
WILDFLOWERS

The Bulletin of the Botanical Society of Western Pennsylvania • May 2000

Next Meeting is May 8th

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

Dr. David Jett will present a "Medical Bag from Western Pennsylvania." We will learn to look inside of a plant and ask "What chemical properties can cure our ills and restore our health?" Dr. Jett, a retired medical doctor and reserve manager of Frick Woods, will focus on the medicinal uses of plants from western Pennsylvania.

Trilliums with Broadly Rhombic Leaves

One spring day out in rich woods, you begin to see the difference between the ovate, pointed leaves of the White-Flowered Trillium (*Trillium grandiflorum*) and the broadly rhombic leaves of the Red Trillium (*T. erectum*). It looks as if you could place a big broad diamond directly on top of the rhombic leaves of the Red Trillium.

There are three species of trilliums with broadly rhombic leaves in western Pennsylvania: Red Trillium (*T. erectum*), Bent Trillium (*T. flexipes*), and Nodding Trillium (*T. cernuum*).

Considering that there is a white form of the Red Trillium (*T. erectum* var. *album*), all three species have white flowers. There are ways to tell them apart.

The white form of Red Trillium is widely distributed in loose unstable soils of wooded slopes. It prefers somewhat neutral soils, less acidic than the soils preferred by the Red

Trillium. Bent Trillium can be found in rich wooded slopes and floodplains along stream valleys, and seems to prefer alkaline soils. It is not as common, but can be frequently found along Raccoon Creek in Beaver County.

The color of the ovaries will distinguish the white form of Red Trillium and the Bent Trillium. The ovary of Red Trillium is dark red or brown. The ovary of Bent Trillium is white, but it can have a lovely rose-pink stripe.

Do not rely on the flower smell. The flower of the white form of Red Trillium does not have a foul odor like that of the Red Trillium (sometimes called Stinking Benjamin). The flower of Bent Trillium can smell sweet.

Look at the stamen, especially the pollen-bearing portion called the anther and supporting stalk called the filament. The anther of a Bent Trillium is notably longer than the filament. The anther and filament of Red Trillium are about equal length.

Nodding Trillium (*T. cernuum*) is quite rare in western Pennsylvania. O. E. Jennings, in *Wild Flowers of Western Pennsylvania and the Upper Ohio River Basin*, reported that it grew in a "swamp white oak woodland... but was exterminated when a flock of sheep was turned in for pasturing." Not only are the plant's known occurrences infrequent, there is also considerable confusion regarding the identification of this species.

The anther and filament of the Nodding Trillium are also of equal length, but the anthers are purplish and the filament more slender. The ovary is white or pinkish.

All three of these trilliums with broadly rhombic leaves will hybridize, so expect some confusing intermediate characteristics as well as interesting colors. But the closer look lets you enjoy many facets of the trilliums that you never noticed before.

Loree Speedy

Breaking the Lawn

Imagine the conversation The Almighty might have with St. Francis:

The Almighty: Frank, you know all about gardens and nature. What in the world is going on down there? What happened to the dandelions, violets, thistle and stuff I started eons ago? I had a perfect, no-maintenance garden plan. Those plants grow in any type of soil, withstand drought and multiply with abandon. The nectar from the long-lasting blossoms attracted butterflies, honey bees and flocks of songbirds. I expected to see a vast garden of colors by now. But all I see are these green rectangles.

St. Francis: They belong to a tribe that has settled there, Lord. The Suburbanites. They started calling your flowers “weeds” and went to great extent to kill them and replace them with grass.

The Almighty: Grass? But it’s so boring. It’s not colorful. It doesn’t attract butterflies, birds and bees, only grubs and sod worms. It’s temperamental with temperatures. Do these Suburbanites really want all that grass growing there?

St. Francis: Apparently so, Lord. They go to great pains to grow it and keep it green. They begin each spring by fertilizing grass and poisoning any other plant that crops up in the lawn.

The Almighty: Do they then cut it and bale it like hay?

St. Francis: Not exactly, Lord. Most of them rake it up and put it in bags.

The Almighty: They bag it? Why—is it a cash crop that they sell?

St. Francis: No, Sir. Just the opposite. They pay to throw it away.

The Almighty: Now let me get this straight. They fertilize grass so it will grow. And when it does grow, they cut it off and pay to throw it away?

St. Francis: Yes, Sir.

The Almighty: These Suburbanites must be relieved in the summer when we cut back on the rain and turn up the heat. That surely slows the growth and saves them a lot of work.

St. Francis: You aren’t going to believe this, Lord. When the grass stops growing as fast, they drag out hoses and pay more money to water it so they can continue to mow it and pay to get rid of it.

The Almighty: What nonsense! At least they kept some of the trees. That was a sheer stroke of genius, if I do say so myself. The trees grow leaves in the spring to provide beauty and shade in the summer. In the autumn they fall to the ground and form a natural blanket to keep moisture in the soil and protect the trees and bushes. Plus, as they rot, the leaves form a compost to enhance the soil. It’s a natural circle of life.

St. Francis: You’d better sit down, Lord. As soon as the leaves fall, the Suburbanites rake them into great piles and have them hauled away.

The Almighty: No! What do they do to protect the shrub and tree roots in the winter, and keep soil moist and loose?

St. Francis: After throwing away their leaves, they go out and buy something they call “mulch.” They haul it home and spread it around in place of the leaves.

The Almighty: And where do they get mulch?

St. Francis: They cut down trees and grind them up.

The Almighty: Enough, Frank! I do not want to think about this anymore!

This anonymous story was found on the Internet and recommended by Anne Bahl.

Field Trip Schedule

Registration is not required. Everyone is welcome, including non-members. Trips are not cancelled due to rain.

Saturday, May 13, 2000

Lee's Cabin on Stony Creek Lake, Somerset County

Time: 1:00 p.m. (Join us for lunch at 12 p.m.)

Leader: Lee Tosh (412) 833-2620

Directions: From Pittsburgh, take the Turnpike east to the Somerset Exit. Follow Rte. 31 east about three miles to a Y where you will bear left to Shanksville. At the first stop sign in Shanksville, make a left. As soon as you cross the bridge over Stony Creek, make a right. After you pass Shanksville High School on your left, proceed about 100 yards and turn left onto Lake Shore Road. Proceed downhill past the dam. Proceed about another 1/2 mile to Lee's cabin, which will be well-marked for us.

Sunday, May 14, 2000

Canoe Creek State Park, Blair County

Time: 1:00 p.m.

Leader: Mary Paoli

Directions: From Pittsburgh, take Route 22 East through Altoona, then to Hollidaysburg. About 7 miles east of Hollidaysburg, turn left onto Turkey Valley Road. Look for the Canoe Creek State Park sign. Continue on Turkey Valley Road about 1/2 mile and turn right. Proceed to the Park Office Building, where we will meet.

This is a joint trip with the Pennsylvania Native Plant Society.

Saturday, May 20, 2000

East Sandy Creek Watershed, Venango Cnty

Time: 12:45 p.m.

Leader: Bill Ray (814) 677-6362

Directions: From Pittsburgh, travel North on I-79 to I-80. Travel east on I-80 to Rte. 8. Travel north on Rte. 8 to Franklin. Take Rte. 322 east out of Franklin for 4 miles to

Victory Heights. Notice the "Heath" gas station on the left. Continue 900 feet beyond the gas station and find the Victory Heights United Brethren Church on the right. Meet in the parking lot at 12:45. We will be transported to the starting point by van(s) so we can begin at the railroad tunnel by 1:00. The trip covers about 3 1/2 miles. We will be picked up at the mouth of East Sandy at 3:30 and taken back to the church where we will refresh and have a snack.

Sunday, May 21, 2000

Mingo Creek County Park, Washington Cnty

Time: 1:00 p.m.

Leader: Jeff Polonoli

Directions: From Pittsburgh, take I-79 south to Washington, PA. Then take I-70 east approximately 7 miles to the exit for Eighty-Four, PA. Off of the ramp, make a left onto Rte. 519 and go approximately 4 miles to the first stop light. Make a right at the stoplight onto Rte. 136 East. Proceed on Rte. 136 for approximately 5 miles until you see, on the left side of the road, a dark brown sign for Mingo Creek Park. Make an immediate left here. There is a red covered bridge on each end of the park. We will meet on the west side of the park in the parking lot near the Ebenezer Covered Bridge, near the Park Office.

Saturday, May 27, 2000

Butler Freeport Trail, Armstrong County

Time: 1:00 p.m.

Leader: Esther Allen (412) 366-0786

Directions: From Pittsburgh, take Rte 8 North, then take Rte. 228 east. Turn left onto Rte. 356. Or, from Rte. 28 north, take Rte 356 west. After roughly 3 miles, you meet Rte. 228 on the left.

Where Rte. 228 and Rte 356 meet, travel a short distance and turn right on Sarver Road (SR2018). Go down the hill and along the creek for 0.8 mile. Just after crossing the creek and passing a volunteer fire department, turn left into a parking area, where we will meet.

Botanical Society of Western Pennsylvania – May 2000
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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. Send to the editor at the above address. Deadline for submissions is the 20th of the previous month.

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 \$10.00 for individual and \$15.00 for family. 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 p.m. sharp, at Trinity Hall or Kresge Theater, Carlow College, 3333 Fifth Avenue, Oakland. All are welcome. An informative program follows the business meeting. Visit the Botanical Society Homepage at <http://home.kiski.net/~speedy/b1.html>.