Over the years Society members have enjoyed documenting the native plants of favorite trails and favorite parks. In 2003 WNPS put over 300 native plant lists for these favorite places online. Now, anyone can access and print these guides to help them learn the native plants on their next hike and discover the amazing diversity of Washington’s natural heritage.

The Washington Native Plant Society continues to grow as an organization providing more activities, programs and public outreach than ever before. Chapters continue to offer speakers, field trips, workshops and plant sales involving the membership and the public. Our Native Plant Stewardship, Ivy OUT and Growing Wild programs heighten awareness of the value of native plant ecosystems and sustainable living. More and more newspapers and magazines are writing about wildflowers along the trail and the joys of native plant gardening. We are running to keep pace with the interest and enthusiasm.

In 2003 it was time, once again, to take stock of our history, our current endeavors and plan for the future with some strategic thinking. To strengthen our conservation efforts WNPS will focus on loss of native plant habitat.

The Society continued to give small grants for education and research projects. Particularly popular among schools is the development of native plant gardens. Teachers integrate the natural history and ecology of native plants into their science curricula.

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New Strategic Plan Provides Focus for Society’s Efforts

WNPS undertook the development of a new Strategic Plan in 2003 to provide direction and guidance for the next five years. The most significant change in approach embodied in the new plan is an explicit intent to focus available energy and other resources on a small number of focus areas. WNPS believes this will make us a more effective organization both in terms of specific accomplishments and in terms of how the Society is perceived by other organizations and by the general populace.

In the next five years WNPS will increase its efforts to protect native plant habitat. Conversion of native plant habitat to other uses and habitat degradation particularly by invasive species is of major concern. WNPS will be focusing on two of the most imperiled ecosystems in Washington: Garry Oak woodlands and shrub steppe grasslands.

Our third area of focus will be non-native invasive species which threaten all native plant habitat in Washington.

This focus will help us manage our resources and goals effectively.
Garry Oak Woodlands and Associated Prairies

Garry oak (Quercus garry-anna), also called Oregon white oak is Washington’s only native oak species. This oak, along with the rest of its native woodland and associated prairie plant communities, harbors a fascinating suite of dry-site plants. It is a distinct habitat for wildlife, including listed species.

Garry oak woodlands are predominantly found in western Washington but also occur along the eastern flank of the southern Cascade foothills in Washington.

Comparison with early land surveys indicates that these ecosystems have been drastically reduced in size, and historical information suggests that interruption of Native American land management practices after arrival of Europeans, including the use of fire, is largely responsible for the recent encroachment by surrounding conifer woodlands. Other threats include invasion by exotic species and agricultural and urban development.

WNPS will work with other agencies and organizations to protect Garry Oak habitat in Washington. Cooperative efforts to provide education and to acquire and restore habitat are our best hope.

San Juan Islands Chapter Organizes Garry Oak Symposium

Speakers from both the United States and Canada discussed the conservation of Garry oak meadows and woodlands during a one day symposium on Washington’s San Juan Island. The event was opened with a formal welcome from county commissioner, John Evans, followed by a keynote speech delivered by the president of the San Juan Island Chapter of WNPS.

Speakers talked about the loss of habitat, wildlife value of these woodlands, insect pests of Garry Oak, fire history and decline which have contributed to habitat loss, and propagation and restoration efforts.

A special delegation from Canada’s Garry Oaks Ecosystem Recovery Team told about British Columbia’s efforts to save Garry oak habitat. The Recovery Team, sponsored by the Habitat Stewardship Program of Canada, National Parks Canada, and The Nature Conservancy presented their recovery strategy and educational aspects of their efforts.

Over the next few years the San Juan Chapter hopes to map all of the Garry oaks in San Juan County.

Participants

- Washington Native Plant Society
- Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
- Washington Department of Natural Resources
- San Juan Islands National Historic Park
- Fourth Corner Nurseries
- SEE Botanical Consultants
- US Natural Resources Conservation Service
- BC’s Garry Oak Recovery Team
Protecting Native Ecosystems from Invasive Species

Invasive non-native plants compete with native plants in many ways including: occupying space, changing the structure of the plant community, causing physical and chemical alterations of the soil, and covering and shading native plants. Invasive plants interfere with animal life, too, by altering the structure of their habitat and by eliminating favored food plants through competition. Invasive plants are spread both by human activity and by animals that eat them and carry their seeds. Each of the plant communities identified by WNPS for special focus is threatened by invasive plants.

Purple loosestrife invasion of Washington wetlands.

Shrub-Steppe Communities

Shrub-steppe grasslands and shrub-lands in the lower reaches of the great Columbia River drainage, are critical habitat for many of our native plant and animal species.

The main initial threat to these vegetation types was the introduction of European livestock and seeds, which initiated a long-term and perhaps irreversible vector of ecological change, including the denuding of soils formerly protected by a complex microbiotic crust; introduction of exotic invasive plants, especially Bromus tectorum; and more frequent fires, carried farther with greater heat by continuous carpets of cheatgrass.

Because many bunchgrass habitats have fertile soil and lie on relatively level ground, they have suffered extensively from conversion to agricultural, commercial and residential uses.

The few remaining areas of good steppe habitat are separated from one another, which makes it difficult for the species in them to maintain genetic continuity and to evolve in ways that they did in the past.

WNPS has identified a number of actions to secure greater protection of shrub-steppe grasslands and shrub-lands in Washington.

“We must take effective steps to secure greater protection of these lands.
One of the core functions of the Washington Native Plant Society is education. We want people to know just how important native plants are to the environmental health of this region.

The Society offers a range of activities designed to get all generations involved in discovering the incredible native plant diversity of Washington.

From the beginning we have supported native plant education through small grants to schools, chapters and other organizations. In 2003 we funded the installation of several gardens that would help to instill an understanding of our natural heritage in our youth.

**Chapter Activity**

WNPS members really get involved in carrying out the mission of the Society at the chapter level. WNPS Chapters offer over 100 field trips annually and organize many education programs on native plants that are open to members and public alike. Chapter involvement is where the true spirit of WNPS lies and the organization strives to help chapters be successful. Chapter members also participate in numerous local events providing information on the ecological value and the wonderful diversity of native plants in Washington and for the home gardener, tips on native plant gardening.

**Chapters offer many opportunities for involvement:**

- **Presentations by knowledgeable speakers at regular chapter meetings**
- **Field trips to see and photograph wildflowers and unique plant communities**
- **Workshops on plant identification, photography and gardening with native plants**
- **Annual study weekends where members learn about the flora of a particular region of the state with WNPS members from all around the state**
- **Publications including local chapter newsletters**
- **Popular fundraising events such as native plant sales**

**WNPS Funded Education Awards**

- “The Forest Meets the School.”
  The Little School, Bellevue
- “Native Plants for a Lewis & Clark Memorial Garden”
  Chief Joseph Middle School, Richland
- “The Outdoor Learning Museum”
  Tukwila Elementary School
- “Native Plant Campus Garden”
  Everett Community College
- “South Whidbey Tilth Native Plant Project”
- “English Ivy Video Support”
  Ecovision
Native Plant Stewardship Program

The Washington Native Plant Society continued to offer its popular Native Plant Stewardship Program in King and Snohomish counties with financial and technical support from Snohomish County Surface Water Management and King County’s Natural Resource Stewardship Network.

Fifty lucky citizens participated in the 2003 classes where they learned about native plant identification, ecology, urban forestry, wetlands, soils, restoration, landscaping with natives, invasive plants, rare plants, wildlife landscaping, vegetation monitoring, Pacific Northwest ethnobotany, and environmental interpretation. Stewards are trained by specialists in their field who volunteer their time and energy. This time and energy represents over $30,000 in-kind support to the program.

Native Plant Stewards return the value of their training by providing 100 hours of volunteer service on habitat restoration and environmental education projects. King County Native Plant Stewards concentrated their service projects on urban forest restoration projects with an emphasis on serving on projects located in lower income neighborhoods and communities. Snohomish County Native Plant Stewards have concentrated their efforts on riparian restoration efforts in Snohomish County, rebuilding trails and helping ordinary citizens understand and learn about the environmental values of native plant landscaping.

We expect 5,000 hours of service from our 2003 classes but experience has shown us that often the return is far greater over the years.

Today we can proudly state that our Native Plant Stewards have provided over 30,000 hours of service and involvement in community habitat restoration projects and environmental education.

“‘My introduction to the world of native plants was a life enriching gift.’”

Growing Wild

Growing Wild is a new program offered by the Washington Native Plant Society that provides on-site garden consultations for residents in King and Snohomish counties. The program encourages integration of native plants into existing gardens and gets homeowners to think about low maintenance, environmental friendly gardening. An important aspect of Growing Wild is that it is run by volunteer consultants who are especially trained in native plant gardening, water-wise gardening, and gardening for wildlife. The Washington Native Plant Society enjoys cooperation and programmatic support from the Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife in this endeavor.
Annual Study Weekend — From the Basin to the Blues

The Columbia Basin Chapter hosted a weekend of talks and field trips which provided participants with a glimpse of the natural history and geology of the remnant sagebrush steppe in the Columbia Basin and the unique flora of the Blue Mountains.

This popular annual event has been organized for over 20 years and offers the membership an opportunity to examine more closely the regional floras of Washington’s incredible diversity.

Botany Washington: Wetlands, Serpentine, Rare Plants and Rare People

WNPS members enjoyed three days of botany focused on wetland, serpentine and subalpine flora of the Snoqualmie Pass Area.

WNPS Back Packing Trip

The Washington Native Plant Society offers opportunities to see plants at the highest elevations on its Annual Back Packing Trips. The Buckhorn Mountains on the Olympic Peninsula were visited in 2003. Up and over two passes, Buckhorn Pass and Marmot Pass, the group was able to explore and see many native plants endemic to the Olympics — found nowhere else in the world.
Research

The Washington Native Plant Society provides financial support to many graduate students and scientists working on projects which extend our knowledge of the biology of Washington’s native species or which provide additional survey information on an understudied area of the state.

In 2003 we provided financial support for ongoing work on a synonymized checklist of vascular plants in the Pacific Northwest and continued support for an online database for the flora of Washington state. Other projects brought to a close in 2003 include completion of physiological studies of two invasive riparian tree species threatening native species in eastern Washington, a study on colonization by native species in the wake of retreating glaciers and completion of a study on bryophyte diversity and rarity in the Okanogan Highlands.

In the past decade, WNPS, has supported nearly 50 research projects to enhance our understanding of native plant ecology and distribution.

Conservation

WNPS members are involved in ecological restoration projects throughout Washington. Their countless hours of work to remove invasives and restore native plant communities is making a big difference in dozens of communities. But ecological restoration is hard work and we don’t always know how best to restore complex ecological systems. Once disturbed, it is difficult, costly, and indeed impossible to restore a plant community to its original state.

So ecological restoration must be only one part of an overall conservation strategy. In 2003 the WNPS Conservation Committee worked to monitor and influence agencies as they developed new operating rules and management plans.

The Washington Native Plant Society participated in a shrub-steppe working group, hosted a Garry Oak symposium and joined with other non-profits to form the Washington Invasive Species Coalition which is working to slow the introduction of invasive species.

Foundation and Grant Support

Natural Resources Stewardship Network
For the King County Native Plant Stewardship Program

Snohomish County Surface Water Management
For the Snohomish County Native Plant Stewardship Program

Martin T and Rebecca A Chaney Foundation

The Leslie Fund

The Seattle Foundation

The Sidney Fund

Washington Plant Lists Now Online

Over 300 sites in Washington have had plants lists compiled by WNPS members through the years. The Herculean volunteer efforts of several WNPS members during 2003 has resulted in publication of these lists on the WNPS website. Now anyone taking a hike, may access these lists online and print them. Updated yearly, these lists provide a great way for anyone to learn the native plants along the

Conservation is most successful when it is proactive — identifying threats to native plant communities and ecosystems, and taking effective action to stop or diminish those threats.
2003 Financial Statement

Revenue

Contributions, Gifts & Member Dues $ 90,163
Government Grants 31,568
Fundraising Sales 23,413
Other Income 55,079

Total Revenue $151,523

Expense

Programs $ 98,128
Management & General 31,434
Fundraising 2,415

Total Expense $131,977

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