



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*

The inspiration for this month's message comes from Mark Turner, president of the Koma Kulshan Chapter of the Washington Native Plant Society. He wrote a thoughtful message about non-native invasive plants in their winter 2008 newsletter. His note is reproduced here with his permission.

Why Care About Native Plants?

The more time I spend learning about our native plants and fretting about non-native invasives, the more I wonder “why bother?”. What difference does it make, in the big scheme of things, if we as a human population wipe out a good portion of our natural floral diversity? The complex and interactive web of plants, fungi, bacteria and animals evolved over the eons, mostly before humans became so numerous as to have a big impact.

As an organization, WNPS has adopted a definition of native plants as being those that were here before Europeans arrived on the scene. That's a convenient place to draw the line, as we've certainly been importing species ever since, both intentionally and accidentally. But did the people who migrated here earlier, say 10,000 years ago, also bring plants with them? We don't really know. There are circumboreal species, but as far as we know they've spread “naturally” rather than at the hands of humans.

I was taught long ago that the Americas had an unmanaged, natural environment prior to Columbus, Jamestown, and Plymouth. But we now know that the Native Americans changed their environments to enhance food production. It may not have been agriculture in the European sense, but there was certainly sophisticated management of the landscape for human benefit.

When we decide we want to maintain or restore natural ecosystems what do we really mean? Do we want habitat restored to the managed environment of the early 15th century? Or some period before that? Or the period after the crash of Native American populations following the arrival of European diseases?

How do we decide? That brings us back to the “why care” question. We can't make intelligent choices in an information void. David Wagner, an Oregon botanist, wrote in an e-mail discussion, “I think it has to do with establishing empirical, ecological benchmarks against which we measure the effects of public policies that affect the environment. Without meaningful ecological concepts, we are left with only nebulous moral feelings to weigh against material values.”

Botanists, both amateur and professional, have a key role to play in understanding our environment. Without plants there wouldn't be higher life forms, including us. Native plants are much more than a pretty decoration on our planet. They have a significant place and the more we know about them and their interactions the better the decisions we make about our environment so we all survive. That's a strong reason to care.

Chapter Highlights

Tri-Cities – Mary Ann Simmons

Our December meeting was our annual Holiday pot-luck. Once again there was good food and stimulating conversation. We also previewed some flower pictures one of our members was submitting to the State photography contest. There were some great photos of our eastern natives and we hope some will make it in next year's calendar. Speaking of calendars, if you haven't gotten your copy there are a few left; contact Mickie Chamness (mickiec@charter.net or 628-0709) or Laura Maier (maierji@whitman.edu).

In other news, we have a new treasurer – Dot Stuit. Thank you, Murrel for your service.

We've received a large number of slides from several wonderful photographers over the past several years. Dave Nelson has offered to archive the slides, and we'd like to start scanning the ones that could be used for educational or promotional purposes. If you're interested in helping decide which slides we should scan, please contact Dave at 627-6286 or daveandlin@verizon.net.

Greg Park is planning our spring field trips, if you have a favorite hike or a place you would like to go contact him at the meeting or gbpark@urx.com. We are hoping to have a trip to the Juniper Dunes and one with the Ice Age Floods Institute.

The Tapteal Greenway Associations has recently been awarded a River Trails and Conservation Assistance Grant from the National Park Service. The purpose of the grant is to facilitate public open space planning in the greater Tri-Cities area. They will identify areas for conservation and work with local governments to ensure their protection. If you are interested in participating in this process by sitting on the steering committee, please contact Bob Fortman (Robertjfortman@aol.com).

Walla Walla – Nancy Berlier

The January meeting featured Alison Bower, of the CURB (Creating Urban Riparian Buffers) project; she talked about how the organization works with home owners and schools adjacent to city streams to protect the water quality and fish habitat for resident bull trout and migrating salmonids. Initially two streams, Yellowhawk and Garrison Creeks were identified for riparian restoration; there are over 300 residents and two schools along these streams. Recently, Stone Creek and Russell Creeks have been tested and added to the project. Two demonstration areas have begun the restoration process. Competing non-native plants were removed (unless needed for bank stability); and, native streamside willow and other shrubs were planted. Additionally, "hot spots" have been identified in highly degraded riparian areas; 30 restoration projects with homeowners and several at Garrison Middle School are planned. Working cooperatively CURB and the homeowners prepare an agreement detailing site preparation, planting and a ten-year maintenance plan. CURB contributes 75% of funding and the homeowners are asked to contribute 25% in kind or cash. CURB is also developing a demonstration project at the Middle school; CURB pays for plants and technical guidance; students design and install the native plants. Alison shared a video of two restoration projects; both were quite impressive. Maybe we could go on a field trip one day! If you are interested in learning more about the project, workshops, native plant list, etc. contact Alison at abower@gohighspeed.com. Ph. 522-6340x3 or wwccd.net

The second speaker for the evening was Augusta Farnum who is championing the use of native plants in residential yards. She is requesting sources of native plants, and is supportive of community and homeowner efforts to plant natives. Contact her at abeel@gohighspeed.com

Spring Timing : The February *Natural History*, pg. 14, reports "Spring green-up - when plant bud burst open at winter's end - has been arriving ahead of schedule in the northern United States for the past twenty-five years, as a result of global warming." Perhaps we could choose a few early plants, say yellow bells (*Fritillaria pudica*) and/or inflated grasswidow (*Olsynium douglasii inflatum*) and keep a record of bloom times in various locations.



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

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At the Demonstration Garden - The great Walla Walla windstorm blew tumbleweeds and their friends over the fence. Nancy Berlier & Laura dressed in protective clothing and cleaned up. They also repaired the weed-suppressing paper. The garden shed, with its hundreds of annoying little screws, remained intact.

Downtown Land Trust Plaza large pots - It is hard to believe, but a penstemon was removed from a pot in January! While a sign won't deter plant vandals, we still hope downtown foundation will agree to some type of sign for the pots to inform the public about these native plants.

Many thanks to Marianne Uyeda for sharing her photos of native plants in the Demonstration Garden. Some photos were used in a presentation for the WWCC class, "Grasses for Ornamental & Native Landscapes"

Salvage and restoration

Tri-Cities *Greg Park*

Volunteering with US Fish and Wildlife

Interesting volunteer opportunities abound with the US Fish and Wildlife Service. During December they needed help with native plant restoration in burned areas on the Hanford Monument. I had not done this kind of volunteer work before so did not know what to expect. They said it could be cold, wet, and possibly involve heavy work. So on a cold weekday morning I arrived at the Richland office about 6 am. Along with another volunteer, we headed to the warehouse on Rattlesnake Mountain to get gas for the trucks and pickup plants. The warehouse had many boxes of plants, mostly sagebrush, what a strong fragrance! Then we headed to the Vernita Rest Area, where we met up with the planting crews who were from Ashland Oregon. Next we headed to an area near Wahluke ponds where we spent a cold day outside talking about nature and "guy stuff". Our job was preparing the plants for the planting crew. Some plants were planted with a large white tablet. I believe that was a water retaining agent. Some were planted without. We dipped the bare root plants in a stinky dark brown mycorrhizal solution. Then the planters would take them in their packs or they would be transported in an ATV to the planting location.

The second day and third day involved more sagebrush planting, even in the snow! On the 4th day we prepared a variety of plants: golden currant, black cottonwood, sumac, 2 varieties of willow, wild rose, and red osier dogwood. All bare root. Before planting, a large tractor with a large mower deck was used to mow weedy grasses, young Russian olive trees, etc. While I was watching the mowing, a bird flew close by, and landed on a box right by us - a female yellowheaded blackbird, the first one I have ever seen.

Volunteering turned out to be a great experience. It was very cold, somewhat wet and dirty. The work was not too hard. I hope to be able to help again in the future, maybe during March when they monitor curlew.

Upcoming Events

Tri-Cities

February 6, 2008, Wednesday at 7 p.m. – Monthly Meeting. Our February program will feature Traci Degerman. Traci will relate her experiences as a seasonal employee with the ecological restoration program at Mount Rainier National Park. Traci has worked for the park since 2005; she will discuss the flood events that occurred in Mount Rainier National Park in November 2006 and the actions taken in response to them. Meeting will be at the Consolidated Information Center (Library) at WSU Tri-Cities, rm. 210-212

February 22-23, Friday / Saturday, – Home and Garden Show We will once again have a display at the show. If you can help for a few hours one day please contact: Mickie Chamness (mickiec@charter.net or 628-0709) or there will be a sign up at the February meeting.

February 23, Saturday, 9am – Planting at Horn Rapids Park. USFW has donated 500 bitterbrush and is looking for volunteers. There will be dibble bars or bring your own shovel. Meet at Meacham bldg (stay right as you enter the park). Contact Adam Fyall at 783-3118 ext. 3 if you have questions. They'll also be installing artificial burrows for burrowing owls.

Walla Walla

February 7, 2008, Thursday Noon. First Thursday Lunch. Meet at the downstairs table at Reid Campus Center, at Park and Boyer. Informal discussion of issues related to native plants. Bring a book to exchange if you like. WNPS calendars will be available for \$10.

February 13, 2008, Wednesday at 7:00 p.m. - Monthly Meeting Room 151 in the Whitman Hall of Science. Our speaker will be Kirt Onthank, doctoral student at Walla Walla University discussing identification of the beautiful and diverse plants of the Blue Mountains. Botany Washington photos will be available. If you are early, enjoy local plant photographs and identification with Steve Roy at 6:45.

Other Events

Tapteal Bend Phase 2 Restoration Workday – February 2, 2008 at 9 a.m. Work will involve trash clean up, pruning and planting. See the Tapteal Greenway web page for details and directions: <http://www.tapteal.org/calendarlist.php#2008-02-02>

First Saturday Bird Walk – February 2, 2008, 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.

Arid Lands – the movie - starting February 8 at Carmike 8 theater. The movie will be shown for a week. Great scenery and a pretty fair representation of Hanford. Janelle Downs is interviewed, as well as Dr Bill Rickard.

Second Saturday at McNary Education Center – February 9, 2008, 9am to noon. Celebrate the National Wildlife Refuges. 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.mcnary.wa.us/>

Managing Shrub-Steppe at a Landscape Scale: Protecting Native Habitats and Greater Sage Grouse – February 11, 2008 at 7pm; Room 119, Glenn Anthon Hall, Yakima Valley Community College. This is part of the lecture series for the Central Washington Chapter of the Native Plant Society. (map - www.yvcc.edu/Map/campusmapcolor.pdf)

Rare Care Training – Saturday April 5, 2008 in Wenatchee. Application deadline **March 14, 2008**. Would you like to help monitor the rare plants in our state? Rare Care has a program to train volunteers, if you are interested, applications are available at : <http://courses.washington.edu/rarecare/VolunteerOpportunities.htm#Training>

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