

The Potent Teller

Newsletter of the Salal Chapter of the Washington Native Plant Society
serving Northern Snohomish, Skagit and Island Counties

September 2016

Issue 3-16

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Brenda Cunningham

Are you looking for more ways to develop and enjoy your botany skills? Want to contribute to plant research? There are a number of well-established citizen-science programs that offer opportunities for you to help further conservation and understanding of plant communities. For the most part you do not need to be a professional botanist, but these programs do help you hone your identification skills, using all the tools out there from botanical keys to herbaria and online resources. And for me, the best part of these programs is getting to know Washington's plant communities near and far from home.

My favorite program is called Rare Plant Care and Conservation (<http://depts.washington.edu/uwbg/rarecare/>). This UW Botanic Gardens program recruits and trains volunteers to visit the sites of rare plant reports, sometimes from long ago, and gather up-to-date information about location, number, and condition of these plants. It is a treasure hunt for plants. All the sites are on public lands, from close to home to across the state. You choose how far you want to travel and you don't have to do it alone. You can partner with other volunteers. The program also needs help at the office in Seattle, where they have long term storage of seeds of these rare species. If interested send them a note to be placed on the email list for a Seattle-based training opportunity in the winter.

This past spring several Salal Chapter members attended a training of the Pacific Northwest Invasive Plant Council (www.pnw-ipc.org). This organization has approached the problem of invasive plant species by educating as many people as possible to recognize the problem plants and report them, hopefully before the population takes off. In some cases volunteers are encouraged to remove the plants, but in other cases the land managers would prefer to send in an employee to remove the plants so they can monitor the site in the future. I first learned of this program during a WNPS study weekend plant hike when 2 participants kept hanging back and pulling weeds. They caught up to the rest of us and still learned a lot from the hike, but they also performed a good service while out there. Trainings occur in the spring throughout the state.

BioBlitz is an event where teams of people try to identify as many species as possible in a given geographic area. The events I am most familiar with in our area are hosted by the National Park Service. They are always looking for more people to help identify and report plant species.

(<https://www.nps.gov/subjects/biodiversity/national-parks-bioblitz.htm>). This event occurs in May each year.

And if you are a homebody and would like to know how you can contribute without driving for hours, there is the National Phenology Network (usanpn.org). Using the tools online you can observe and contribute information to the datasets about the timings of leaf out to leaf fall without leaving your yard. It seems like every year we are making guesses about how early or late the season is in relation to the norm. Here is a program that helps us track that and provide the information to land managers and research scientists to address issues from climate science to wildfire threats. Sign up online anytime to receive the newsletter and become an observer.

I know there are many more interesting programs in which we can use our passion for plants to contribute to the collective knowledge of the natural world. If you have some to recommend, please let me know and I will share them with others. I have come to really enjoy walking in the mountains with these projects in mind. There is so much we learn from each other and I see these programs as ways in which that knowledge can be documented and benefit the future. Happy Trails!



Brenda Cunningham

UPCOMING SALAL CHAPTER MEETINGS

Saturday, September 17, 10 – 12 noon at the Padilla Bay Interpretive Center.

Jim Clark of the Pilchuck Audubon Chapter will discuss "Attracting Birds and Other Wildlife to Your Garden with Native Plants". The talk will cover landscaping and gardening strategies that provide basic habitat features (food, water, cover, places to raise young) and regionally selected native plants that can enhance the quality of habitat for birds, butterflies and other pollinators. Discussion will also focus on plant selection to provide food (flowers, berries, seeds, nuts) as well as dense plantings for cover and places to raise young. Jim will provide a number of references that are useful in helping gardeners select plants for specific garden conditions (dry, wet, sunny, shady) and needs (ground cover, low growing, or tall canopy additions). Additionally, information on native plant demonstration gardens in the area, such as the Pilchuck-sponsored Native Plant and Wildlife Habitat Demonstration Garden in Edmonds, will be provided.



Brenda Cunningham

Saturday, November 19, 10 – noon at the Padilla Bay Interpretive Center.

Revising Hitchcock and Cronquist's *Flora of the Pacific Northwest*, presented by Ben Legler.

Published in 1973 by C. Leo Hitchcock and Arthur Cronquist, the *Flora of the Pacific Northwest* remains the primary reference manual for identifying vascular plants in Washington and surrounding areas. However, the *Flora* has become substantially outdated and unusable due to rapid increases in our knowledge of taxonomic classifications, coupled with the discovery of new species and arrival of new exotics. Those using the

Flora today can only arrive at a current name and correct identification for less than half of the species in the Northwest. Clearly, a new flora is needed.

Well, the time has finally come! In 2012, almost 40 years after the original *Flora* was published, the University of Washington Herbarium began production of a second edition of the *Flora*. Slated for completion in 2017, this revised *Flora* will be fully updated with current classifications and nomenclature, many new keys and illustrations, and many additional taxa, while retaining the original book's familiar look and layout. Once again, we'll have a single resource covering all vascular plants known to occur wild in our region. Ben Legler will share how the Herbarium is tackling the task of writing a flora, the status of the process, and what the new *Flora* will look like. Along the way we'll learn about some of the changes that have occurred in our flora—such as the exciting discoveries of new species and the often not-so-welcome disintegration of familiar families and genera.

Ben works for the University of Washington Herbarium and has extensively collected and photographed plants throughout the Pacific Northwest and Rocky Mountains. In addition to being an outstanding botanist and student of our flora, Ben is known to many in the region as the designer and developer of both the Plants of Washington Image Gallery, where he has contributed over 9,000 of his own photos of plants from across Washington, and the Consortium of Pacific Northwest Herbaria database, which provides online access to over 2.5 million herbarium specimens. Ben's primary focus now is working on the revised *Flora of the Pacific Northwest*.



Gentiana douglasiana Ben Legler

SALAL NATIVE PLANT GARDEN UPDATE

Brenda Cunningham, Native Plant Garden
Coordinator

Thanks to all the volunteers who have helped during these hot summer days. After mid-July we have held off working in the garden because of the heat, but the nursery has needed more attention than ever to keep plants watered sufficiently. I look forward to the fall weather when we can get back into the garden and plant again.

In the garden you may notice a few new stumps in places where we did not have trees before. A friend contributed several stumps of old nut trees that he was removing. These we set up in the garden to serve as platforms on which to grow plants that need to put roots into rotting wood, such as bunchberry (*Cornus unalaschensis*) and red huckleberry (*Vaccinium parvifolium*). A huckleberry has already been planted in one and in the fall we will drill holes and plant bunchberries.

We have scheduled our fall plant sale – mark your calendars for October 15th from 10 am to noon. If you would like to help with the sale or preparations in advance, please let me know: nativegarden@fidalgo.net. We have propagated a few things from the garden this year that I am pleased to see doing well and we are entering a partnership with Plantas Nativa Nursery to offer some species we do not have available right now. So, tell your friends and watch for an email with the plant list later this month.

Everyone is welcome to join us at volunteer events in the garden. Here are the events scheduled for this fall:

Volunteer events at the display garden this fall, 10 am to 1 pm:

September 14th, weeding and planting in the garden

October 7th, weeding and planting in the garden

October 14th, Plant Sale set up

October 15th, Plant Sale (please arrive by 9:30 if you are helping)

Please let me know if you would like to be on an email notification list for these events. I usually send out a reminder once a month. Or if you would like to be notified of the date of the fall plant sale, I can put you on a separate list for that purpose.

Brenda Cunningham, see you in the garden!
nativegarden@fidalgo.net

The Potent Teller

Salal Chapter Summer Hikes: Report from Lucie

Perry Creek, off the Mountain Loop Highway, is famous with botanists for the variety of ferns. Our group of nine certainly found this to be true. We even identified the rare Anderson's sword fern. It was a lovely day and we all enjoyed the hike, the company and many spring flowers.

We also hiked Chiwaukum Creek, towards Leavenworth. Our group of nine saw many east-of-the-mountains spring flowers. The most spectacular was *Tweedy's lewisia*. Even people who are not interested in flowers can't help but say "wow" upon seeing this one. Again we enjoyed the hike and the fine companions.

Next we hiked Skyline Divide in the North Cascades. The twelve of us saw many fine flowers and learned a few things about those we looked up. This trail is famous for great views. Unfortunately we were in the clouds all day, which we drove out of as we descended. We had a good time talking, resting and eating on the ridge.



Polustichum andersonii

Brenda Cunningham

WNPS NEWS

Study Weekend Reports and photos at

http://www.wnps.org/study_weekend/postevent.html

October 15th is the last day to vote for the WNPS State Board of Directors. Information about the candidates and a mail-in ballot are in the latest issue of *Douglasia*. You can also find a link to an electronic ballot on the WNPS home page (<http://www.wnps.org>) just below the photo of the *genitian*.

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FALL CALENDAR

Impromptu Walks/Hikes with Lucie

Lucie Johns will continue to schedule and lead plant hikes on short notice during the summer. If you want to be on that list please send her your e-mail address luciejohns@hotmail.com



Lunch at Perry Creek

Brenda Cunningham

Friends of Fidalgo Pool and Fitness Center Fall Gardening Sale

Saturday, September 24th - 8 until noon

booksmarcia09@gmail.com

Salal Chapter Native Plant Sale,

Saturday, October 15th - 10 until noon at the garden.

Green Everett Day

**Saturday, October 15th - 9 until noon,
Howarth Park**

At the Green Everett Partnership, we work to grow healthy communities, both of forests and of people. On October 15th, we are holding the 3rd annual Green Everett Day, a celebration our urban forests and the hard work the community has done to keep them healthy. This is our favorite day of the year because it is the beginning of planting season! Over 100 other volunteers will gather at Howarth Park to plant a forest and celebrate the work we are accomplishing in this partnership. There will be raffle prizes, food, special community guests, and a few more surprises.

To register:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/greeneverettday2016>

Friends of the Forest Hikes

The Friends of the Forest is a not for profit, citizen organization dedicated to the preservation of the Anacortes Community Forest Lands through education, outreach, and stewardship. For more information about our group or these hikes please contact Denise Crowe or Jean Andrich at 293-3725. You may also visit our website www.friendsoftheacfl.org or email us at info@friendsoftheacfl.org. Please understand that our hikes are for people only, we ask that you leave your pets at home. Hope to see you in the woods!

All Ages Hikes

Great for families and folks of all ages, these are hearty hikes led by our naturalist, Denise Crowe.

Erie View Trail

Saturday, September 10th - 10am until noon

This is a trail of wonders, twisting and turning through prime wetland wildlife corridor all the way to a hidden meadow. The views of Lake Erie and Mount Erie are a rare treat. This hike is approximately 2.8 miles. Meet at the base of Mount Erie on Ray Auld Drive.

Sugarloaf Mountain

Saturday, October 8th - 10am until noon

Experience the golden glow of Sugarloaf Mountain in October. We will hike from the dark woods at the base to the stunning summit view, enjoying every stretch in between. Meet at the trailhead on Ray Auld Drive at the bottom of Mount Erie just off of Heart Lake Road.

Bat Cave

Saturday, October 29th - 10am until about noon

Come to the woods for a natural spook time that will help transition us all to the nocturnal season. Our annual bat cave exploration is fun for everyone. Costumes and flashlights are welcome. Meet at the Little Cranberry Lake parking lot on the north end of the lake.

Whistle Lake

Saturday, November 19th - 10am until noon

Late Fall in the woods is a time of hushed beauty. Prepare yourself for the holiday season with a deep forest immersion. Meet at the Whistle Lake parking lot at the end of Whistle Lake Road.



Kopsiopsis hookeri Brenda Cunningham

Senior/Adult hikes

For any adult with a desire to learn more about our community forest through an easy hike in fine company, with Denise.

Northwest Heart

Friday, September 9th - 10am until noon

We will explore a maze of trails in the Ace of Hearts Creek terrain. There will be some gentle hills on this just over 1 mile hike. Meet at the Heart Lake parking lot.

Big Beaver Pond Loop

Friday, October 14th - 10am until noon

This gentle, just over one mile hike will lead us past three distinct wetlands and through two watersheds. You will come to know the qualities of a marsh, swamp, bog, and fen. We will explore the role of our resident beaver families in creating and sustaining this rich habitat within the ACFL. Enjoy this excellent birding opportunity. Meet at the end of 32nd St west off of D Ave.

Heart Lake Old Growth

Friday, November 18th - 10am until noon

We have the best remaining stand of Puget Sound lowland old growth forest right here on Fidalgo Island in the heart of our community forest. Come along and experience the big old trees. Meet at the base of Mount Erie on Ray Auld Drive.

Whistle Lake

Friday, December 9th - 10am until noon

The hush of Whistle near winter solstice couldn't be farther from the madding crowd of summer. Enjoy our deep water jewel of the forest during the season of recharge, and feel the stored sunlight energy emanating from the green. Meet at the Whistle Lake parking lot at the end of Whistle Lake Road.

The Potent Teller

Extra Gentle Hikes (New Offering!)

Each of these outings is a mile or less on gentle trails and will last about an hour.

Sugarloaf Mountain Old Growth

Wednesday, October 19th - 5pm until 6pm

Tucked in to the bottom of Sugarloaf lies a sweet trail through ancient trees. Meet at the base of Mount Erie on Ray Auld Drive.

Whistle Lake Madrona Point

Wednesday, November 30th - 9am until 10am

We will walk in to the Lake on a wide gravel road and enjoy the view! Meet at the Whistle Lake parking lot.

Fast Paced Fitness Hike - For the very fit only! For people that want to move fast through the forest, and already know that they can! These offerings are led by Jean and some of our board members who love to get out in the woods and really cover some ground.

Whistle Lake Curly Q – a fitness odyssey

Saturday, November 12th - 10am to 1:30pm

Distance: 8.2 miles

Join Jean, Monica, Lin and Scott on November 12th. Come walk in circles with the Friends of the Forest on our next fitness hike. This fast-paced 8-mile hike for the very fit will begin at the Heart Lake parking lot at 10 am. Hikers will experience the many ups and downs of the northwest section of the Whistle Lake forest lands as we walk in three connecting circles, on different trails, around and to Little Round Top. We will finish the hike by returning to Heart Lake about 1:30 pm. Bring water and a snack and meet at the Heart Lake parking lot.



Brenda Cunningham

What Color Is That?

Jim Duemmel

Humans are very visually oriented for incoming information – and color is a crucial element of what we see. But what color? Crimson, red, vermillion, maroon? Purple, violet, blue? Do individuals, including the authors of flower guides, agree on the boundaries of these hues?

Common Camas, *Camissia quamash*, is blue. A favorite quote from the journals of the Lewis and Clark expedition illustrates this: "... the quawmash is now in blume and from the colour of its bloom at a short distance it resembles lakes of fine clear water, so complete is this deseption that on first sight I could have swoarn it was water." (June 12, 1806, in their spelling) But which blue? West of the Cascades Common Camas is a very deep blue. East of the Cascades it is much paler. If you are accustomed to Skagit County camas you might be surprised by some plants in central Washington, perhaps even stopping to look more closely to be sure of your identification.

Plants sometimes try to fool us. Have you seen pure white flowers on Elkhorn Clarkia (*Clarkia pulchella*), Common Camas, Red-flowering Currant, Western Groundsel (*Senecio intergerimus* var. *ochroleucus*), or Shrubby Cinquefoil? These may be recognized varieties, "sports", or horticultural products. Pacific Waterleaf, *Hydrophyllum tenuipes*, a regular lowland forest plant locally, is white flowered in our area but frequently a lovely blue on the Olympic Peninsula.

The coral-root orchids give a particularly interesting example of color variation. Striped (*Corallorhiza striata*), Western (*C. mertensiana*) and Spotted Coral-roots (*C. maculata*) are fairly often observed in our area. Yellow Coral-root (*C. trifida*) is rare – and sightings are fervently sought, sometimes too fervently. Spotted Coral-root plays with our expectations. Usually the central lower petal is white with dark purple spots. But that petal can be pure white - unspotted. Some authors then give it the incongruous name *C. maculata* var. *immaculata*! Or the whole plant can be very pale, indeed rather yellowish, just what someone looking for Yellow Coral-root is expecting. Recently there was an excellent example of this variation in Washington Park. The plant persisted for several years but unfortunately has died as far as I know. The accompanying photograph shows several stems of this plant with a "normal" Spotted Coral-root plant nearby. Several close-up photos of this plant exists on the WTU Image Collection (<http://biology.burke.washington.edu/herbarium/imagecollection.php>). (This website is an invaluable

resource for checking plant identifications. Be sure to visit it if you have never used it before.)



Jim Duemmel

Three times I have seen plant watchers, almost ecstatic at finally having found a Yellow Coral-root, reluctantly talked down to the realization that indeed they are looking at a variant Spotted Coral-root. (One of those times involved me talking myself down.) Actually the shapes of the two flowers are recognizably different. The technically decisive and convincing feature appears on the two side sepals: on Yellow Coral-root these sepals have a single vein (nerve) where Spotted has three usually. A hand lens helps to see this. This distinction is evident on some of the close-up photos on the WTU Image Collection.

Plant watchers are frequently bird watchers also – and color problems can occur with birds – and bird guides - also. When the first printing of the revised edition of The Sibley Guide to Birds appeared there was a flurry of comment on the web about the color rendition in the revision. Recently when I was looking over a flock of shorebird on Semiahmoo Spit in Blaine another bird watcher approached and asked "What shorebird has red legs?" I was stumped and asked for other field marks. "It was brown and black above" was the reply. I was still stumped. A few minutes after she walked away a Ruddy Turnstone with very bright orange legs and bold brown and black markings above showed itself in the flock I was watching. Could bright orange be seen as "red"? Yes, color is crucial in many plant identifications. Many popular identification guides are organized on color as a basis. But watch it. Color can play tricks on you.

From the Herbarium Image Collection



Corallorhiza maculate var. maculata Ron Bockelman



Hydrophyllum tenuipes Ben Legler

SALAL CHAPTER ONLINE

The Salal Chapter maintains an email list of our members so we can send out timely notice of events between issues of the *Potent Teller*. If you'd like to be included or removed from the list, email Brenda Cunningham nativegarden@fidalgo.net

You can now receive the Potent Teller via email! If you'd like to receive the newsletter in PDF format instead of paper, email Tara McGown at kcrozier@frontier.com.

Salal Chapter Summer Hikes: Report from Peggy

June 15, 2016: 12 people showed up on this cold and damp morning to hike Sauk Mountain. However, the indication of snow at the trailhead led us to the Baker Lake Trail instead. It was a good choice as we had a beautiful hike and even had lunch at the lake under blue skies. As always it's interesting to learn so many new plants and to appreciate the incredible variety that we have here in the North Cascades. I was particularly thrilled to be able to differentiate between the fern varieties.

July 20, 2016: Four of us met at the Cook Road Park and Ride for a hike up Heliotrope Ridge. It was a beautiful day to hike the forest, picnic at the creek crossing, then continue to the edge of the Coleman Glacier. As we popped out of the trees, the wildflowers were out showing their colors under the blue sky. Once again, hikes like this one make me so appreciative of our beautiful mountains!

Please direct address changes to Washington Native Plant Society, 6310 NE 74th St, Suite 215E, Seattle, WA 98115, 206-527-3210 or call toll free 1-888-288-8022 or email wnps@wnps.org.

The Washington Native Plant Society (WNPS) is dedicated to the preservation, conservation, and study of the native plants of Washington and to the education of the public on the values of native flora and its habitat.

Salal Chapter Officers

Chair: Brenda Cunningham
Treasurer: Jean Birdsall
Secretary: Kathy Murray
Chapter Botanist: Vacant

Visit our website at www.wnps.org/salal

The Potent Teller is issued four times yearly on the first of March, June, September and December. Direct submissions to: Tara McGown PO Box 26 Rockport, WA 98283 (360-853-8375), email kcrozier@frontier.com. Please direct address changes to Washington Native Plant Society, 6310 NE 74th St, Suite 215E, Seattle, WA 98115, 206-527-3210 or call toll free 1-888-288-8022 or email wnps@wnps.org.

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