
WILDFLOWERS

The Bulletin of the Botanical Society of Western Pennsylvania • August 1997

Cusick Receives First Buker Travel Award

Allison Cusick, Chief Botanist for the Ohio Division of Natural Areas and Preserves, is the first recipient of the Buker Travel Award. The Carnegie Museum of Natural History (CMNH) Section of Botany created this award in 1996 in honor of long-time Research Associate and Botanical Society member W.E. Buker. It provides funds for travel to utilize the CMNH botanical collections.

Over 65 individuals and organizations from Pittsburgh to Japan, including the Botanical Society of Western Pennsylvania and many individual members of the Society, helped to make this award a reality through their generous contributions.

Cusick's project is a publication on the vascular flora of the Ohio Lake Erie Plain, an area for which the CMNH herbarium contains many historical specimens dating back to early collectors such as former Curator O.E. Jennings and John Bright. These specimens document the history of vegetational change along the lake, which will be included in Cusick's study. Cusick will travel to Pittsburgh to study specimens in the herbarium sometime this fall.

Persons at any level of training (students, professionals, conservationists, and others) may apply for the Buker Travel Award, which is awarded annually. The deadline for applications is March 31 each year, and the application consists of a short letter (1-3 pages) outlining the project and reasons for visiting CMNH with a budget included. Presently, one award of up to \$300 is given each year.

For additional information, contact Sue Thompson, Section of Botany, Carnegie Museum of Natural History, 4400 Forbes Ave., Pittsburgh, PA 15213; telephone 412-622-3295; e-mail thompsons@clpgh.org.

Sue Thompson, Carnegie Museum of Natural History

Volunteers are needed for North Park Arboretum Refurbishment Project

The North Park Arboretum Refurbishment Project is holding a Volunteer Clean-Up Day on Saturday, August 2, 1997, from 8 a.m. to 12 noon.

Volunteers will clear dead wood and brush, and spread wood chips. Tools will be furnished, but please bring gloves. Refreshments will be provided.

For more information and to volunteer, call 393-6078.

Mystery Plant Identified

At the Botanical Society meeting in June, Scott Shriver brought in for identification a branch from a mysterious tree. Several members guessed that it was a Hawthorn hybrid.

Dr. Mary Joy Haywood managed to track it down. It is *Craetaegus viridis*, or Winterking

Enjoy Your Wildflowers: Bouncing Bet

Long, long ago, there was no soap. Water was used for whatever cleaning was done. Gradually, some people discovered that certain plants had a cleansing action and that certain oils were good skin cleaners.

Millennia later, before 600 BC, Phoenicians who lived in Egypt made soap from fat and an alkali, still the basic constituents of soap. (Did they get their idea from the Egyptians? There is a wall painting in a Theban tomb, dated about 1400 BC, depicting the preparation of an unguent. Fat is being cooked with a fluid obtained by soaking wood chips in wine.) By 600 BC the Gauls had learned the process, then the Romans. Pliny the Elder, the first century AD Roman scholar, wrote about soap making in his "Natural History".

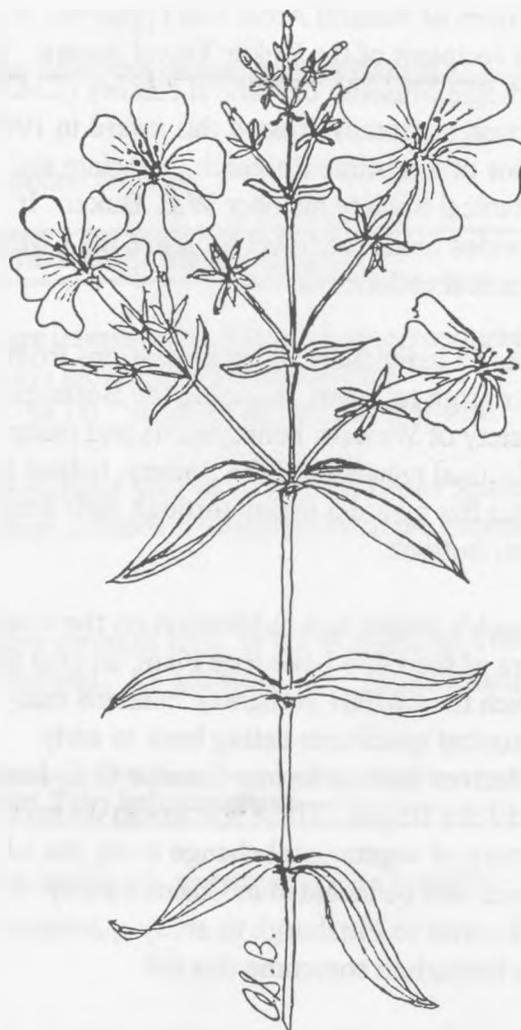
Soap making, as an industry, did not exist in our country until the nineteenth century. People made their own soap. Some still do. They used it for most everything, including personal cleansing. Exceptions were made for delicate laces and fine fabric. For these they used a European plant called Bouncing Bet, another name for which is Soapwort. They grew it in their gardens or on their farms. Its mucilaginous sap contains the glucoside, saponin. Saponin, when mixed and shaken with water, forms a soapy, foamy, gentle cleansing solution. Saponin dissolves fat, grease and oil.

Another name for Bouncing Bet is Fuller's Herb. This reflects its use by fullers, the people who clean, thicken, and if desired, shrink woolen fabric after it is woven. The plant also was used to wash newly-dyed yarn. Mills usually grew their own plants nearby.

Bouncing Bet is still used by museums to clean delicate furniture, pictures, tapestries and fabrics. In some parts of western Asia it is used on fine quality Oriental rugs. The foam is said to clean kid gloves without damaging them.

The botanical name of Bouncing Bet is *Saponaria officinalis*, which is Latin. *Officinalis* refers to its being sold by apothecaries. It is in the Pink family, related to Carnations. From July to September its pale-pink flowers and pleasant fragrance are a delight in the city and in the country.

Anne S. Bahl



Bouncing Bet - *Saponaria officinalis*, drawn by Anne Bahl

Field Trip Schedule

Saturday

August 9, 1997 - Chalk Hill Bog,
Fayette County
Leader: Howard McIvried
Time: 1:00

Directions: From Uniontown, take Route 40 east. At the Summit Hotel, measure your mileage. About 2 miles from the Summit Hotel, in Chalk Hill, turn left onto Chalk Hill-Ohiopyle Road. (You will see signs for Ohio-pyle and Kentuck Knob on the right, just before this turn-off.) Shortly after this turn-off, you will reach a Y in the road; bear left.

After crossing an arm of Deer Lake, take the first left turn onto Greenbriar Road. Travel about a mile; you will enter State Game Lands on a dirt road. Park at the State Game Land parking lot about 2/10 of a mile farther on the right.

Expectations: The Society has not explored this area since 1992. We will look for Cross-leaved Milkwort, Thread-leaved Sundew, Cotton Grass, Yellow-eyed grass, and Pitcher Plant.

Prepare for wet feet and possibly insects.

Saturday

August 23, 1997- Ferncliff Peninsula at
Ohio-pyle State Park,
Fayette County
Leader: Esther Allen
Time: 1:00 p.m.

Directions: From Pittsburgh, take the turnpike east to Donegal exit. Turn left onto Route 31 east. After 2 miles turn right onto Route 381/711. Travel 18.5 miles south into the town of Ohio-pyle. After crossing the railroad tracks, park in the Ferncliff parking area on the right.

Expectations: Pencil Flower, Cowbane, Stiff Aster and a white form of Teasel.

Saturday

August 30, 1997 - Markleysburg Bog,
Fayette County
Leader: Phyllis Monk
Time: 1:00 p.m.

Directions: From Uniontown, take Route 40 east. At the Summit Hotel, measure your mileage. At 12.2 miles, look for log buildings (Leber Bakery) on the left and an oversized sign on the right reading "Truck Warning". Turn right at the foot of this sign onto a blacktop driveway into a church camp, where we will meet.

Don't miss this wonderful bog this year. Expect to see Canada St. Johnswort, Round-leaved Sundew, Yellow Bartonnia, and *Aster radula*.

Prepare for wet feet and possibly insects.

Missey-Moosey

What fairly common plant is known as missey-moosey?

If you are curious enough, you can look it up on page 760 of Gray's Manual of Botany.

Robert Bahl

Editor's note: If you were on the Dolly Sods field trip, you got a hint!

WILDFLOWERS - Bulletin of the Botanical Society of Western Pennsylvania

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WILDFLOWERS is published monthly by the Botanical Society of Western Pennsylvania.

We welcome short articles of botanical interest, drawings, letters to the editor, and notices of botanical events and group activities. Articles, notices, drawings, etc. should be sent to the editor at the above address. Deadline for submissions is the 17th of the previous month. Material on computer diskette is welcome; call to discuss file format.

We especially welcome news about our members! Please call or write the editor, or Bob Bahl at 921-1797.

Changes of address - Notify the editor at the above address or phone number.

The Botanical Society of Western Pennsylvania - Membership Information

The object of the Society shall be to bring together those who are interested in Botany and to encourage the study of this science and a knowledge of plants. Our members include both amateurs and professionals. Annual dues are: Individual -\$5.00; and Family - \$8.00. Students can join at half-rate.

To join, mail your name, your address, and check payable to "Botanical Soc. of W PA" to Loree Speedy, 5837 Nicholson Street, Pittsburgh, PA 15217. Your membership includes a subscription to the monthly bulletin WILDFLOWERS.

The Society meets the second Monday of each month, September through June, at 8 PM sharp, at Trinity Hall or Kresge Theater, Carlow College, 3333 Fifth Avenue, Oakland. All are welcome. An informative program follows the business meeting.

The Botanical Society of Western Pennsylvania - Field Trip Information

Everyone is welcome on field trips; amateurs, professionals, non-members, and anyone who is curious about the natural world.

- ◇ Trips are not canceled due to rain or cold.
- ◇ Dress for the weather. Comfortable shoes, water-proof boots, all-weather gear are suggested; water bottles, sunhats, and rainwear are strongly recommended.
- ◇ Trips usually last three, sometimes four, hours. You can depart earlier if you like.

Field trips are often at a leisurely pace, but may require some hiking and traveling through wet and muddy areas. If you have any questions about the nature of a trip, feel free to contact the trip leader or Loree Speedy at 521-9425.