
WILDFLOWERS

The Bulletin of the Botanical Society of Western Pennsylvania • January 2007

Next Meeting is January 8

The next meeting will be Monday, January 8, 7:15 p.m., at Kresge Theater, Carlow College, 3333 Fifth Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA (Oakland). Kresge Theater is on the top floor of the Grace Library and is accessed from the upper campus. Place a note on your dashboard saying "Botanical Society Meeting," or use your parking permit.

Member **Esther Allen** will present "Wildflowers of Pennsylvania." We need a bright spot in the middle of cold and dark January, so Esther will present a seasonal display of our local native wildflowers from Skunk Cabbage to Asters.

Esther's insightful and informative programs should not be missed. An honorary member of the Botanical Society, she is a self-taught naturalist and leads nature hikes for many organizations.

The following programs have been scheduled for the spring: On February 12, botanist Joe Isaac will share his botanical research projects as a consultant with CEC. Ecologist Pat Bonislowsky will discuss native grasses on March 12, and on April 9, Phyllis Monk will share her botanical experiences from a trip to Russia.

Botany In Action Day at Phipps is Saturday, January 6

The Botany in Action program supports graduate students studying botany and ethnobotany in natural areas around the world. Program participants strive to preserve

biodiversity and foster plant conservation so there will be time to tap the unknown power of the plants they find in these little-known areas while the plants can still be found.

Once a year, the students share their newfound knowledge at Phipps Conservatory and Botanical Gardens (directions below). The Botany in Action Symposium takes place on Saturday, January 6, with lectures and public programs.

11 am to noon: Two lectures will take place in the Joan Kilner Hunt Auditorium in Botany Hall. Botany Hall is next to the Panther Hollow Bridge. Please register for these lectures by calling (412) 441-4442.

Jack in the Pulpit and Deer in Our Woods by Christopher Heckel.

White-tailed deer have negatively affected populations of native herbaceous and woody plants. Heckel's research will examine the direct and indirect effects of deer overabundance on the ecological and evolutionary dynamics of a non-preferred temperate forest herbaceous plant, Jack-in-the-pulpit, *Arisaema triphyllum*.

(A donation from the Botanical Society to the Botany In Action program is helping to fund Christopher Heckel's field work. Let's show our support for his research.)

Botanical Remedies For The Skin: A South Italian Pharmacopoeia by **Cassandra Quave**
Southern Italy has a rich cultural history that integrates wild and locally cultivated plants into many aspects of daily life. In rural communities, there is a strong tradition of preparing botanical remedies in the household. In this talk, Quave will discuss some traditional remedies for the

treatment of skin ailments such as inflammations, abscesses, burns, rashes, cuts, and bruises.

1 p.m. to 3 p.m.: Public programs will take place in the Tropical Forest Conservatory and are free with admission to the Phipps Conservatory.

Jack in the Pulpit and Deer in Our Woods – Christopher Heckel - Find out how Heckel studies this common western Pennsylvania problem.

Medicinal Plants of Southern Italy - Cassandra Quave - Medicinal plants play an important role in the folk-medical system of south Italy. Some of the most important of these plants include chamomile, malva, horehound, and the giant reed. Specimens of these plants and descriptions of traditional remedies will be on display.

Hunting Ferns in the Bolivian Andes - Bianca Knoll - Learn about Knoll's trip to Bolivia in August 2006 to collect ferns for studies in phylogenetics and phytoremediation.

Thai Ethnobotany: Plants, People, and Traditional Knowledge - Arika Virapongse - Arika will display examples of plants used for different aspects of Thai ethnobotany. Items include silk and silk cocoons, paper, wooden and bamboo arts and crafts, and jewelry made from plants.

A Brief History of Chocolate and Herbal Medicine - Nat Bletter - Chocolate, or cacao, has had a long history that brought it from a not-often-used fruit of the Amazon to a highly prized and revered drink of the Aztecs and Mayas, to an addiction-inspiring sweet of the United States and Europe. Learn how this and other plants can affect our mind and our health to such an extent as to lead us to addiction or heal our gravest diseases.

Traditional Ethnobotanical Knowledge Among Maya Communities in Belize - Pio Saqui - Learn about Saqui's work in how traditional ethnobotanical knowledge of local common

plants is shared within communities, and variations due to gender, age, and socially defined groups.

Explaining Tropical Forest Diversity Using Evolutionary History - John Paul - The majority of species in tropical forests are rare. Understanding why most species are rare but others are common is critical to conservation and to our general understanding of tropical diversity. The unique evolutionary histories of different species can help explain patterns of rarity and provide insight for plans to conserve them.

Directions to Phipps Conservatory from

I-376: From points east, travel west on I-376 to Oakland Exit 3B and continue to a stoplight at the top of the hill. Turn right onto the Blvd of Allies. Proceed through 2 stoplights. Once you cross a bridge, you will see exits for Schenley Park to the right. Take the second exit into the Park and continue over the Panther Hollow Bridge. Phipps is on the left.

From points west and north, travel east on I-376 to Oakland Exit 2A. Follow Forbes Ave through Oakland and turn right onto Schenley Dr after the Hillman Library. Turn left at the light to continue on Schenley Dr. Phipps is on the right.

Parking is available free of charge in the center island in front of Phipps (submit your license number to the admissions desk upon arrival). Metered parking spaces are also located along Schenley Dr.

Plant Conservation Quiz

1. How many plant species do we rely on to provide over 80% of the world's nutritional needs? a. 20 plant species b. 400 plant species
2. How many of today's prescription medicines have plant origins? a. One-fourth b. One-half

*From Center for Plant Conservation website
/www.centerforplantconservation.org*

Meet the Scientists at the Carnegie Museum

On the second Saturday of each month, visitors to the Carnegie Museum of Natural History can meet a different Carnegie Museum scientist for an informal discussion of the Museum's collections and on-going research. On Saturday, February 10, 1 p.m. in Botany Hall, 2nd Floor, Dr Cynthia Morton will discuss the "Evolution of Schenley Plaza." Dr. Morton, curator in the Section of Botany, will share the story of her participation in a genetic diversity study to establish an insect- and disease-resistant population of London planetrees.

On Saturday, April 14, Bernadette Callery, at 1 p.m. in Botany Hall, 2nd Floor, will present "Discovering Carnegie Museum's Botanical Roots." Ms. Callery, Museum Librarian, will take visitors on a journey through archival material and published works produced by the Botanical Society of Western Pennsylvania. The Society's 1899 gift of their herbaria collection formed the basis of the Museum's specimen collection, and the later gift of the Society's books began the departmental library.

For directions and admission information, as well as information on additional Meet the Scientist programs, call (412) 622-3131 or visit www.CarnegieMuseums.org.

Answers to Plant Conservation Quiz

1 - a. At least 75,000 plants species are believed to be edible. However, we rely on a mere 20 plant species to provide over 80% of the world's nutritional needs. Over half of our caloric intake is supplied by just three grasses: wheat, rice and corn. Many endangered plants are close relatives of valuable crops. Plant extinction not only weakens natural ecosystems and their ability to adapt to change, but also it tragically reduces the beauty and diversity of life around us. Furthermore it depletes the irreplaceable gene pool that may hold the key to cures for

cancer, ending world hunger, or controlling agricultural pests.

Texas wild-rice (*Zizania texania*), once much more abundant, is now restricted to a small section of a single stream in Texas. It is being bred with northern wild rice to develop a new strain suitable for mild climates. Without concerted conservation action, Texas wild-rice could become extinct in the wild within five years.

2 - a. Over one-fourth of all prescription medicines today have plant origins. Native Americans once used more than 2,000 wild plants for medicine. Aspirin, which is consumed at a rate of 80 million pills each day, was first discovered from a chemical manufactured naturally by the willow tree. Several species of willow are now facing imminent extinction in the United States.

Field Trip Schedule

Sunday, February 4, 2006

**Winter Ecology at Pleasant Valley Park
Murrysville, Westmoreland County**

**Leaders: Tom Pearson, Tom & Janet Kuehl
(724-325-1918)**

Time: 10 a.m.

Directions: From Pittsburgh, take I-376 east until it joins US22 east. Heading east through Murrysville on US22, make a right onto Trafford Rd at a traffic light and a McDonalds. Travel 2/10ths of a mile and bear left onto Pleasant Valley Rd. Note your odometer: continue on Pleasant Valley Rd for 1.2 miles. Look for a gold diamond-shaped park entrance sign on the right side of the road. The park entrance is on the left side of the road, lined on both sides by a wooden split-rail fence. Turn left and drive uphill into the parking lot.

We will join the Westmoreland Bird and Nature Club for a winter ecology outing in this 265-acre park.

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WILDFLOWERS is published monthly by the Botanical Society of Western Pennsylvania. We welcome short articles of botanical interest, drawings, and notices of botanical events and group activities. Send to the editor at the above address. Deadline for submissions is the 23rd of the previous month. WILDFLOWERS is printed on recycled paper.

The Botanical Society of Western Pennsylvania - Membership Information

The Botanical Society was founded in 1886. 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. 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, 279 Orr Road, West Newton, PA 15089. Your membership includes a subscription to the monthly bulletin WILDFLOWERS.

The Society meets the second Monday of each month, September through June, at 7:15 p.m. sharp, at Kresge Theater, Carlow College, 3333 Fifth Avenue, Oakland. All are welcome to the informative program and business meeting.

Wildflowers of Pennsylvania – Ordering Information – 400 pages of text and 612 color photographs

Wildflowers of Pennsylvania can be purchased for \$20.00 (plus \$1.40 sales tax for PA residents). Forward your check, made payable to Botanical Society of Western PA, to Dr. Haywood at the address below. If you order by mail, add \$2 postage and handling for one book, \$3.00 for two, \$4.00 for three, \$4.50 for four. Send your request to Dr. Mary Joy Haywood, RSM, Ph.D., 3333 Fifth Ave., Pittsburgh, PA 15213-3165 (412) 578-6175; mjhaywood@carlow.edu