the river. Meet near the front door of the Consolidate Information Center (Library) at WSU Tri-Cities. (see map at end of newsletter)

October 3, 2007, Wednesday, at 7 p.m. –Monthly Meeting For our October meeting, Ken Gano, Restoration Ecologist with Washington Closure Hanford, will talk about “Revegetation of Remediated Waste Sites on the Hanford Site”. Meeting will be at the Consolidated Information Center (Library) at WSU Tri-Cities, rm. 212. (see map at end of newsletter).

October 26, Friday at 5:20 p.m. Hunter’s Moon Hike. Join us for a hike up Badger Mountain to enjoy the full moon. Meet at the playground at Westcliffe Park in Richland (take Shockley Road to the end, proceed onto Queensgate Drive up the hill to the park). Wear sturdy walking shoes, and bring water and a flashlight.

Walla Walla

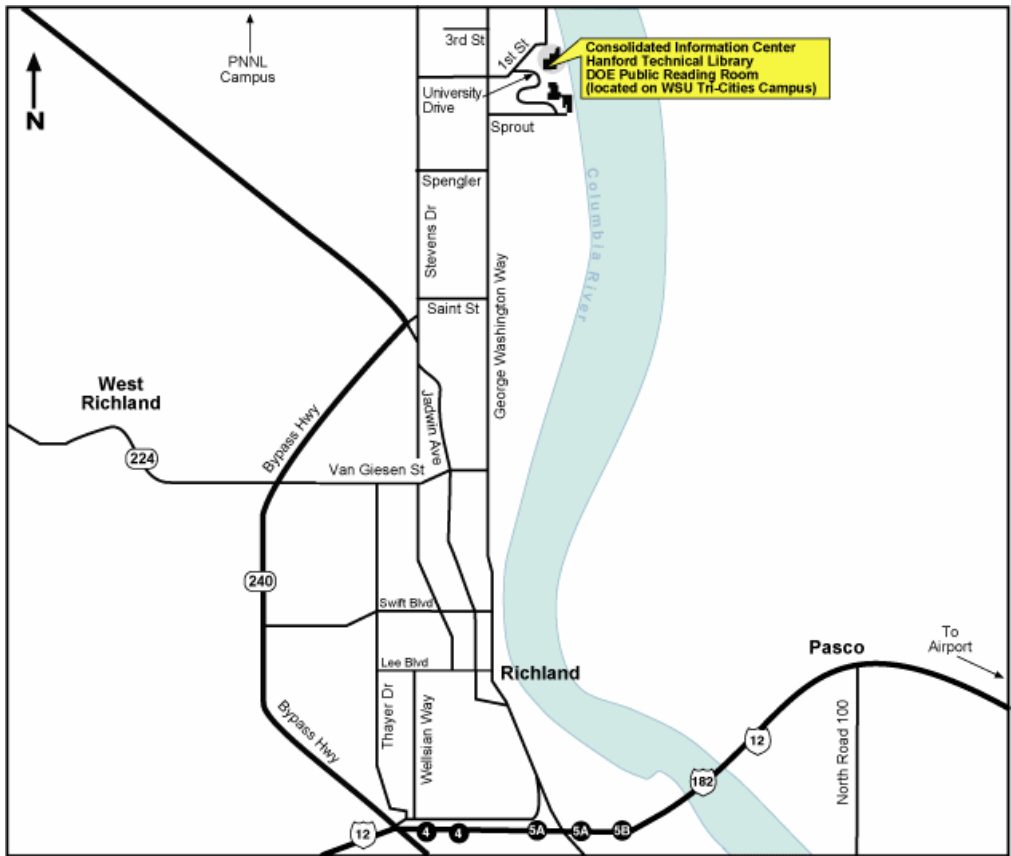
Every Friday at 9:00 – 10:30 a.m. – Gardening at the Demonstration Garden at the Blue Mountain Humane Society, 7 E. George St. Since the gate is locked, please call Laura (525-1079) or Nancy (529-2253). Sue, Nancy and Anitra are spiffing up beds 1, 2, 3, and 4.

October 4, 2007, Thursday, Noon. First Thursday Lunch at Reid Campus Center, corner of Park and Boyer for informal discussion of issues related to native plants.

Other Events

First Saturday Bird Walk – October 6, 2007, 8 a.m. Wye Park. The Lower Columbia Basin Audubon Society leads a bird walk on Bateman Island the first Saturday of the month. Meet at the Wye Park off Columbia Parkway, Hwy 240. Go to: <http://www.lowercolumbiabasinaudubon.org/Batemanwalk.htm> for more information.

Second Saturday at McNary Education Center – October 13, 2007, 9am to noon. Birds in a Flocking – Children’s program. Directions: From the Tri-Cities, turn left on Hwy.124, go through Burbank Heights. At the fire station, turn right on Lake Road. McNary NWR Environmental Education Center, is at 311 Lake Rd. For more information, leave a message at: (509) 543-8322 or go to: <http://www.nwr.mcmary.wa.us/>



Consolidated Information Center

March 2005

Hanford Technical Library DOE Public Reading Room Location Map

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