
WILDFLOWERS

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

Next Meeting is November 10

The next meeting will be Monday, November 10, at 8:00 p.m., at the Kresge Theater, Carlow College, 3333 Fifth Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA (Oakland).

The speaker will be Pennsylvania's Native Plant Program Manager, Kathy McKenna. She will speak on the Pennsylvania Natural Diversity Inventory and the state's Native Plant Program.

W.E. Buker, 1903-1997

Werner E. Buker, a long-time member of the Botanical Society of Western Pennsylvania, died on October 1, 1997 of pneumonia at the age of 94.

W.E. Buker is a name well-known to those involved in studying the plants of Pennsylvania. For over four decades, Buker volunteered in the Carnegie Museum of Natural History (CMNH) herbarium and also conducted extensive fieldwork in Pennsylvania. Buker's eye for rare species and penchant for making lists led to many new discoveries as well as county records.

Buker was involved in the collection of 14,327 plant specimens from Pennsylvania that are deposited in the CMNH herbarium, as well as numerous other specimens from outside the state. He collected over 1600 different plant species from 46 Pennsylvania counties. In terms of number of Pennsylvania specimens, Buker is the third most prolific collector at CMNH -- behind only O.E. Jennings and L.K. Henry, both full-time professional botanists who spent their entire careers associated with the museum.

In 1950, Buker was appointed as a Research Associate of the museum, a position he held until his death. He received the first Lifetime Achievement Award from the North American Native Orchids Alliance in 1996 in recognition of his work on Pennsylvania orchids. Also in 1996, the CMNH Section of Botany created the Buker Travel Award in his honor. This annual award provides travel support for persons at any level of training to utilize the botanical collections at Carnegie Museum of Natural History, including the many thousands of specimens collected by Buker.

In addition to his avocation as a botanist, Buker worked as a math teacher, principal, and later associate director of mathematics for the Pittsburgh public schools. He also found time to work as a real estate salesman, collect old bottles, and raise a family.

Buker is survived by his wife of 71 years, Henrietta "Kit" Buker; a sister Virginia Wern; three sons, Robert, William, and James; daughter Sal Eckard, and 12 grandchildren.

The family has requested that memorial donations be made to the Buker Travel Award, c/o Section of Botany, Carnegie Museum of Natural History, 4400 Forbes Ave., Pittsburgh, PA 15213.

Some Botanical Publications of W.E. Buker (chronological):

- Henry, L.K. & W.E. Buker. 1951. *Checklist of the flowering plants and ferns of Allegheny County*. Trillia 11: 3-123.
- Henry, L.K. and W.E. Buker. 1955. *Orchids of western Pennsylvania*. Annals of Carnegie Museum 33:299-346.

- Henry, L.K. and W.E. Buker. 1958. *The Ranunculaceae in western Pennsylvania*. *Castanea* 23:33-45.
- Henry, L.K. and W.E. Buker. 1960. *Recent botanical discoveries in western Pennsylvania*. *Castanea* 25:126.
- Henry, L.K. and W.E. Buker. 1961. *Recent fern discoveries in western Pennsylvania*. *American Fern Journal* 51:42-43.
- Henry, L.K. and W.E. Buker. 1964. *Additions to the "Check list of the vascular flora of Allegheny County, Pennsylvania."* *Trillia* 12:1-15.
- Henry, L.K. and W.E. Buker. 1964. *Rare or otherwise noteworthy plants of western Pennsylvania*. *Trillia* 12:47-132.
- Henry, L.K., W.E. Buker, & D.L. Pearth. 1975. *Western Pennsylvania orchids*. *Castanea* 40: 93-168.
- Buker, W.E. & S.A. Thompson. 1986. *Is Stylophorum diphyllum (Papaveraceae) native to Pennsylvania?* *Castanea* 51:66-67.
- Thompson, S.A., W.E. Buker, & M. Macdonald. 1989. *Notes on the distribution of Pennsylvania plants based on specimens in the Carnegie Museum of Natural History herbarium*. *Carnegie Museum of Natural History Special Publication* 14: 1-55.

Sue Thompson, Carnegie Museum of Natural History

Carnegie Herbarium hosts Open House

Plant yourself in the Carnegie Museum herbarium on Saturday, November 22, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., or Sunday, November 23, from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. The Section of Botany and herbarium will be open behind the scenes to all visitors on those two days during this Open House.

See the largest seed of any plant species in the world as well as some of the almost 500,000 plant specimens in the herbarium. Displays will include useful plants, Thanksgiving foods, and how to press and dry plants. Come and see how dried plants are mounted on herbarium paper and stored in the cases.

As an extra treat, part of the insect collection will be open with information on the close relationships between plants and insects. Bring your friends and family for a chance to talk with

museum botanists and other herbarium staff and watch what we do!

The Open House is free with museum admission. Carnegie Museum of Natural History is located at 4400 Forbes Avenue in Oakland, parking is available at the museum for \$3.00/day. Sponsored by the Section of Botany and the Division of Education. Call 622-3253 for more information.

Enjoy Your Wildflowers: Butter-and-Eggs

Butter-and-Eggs is a world traveler. It originated in Eurasia, and now grows in temperate climates throughout the world. It was used in flower and herb gardens, and when people migrated, they took seeds with them.

The plant adapted well and spread into wild areas by its rhizomes and its thousands of wind-blown seeds. This ability to multiply rapidly is anathema to gardeners even though the flower is attractive and luminous. It blooms from late spring well into fall, is perennial, and grows in sunny, dry areas.

The clear yellow and orange color (butter and eggs) of the flower seems to bring a touch of spring wherever it is, because the color combination resembles certain Daffodils. In England, some Daffodils and other flowers with similar coloring were also called Butter-and-Eggs.

Butter-and-Eggs closely resembles its relative, Snapdragon, with the addition of a nectar-holding spur. Occasionally a flower will be produced that has a spur at the base of each of the five petals, which results in a radially symmetrical flower rather than the normal bilaterally symmetrical. This condition is called "peloria". The tendency to produce peloric flowers can be inherited.

The flower has a mouth that will open when a pollinator lands on the lip or when the hinge

section of the blossom is gently squeezed. This was the inspiration for many common names that refer to animals. One name frequently used is Toadflax, because the open mouth of the flower was thought to resemble a toad's. "Flax" refers to the narrow leaves, which are similar to Flax leaves.

Herbalists have internal and external uses for Butter-and-Eggs. However, any such use of the plant should be under the guidance of a qualified practitioner, as dosage is critical. For example, the whole plant was boiled in milk and the infusion was used to poison flies.

The fresh flowers will yield a yellow dye. Dried, the flowers are colorful in potpourri mixtures.

The botanical name of Butter-and-Eggs is *Linaria vulgaris*. It is Latin. *Linaria* means "resembling Flax". *Vulgaris* means "common" or "ordinary".

Anne Bahl

Landscape History Society is forming in Pittsburgh

"Landscape History" is the interest of a new group forming in Pittsburgh. The group is hoping to pool information about what used to grow in specific places, with the aim of encouraging current owners to plant similar things. One goal is to discover where one can get this information. Where are collections of old pictures, which include houses and the trees planted around them?

The next meeting is scheduled for November 19th, at 7 p.m., at the Hunt Institute for Botanical Documentation, 5th floor of the Hunt Library at Carnegie Mellon University. Charlotte Tancin, Hunt Institute Librarian, will present an informal talk on the resources in their collection. For further information, contact Barry Hannegan at 471-5808.

Liz DePiero

Don't Overlook Fall Wildflowers

Mention wildflowers, and most people think spring. I do. But spring blooms are often short-lived and quickly give way to summer color-scarlet bee balm, lavender blazing star and orange butterfly milkweed to name a few. From mid-June through August, these and many plants brighten my backyard.

By the time September arrives, our attention often turns to fall colors and pumpkin festivals. But late summer and early fall bring a whole new wave of blooms to the phenologically-minded ecologist. Phenology is the branch of biology that covers predictable, seasonal phenomena. Fall leaf drop, migrating birds and spring frog choruses are classic phenological events.

Many folks plan their wildflower gardens to take advantage of natural plant phenology. By allowing spring blooms to give way to summer blossoms and fall flowers, their backyards are filled with color from April to October.

I was reminded of this last week when a small group from the Botanical Society of Western Pennsylvania visited my woods for an afternoon stroll. In exchange for playing host to the field trip, they promised to teach me how to identify some fall wildflowers.

My first question concerned the abundant white flower that occurs throughout the woods. Snakeroot, I was told (genus *Eupatorium*). A cousin to Joe-Pye-weed. As far as I was concerned, the day was already a success. I'd learned the dominant fall wildflower here on the ridge. But the lesson was just beginning.

For the next four hours, my property became a classroom. I was the student, and my guests were the teachers. I learned the differences between several species of asters and goldenrod. I discovered that the second-most common wildflower in the woods, a tall yellow sunflower-like species, is called wingstem (genus *Actinomeris*). It's named for the flattened ridges on the stem. We found the blackened vestiges of

a small stand of Indian pipe, a peculiar white plant that lacks chlorophyll. I learned that the little burrs I get on my clothing when I walk along the edges of the woods come from a plant called agrimony (genus *Agrimonia*). Another botanical hitchhiker, tick-trefoil (genus *Desmodium*) was still in bloom in my hayfield. Its small purplish pea-like flowers mature into flat sticky pods often called sticktight.

A highlight of the day was a woman who knew most of the mushrooms that littered the forest floor. She greeted even the tiniest fungus as an old friend. My favorite was a small shelf fungus growing on a fallen log. Its edges, trimmed in iridescent blue, almost seemed to glow. Somehow, I'd never noticed it before. Just as I'd never noticed the many fall wildflowers I learned about that day. I plead guilty to scanning the sky at the expenses of the ground

Nature-watchers are wonderful people. They are generous with their time and always willing to teach. I'm grateful to everyone who spent a few hours with me on the ridge. And I urge anyone interested in learning more about nature to seek out field trips with knowledgeable leaders. Much can be learned from books, but nothing beats a patient, experienced teacher.

Scott Shalaway

The above article appeared in the September 28th edition of the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette.

Don't miss Scott's radio show, Birds and Nature, which airs in Pittsburgh on tape, on WORD-FM 101.5, Saturday mornings from 10 a.m. to 11 a.m. To be on the show live, listeners can call 1-888-644-9553 between 8 and 9 a.m.

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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.

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