



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*

Tessa Grasswitz knows good books! She recommended a Native Plant Society publication to me and suggested I might like it. She was right! The book is titled “Walking in the Beauty of the World, Reflections of a Northwest Botanist” by Joseph Arnett. It contains twenty four short chapters on a variety of subjects. There is one chapter that especially resonates with me. It is titled simply “Gardening with Native Plants”. The words come off the page and speak to me. I think it explains my appreciation for native plants. Tessa and I highly recommend this book.

My favorite chapter is reprinted in this newsletter with the permission of the author. The book is available from the Washington Native Plant Society for \$8.00 plus \$2.00 shipping. Check it out at on the web site www.wnps.org/publications.

It’s nominating committee time again. The Chapter will need three people to serve as the nominating committee for selecting candidates for next year’s Board positions. The existing Board will elect an *ad hoc* Nominating Committee for the purpose of nominating candidates for the new Board at the March meeting. It is the responsibility of this committee to submit for publishing in the newsletter a list of Board candidates to be mailed to the membership prior to the annual membership meeting in June. Let us know of your interest in this activity.

Chapter Highlights

Tri-Cities – *Mary Ann Simmons*

Our February speaker was Traci Degerman, a member of the Columbia Basin chapter and the owner of Ecosystem Aesthetics LLC, a native plant landscape design and restoration business based in Richland. She gave a presentation about her experience of working for the National Park Service at Mount Rainier as an ecological restoration technician and planner in the summers of 2005 through 2007. She spoke about the development of the restoration program at the national park, its functions, goals and challenges. The restoration program at Mount Rainier National Park (MORA) was initiated in the early 1970’s in response to the ecological degradation taking place in the park’s subalpine meadows as a result of excessive visitor use and off-trail hiking. Much of the restoration work occurs in the meadows at Paradise and Sunrise, the two most popular visitor destinations in the park. Restoration program personnel document the impacts to vegetation, prioritize sites according to factors such as the severity of the impact and the steepness of the terrain, collect seeds and cuttings from native plants in adjacent undisturbed areas for greenhouse propagation, and revegetate damaged sites with the propagated plants. The restoration program is also responsible for controlling invasive, non-native plant species in the park; weed management efforts include both manual and chemical control methods.

Traci also talked about the severe flooding that occurred at MORA in November 2007. She shared photos taken by park personnel during and after the flood, and discussed the resulting damage and subsequent recovery efforts. Traci also described some of the controversial actions that were taken in the flood’s aftermath and some issues that remain unresolved. She encouraged attendees to become involved by volunteering with the MORA restoration program, and expressing support for the program via letters to the superintendent or donations through Washington’s National Park Fund. She also provided information about a Web site where people can participate in the public comment periods for park management and planning decisions. The addresses and emails are -

Superintendent / Mount Rainier National Park / 55210 238th Ave. E. / Ashford, WA 98304

The MORA Volunteers in Parks (VIP) Program:
<http://www.nps.gov/mora/supportyourpark/volunteer.htm>

Washington's National Park Fund / P.O. Box 4646 / Seattle, WA 98104
<http://onwebmanager.net/wnpf/view/view.php3?nt=1201298192>

The National Park Service's Planning, Environment and Public Comment (PEPC) website: <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/>

Other Items –

Many thanks to all who helped with the Home and Garden Show! Sounds like it was a hit.

Our chapter will sponsor an award at the upcoming Mid-Columbia Science Fair for a project involving the ecology and/or native plants of the Columbia Basin.

We've received a large number of slides from several wonderful photographers over the past several years most recently from Marge Ann McCormack. 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 like pretty flowers (and shrubs and grasses) and would like to help us - please contact Dave at 627-6286 or daveandlin@verizon.net. Or talk to Dave or Mickie Chamness at the next meeting.

Speaking of photos – Mickie Chamness is planning a photo contest. There will be more information at our March meeting and in next month's newsletter.

The City of Richland is planning on issuing a call for development of the City View property (between the City shops on Duportail and the Yakima River). We would like to delay this call until the open space planning process of the River, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program is completed. Letters can be sent to Bill King and Gary Ballew by March 5 or the City Council by March 13. There will be tours of the property on March 2 (1pm) and March 12 (6pm). Contact Donna Lucas (jenluc@hughes.net; 967-5913) or Shannon Hays-Truex (mike.shannon@verizon.net, 946-4813) for more information.

Walla Walla – Laura Maier

Kirt Onthank, is a biology graduate student at Walla Walla University who is, at present, studying the life of the octopus, however, at our February meeting he spoke to us as a botanist. Kirt has taught systematic botany and worked for the Forest Service in the Blue Mountains for a summer, and also was a trip leader for the June, 2007 Botany WA.

Kirt described the enormous biodiversity found in the Blue Mountains. His advice was that we could appreciate the plants better by knowing them, and he was confident that we could know them better. He showed us helpful identification books including *Wildflowers of the Pacific Northwest* by Mark Turner and Phyllis Gustafson and *Plants of Southern Interior British Columbia and the Inland Northwest* by Robert Parish. Both of these books are listed on Columbia Basin Chapter Website.

Kirt explained that it's easier to have a general framework to narrow the field, since there are so many flowering plants. By learning simple cues for each family, you get a better handle on identifying the plant. For example, Fabaceae (the pea family) can be identified by the wings and keel of the flower. The Rosaceae (rose) family is very diverse but two hallmarks are the many stamens and the single cup-like structure of the floral tube or hypanthium. For the aster family, Kirt showed a slide with the petals pulled away from the flower to highlight both the ray flowers and the disc flowers.

Kirt remarked that it was easy to notice the bright yellow Sabine's Lupine. With its larger size and vigorous leaves *Sabini* looked as if it intended to beat up the other plants in the forest, while the wimpy sulphur lupine was pale, sickly yellow, not a hearty plant like Sabine's. Far from the Victorian language found in botanical descriptions, Kirt was enthusiastic about the "need-to-see" blue color of the stamens of *Collomia*.



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

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After an evening of tips on the shape of the leaves, the arrangements of the petals, and comments on the moist shady habitat of a certain plant, we all began to look forward to spring and summer hikes with a new confidence. Afterwards Kirt welcomed people to delve into his stack of pressed flower samples. A bonus will be copies of the Floral Diversity the Northern Blue Mountains CD available to Native Plant Society members and friends. Listening to a young expert was entertaining for the gray-haired audience.

Other Items – A Wish List for Habitat Preservation in Walla Walla County

At our Thursday noon lunch on February 7, Betsy Kaiser, Nancy Berlier, Mary Patton, Priscilla Dauble, and Laura Maier considered the loss of natural land in Walla Walla County and what valued land might be preserved. We prioritized our wishes as follows:

1. Wallula Gap: For the shrub-steppe, the field of Mariposa lilies, the migrating birds, the wide-ranging view of the Columbia Basin and the Blue mountains.
2. Patches of farmland in the Walla Walla/ College Place Urban area: Much of this land is quickly being lost and along with it, habitat for native wildlife and birds near the urban area. New homes, paving and shopping centers cover land where springs were replenished and quail, pheasants and wildflowers recently lived. Perhaps patches of land could be strung together to maintain an easily accessible corridor of native habitat, close to our urban area, which could be enjoyed by people and by birds and other wildlife.
3. Perhaps a generous swath, following the trace of the Lewis & Clark Trail: In honor of Lewis and Clark, we could preserve some of the land to the west of the Touchet River, near the Plucker farm and the sand dune area in the Eureka Flats. There could be trails for people and horses.
4. Copei Ridge: This area provides water for Waitsburg and also contains an excellent foothills habitat for birds and native plants.
5. Tiger Creek Watershed, outside the limits of the National Forest: Land adjacent to the Tiger Canyon Road, in Oregon, contains a nice aspen grove, as well as some special ferns. This is private land.

Salvage and restoration

Tri-Cities *Mickie Chamness*

Mickie has some native bluebunch wheatgrass tublings that need to be planted soon on Badger Mountain. The work will be somewhat weather dependent and might be on a workday afternoon. If you are willing to help, please contact Mickie: 628-0709 or mickiec@charter.net

Upcoming Events

Tri-Cities

March 5, 2008, Wednesday at 7 p.m. – Monthly Meeting. Our March program will feature Mike Livingston. Mike is a District Wildlife Biologist for the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife in Pasco. He will talk about “Managing Shrub-Steppe at a Landscape Scale: Protecting Native Habitats and Greater Sage Grouse.” Meeting will be at the Consolidated Information Center (Library) at WSU Tri-Cities, rm. 210-212

Walla Walla

March 6, 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.

March 8, 2008, Saturday 8:30 AM. Field Trip to Juniper Canyon. Meet at the Whitman-Harper Joy Theatre parking lot. See what blooming in late winter; At one time this valley, flooded by the Ice Age floods, was considered for preservation by the Nature Conservancy. Is there a 100' juniper in the canyon? Plan to hike and scramble for two miles each way in the NWR Juniper Canyon and State Line Unit located a few miles into Oregon, beyond the WA border

March 12, 2008, Wednesday at 7:00 p.m.- Monthly Meeting Room 151 in the Whitman Hall of Science. Our speaker will be Ruth Whittaker, nursery manager for the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR) Tribal Native Plant Nursery located near the Umatilla River will speak about “Native-scaping from the Ground Up.” Her talk will focus on

medicinal native plants excellent for accents, rock and tub gardens. Learn about their native setting; Ruth will also demonstrate xeriscaping with some of her plants and substrate material. If you are early, enjoy local plant photographs and identification with Steve Roy at 6:45.

Every Friday at 1:00 - 2:30 - Gardening at the Demonstration Garden at the Blue Mountain Humane Society. Call Laura at 525-1079 or Nancy at 529-2253.

Other Events

First Saturday Bird Walk – March 1, 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.

Second Saturday at McNary Education Center – March 8, 2008, 9am to noon. Wildflowers, native plants. 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/>

Amon Basin Clean Up Work Party -March 8, 2008, 9 a.m. Meet at Claybell Park in South Richland (on Broadmoor St off of Leslie). Activities include cleaning up trash, installing signs, fixing gates and installing benches. We need pickup trucks or larger to haul trash to the dumpsters. Bring gloves and clothes to match the weather. **Contact:** Mike Lilga, (375-4354) or Kami Lowry, (371-7858)

Huckleberries: A Traditional Cultural Resource – March 10, 2008 at 7pm; Yakima Arboretum, Yakima This is part of the lecture series for the Central Washington Chapter of the Native Plant Society For more information - http://www.wnps.org/chapter_info/chapter_programs.html#central

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>

Gardening with Native Plants

from “*Walking in the Beauty of the World, Reflections of a Northwest Botanist*” by Joseph Arnett, text copyright@2004. With approval of the author and the WNPS.

Most revegetation is quit simple: Remove the weeds, plant native species, and fight the weeds from then on. Native species are the primary components of revegetation plans because they are adapted to the place they have occurred naturally and they provide habitat for the native fauna that are adapted to them.

But what about bringing native plants into our gardens? It we think of them as natural inhabitants of our piece of earth and as the species most likely to grow here without cultivation, why bother to encourage and nurture them?

I practice and advocate gardening with native plants for many good reasons. Although, as is often the case, the reasoning came after the practice. And before beginning, we should acknowledge that the plants most likely to grow outside our front door now, without human intervention, are not the local flora at all, but an assemblage of cosmopolitan weeds.

As a practical person, I would like to say that I raise native species because of their food and medicinal value, but the truth is I rarely eat native plants and am even less likely to use them for medicine. There are a few native plants I do eat, like cooked nettles in the spring or the leaves of mountain sorrel tucked into a cheese sandwich on a summer hike in the Cascades. And most notably, I have never come closer to tasting the wild sweet heart of nature than when gorging on blueberries (especially Cascade blueberries) in the mountains in September.

But this is really beside the point. None of these plants have ever been found in any garden I have worked in. If there is a practical aspect to gardening with native species at all, it is that they are adapted to the climate and soil of our region and are able to thrive, once established in the right places, without watering or fertilizer. This is especially valuable to gardeners who have big plans in the spring but then are drawn to other places, like the mountains, once summer arrives.

But the primary reason that I garden with native plants is simply that I am particularly fond of them. Some have become familiar through years of studying the plants of Washington. I enjoy bringing this relationship home. It is something akin to the habit of pioneering people to bring familiar and favorite plant species with them from their homelands. Some of these plants were useful, like black locust for tools and fence posts, or apples and cherries and vegetables for food. But early arrivals also brought roses and lilacs and daffodils. They were reminders of home. Maybe native plants are, in an iconic way, reminders of this home, this place where we live now, but that is being obliterated by human development.

The native garden is front of the Burke Museum at the University of Washington, always reminds me of the impact, to some one familiar with them, of native plants in the urban setting. They catch my eye, stir a feeling of familiarity and affection in a way that the rest of the grounds, as beautiful as they are, can't.

Even without the element of familiarity, many of our native plants are exceedingly beautiful. Of course, beauty is in the eye of the beholder, so I don't claim a lack of bias. But some of our native species are showy and easy to grow, including favorite shrubs like red-flowering current, mock-orange, shrubby cinquefoil, and shrubby penstemon, and herbaceous species like columbine and fawn lily and trillium. These are just a few of a long list.

Some of our natives, like white rhododendron, or Indian paintbrush, are not easy to grow in a garden. The difficulty in cultivating these species brings us to another value of growing native plants: it teaches us about symbiotic relationships, such as between mycorrhizal fungi, and the rhododendron, or between Indian paintbrush and the plants they parasitize. These ecological relationships may be invisible until we try to replicate them.

Native plants are also the food and shelter of the regional biota, in ways more complex than we can ever know completely. There are relationships with pollinators, herbivores, dispensers of seed, decomposers, animals, fungi, bacteria, protists, other plants. There are other organisms that eat plants, build nests in them, or penetrate their root cells, or that lay eggs under their bark or in growing stems. This is a biota that is under siege, fragmented and depleted. Without human assistance, native plant species are likely to die out in densely settled areas and with them is likely to go a whole assemblage of other organisms with needs closely tied to the native flora.

Native species remind us of where we are. They belong here. They look right. Native species are a small component of the plants that I see here as I walk back and forth to work every day. The urban vegetation is generally composed of weeds and horticultural varieties that are easy to propagate and transplant, trees that don't buckle the sidewalk or drop branches on cars, plants that are sometimes beautiful, but more often just showy. This vegetation has no particular connection to this part of the world, or to its unique fauna and flora. The urban vegetation is generally mass-produced, the chain stores and franchises of the plant world, predictable, but not all that flavorful or nourishing. (There are exquisite exceptions, gardens that are like the little Italian cafes of the plant world, but that is another topic.) What if all that we had to eat was what we could find in gas stations mini-marts? It would be a short life characterized by indigestion. Think of the plight of the regional fauna in this way.

The plants around us are more than decorations in a landscape of human activity. They are the foundation of the web of relationships between all of the forms of life: plant and insect; fungus, protist, and bird; mammal (including humans) and bacteria. We need to be reminded of this, or to learn it in the first place. Growing native plants can help us learn these essential lessons.

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