
WILDFLOWERS

The Bulletin of the Botanical Society of Western Pennsylvania • November and December 2007

Next Meeting is November 12

The next meeting will be Monday, November 12, **7:15 p.m.**, at **Kresge Theater**, Carlow University, 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.

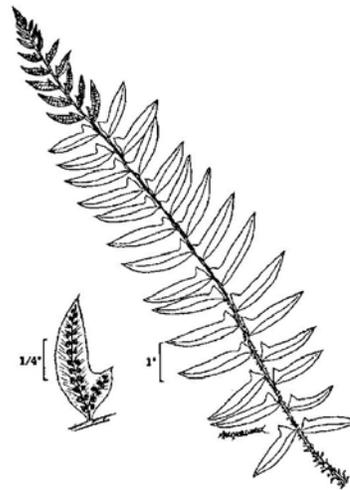
Eric Burkhart will present "**The Deep and Tangled Roots of Pennsylvania's Ginseng Industry: Past, Present, and Future.**"

American ginseng (*Panax quinquefolius* L.) is a native Pennsylvania forest plant whose root is harvested for the international medicinal plant trade. In this talk, Eric Burkhart, doctoral candidate with the Penn State School of Forest Resources, will share results from his recently concluded three-year study of the Pennsylvania ginseng industry. The history, importance, and complexity of the industry will be discussed along with what is known about the current status of one of our state's most valuable plants.

Eric is an ethnobotanist, horticulturalist and agroforester. His interests and work are centered on people and plant relationships—including the utilization, cultural role(s), and husbandry of plants by people. He has been investigating American ginseng occurrence and husbandry in Pennsylvania since 2002 in an effort to help inform management and policy decision-making. He is a native of the Ohio River Valley region of Pennsylvania.

Wild Foods Holiday Party is December 10

Our annual Christmas Party will be Monday, December 10, at 7:15 p.m., at **the Atrium of the A. J. Palumbo Hall** at Carlow College, 3333 Fifth Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA (Oakland). As you approach the campus on Fifth Avenue (heading toward downtown), do not turn right into the Carlow Campus entrance. Instead, pass the entrance, stay in the right lane, and make the immediate right into the parking area. Park here and cross the street. Place a note on your dashboard saying "Botanical Society Meeting," or use your parking permit.



Christmas Fern - *Polystichum acrostichoides*

This is the **Wild Foods Holiday Party**. Members and guests bring an assortment of foods made from something found in the wild. Appetizers, cookies, candies, fruits, and berries: a challenge for the most daring and the most

creative. Don't dare stay away if you have nothing to bring, for there will be plenty!

After wild foods, we present **Member's Night** where we share our botanical sightings over the year. A member can bring up to 12 slides or digital photos. A slide projector and a digital video projector will be available.

Emily Hyre Mac Caddens's Memorial Service – September 1, 2007

About 100 friends collected at the Garden Center on Saturday, September 1 for a celebration of Emily's life and her volunteer gifts to the gardening community. Many Emily stories were told. All showed affection for her as an incredible volunteer, gardening enthusiast and friend.

The memorial service opened with a cup on a table with a napkin on top of it. This represented the numerous times different people came to teach or speak at the Garden Center—Emily would always have a cup of milk or water for the guest.

Emily donated over 1000 hours per year to the Phipps Conservatory and began the "Green and Growing Club."

Emily never hesitated to stop folks and show them the way to weed or water in what she "knew" was the correct way.

We all know Emily always wore a baseball cap. Dr. Haywood visited her when she was in the hospital. (Emily told her "she knew she would come!") Guess what Emily had in bed with her—her baseball cap!

In the wreath making class she told the class members to never cut off the grape vine tendrils. They added to the charm of the wreath.

Once, a group of kids came up to her and said, "You're old - really old." Emily laughed and said, "I know!"

A memorial Allium Garden will be made for her. The Earth Angel Allium is as useful as Emily was.. It regrows every year.

Thanks to Mary Joy Haywood and Liz DePiero.

Hunt Presents its International Exhibition

The Hunt Institute for Botanical Documentation will present its "12th International Exhibition of Botanical Art & Illustration" through December 20, 2007. Every three years, the International series features the works of talented botanical artists from around the world. The works included in the 12th International prove that in the world of art the infinite variety of plant forms and colors still holds special fascination. The exhibition will be on display in the Hunt Library building at Carnegie Mellon University. Hours: Monday-Friday, 9 a.m.-noon and 1-5 p.m.; Sunday, 1-4 p.m. The exhibition is open to the public free of charge. For further information, contact the Hunt Institute at 412-268-2434 or visit the website at huntbot.andrew.cmu.edu.

Enjoy Your Wildflowers: Crown Vetch

Driving across or flying over some parts of Pennsylvania during the mid-twentieth century, people saw the devastation of land and the destruction of streams caused by strip mining and turnpike construction. They were angry and dismayed. They wanted the land and the streams to be restored, to be attractive and productive again.

Eventually, road workers contoured the huge mounds of clay and rock and planted seeds of Crown Vetch, a Mediterranean-area, perennial, plant in the Bean family. Crown Vetch restores nitrogen to the soil, making it fertile, enabling regeneration. Eventually, plants covered the areas with green. The clusters of usually, bright, pink—with-white flowers identify the plants from late spring into late autumn, depending upon location.

Crown Vetch has 2 foot sprawling stems and compound leaves with 11-25 leaflets. Its 1" to 1 1/2" flower clusters are on long stalks. Introduced for horticultural use, it naturalized in eastern United States and in adjacent Canada. In

some places it is spreading into woodlands, where it is not wanted.

The common name, Crown, is for the shape of the flower clusters; Vetch is from Latin *vincia*, vine. Other common names are Axseed, for the axhead-shaped pods, and Axwort. Wort is from Old English *wyrt*, meaning herb, root, plant, especially one used for food or medicine. The leaves have a diuretic and purgative action. They contain a glucoside similar to digitalis. Hive vine is another common name.

Its botanical name is *Coronilla varia*, Latin *corona*, crown, *illa*, small, for the flower cluster, *varia*, variable. There are two botanical family names. *Leguminosae*, the classical name, is from Latin *legere*, gather, because the fruit can be gathered without cutting. *Fabaceae*, the updated name, is from Latin *faba*, bean. The ancient Romans enriched soil by plowing cover crops of some members of the family into it, even though they did not know how enrichment occurred.

Anne S. Bahl

Crownvetch – Weed, Wonder, Winner, Invader?

Crownvetch (*Coronilla varia*) was introduced in the late 1800's, most likely from imported alfalfa seed. The seedlings of crown vetch are non-competitive and survive only in areas with little or no competing vegetation, or in soil so poor that little else will grow on it. Once it is established, however, Crownvetch is competitive and spreads by way of underground root stocks. As it matures over 3 to 4 years, one plant can cover 100 square feet. It is this character that promotes Crownvetch for the prevention of soil erosion and woody brush invasion on our roadside slopes.

In 1935, Dr. Fred Grau, an agronomist from Penn State found Crownvetch growing by itself on a shale hillside in Berks County. Dr Grau reproduced the plant from seed and over a period of 20 years, the Pennsylvania

Agricultural Experimental Research Station cultivated a low-growing, thin-stemmed variety called "Pennsgift."

The Pennsylvania Department of Highways seeded "Pennsgift" to see if it would establish a permanent groundcover and thereby reduce soil erosion. It did, and by 1955, as Pennsylvania's hills were being excavated and its valleys being filled for an expanded highway system, Crownvetch became the standard for erosion control along the state's roads and interstates.

In 1982, then-Governor Thornburgh signed Act 1982-150, declaring "Pennsgift" Crownvetch the official "State Beautification and Conservation Plant of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania." This declaration recognized the plant for its erosion control value as well as its agronomic value for livestock feed and in no-till corn production.

But can this "gift" to Pennsylvania be a troublesome invasive? The Nature Conservancy reports that it has invaded high-quality grasslands of Minnesota, Missouri and Illinois (The Nature Conservancy, tncweeds.ucdavis.edu/esadocs/corovari.html). Crownvetch is included, along with 60 other species, on a list of Invasive Exotic Plants in Pennsylvania created for an Invasive Exotic Plant Management Tutorial prepared by the Mid-Atlantic Exotic Pest Plant Council (Smith, dncr.state.pa.us/forestry/invasivetutorial/).

This plant is firmly established in PennDOT's construction and roadside maintenance programs. Officials of PennDOT admit that it will be found in areas where it was not intentionally planted, but they claim that seed tanks were not cleaned between applications, and Crownvetch was introduced in this way into an unintended location (Whaley, Crownvetch's Role in Vegetation Management, propertyrightsresearch.org/2004/articles/Crownvetch.htm).

Further monitoring needs to be done to document any population of Crownvetch that is apparently invading a natural area in Pennsylvania. Time and careful observation will tell.

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Editor: Loree Speedy, 279 Orr Road, West Newton, PA 15089, (724) 872-5232; E-mail: mousemapper@verizon.net.
President: Bonnie Isaac; E-mail: isaacb@CarnegieMuseums.org, (412) 622-3253 **Vice-President:** Phyllis Monk, (412) 831-2724 E-mail: uscmonk@ieee.org; **Treasurer:** Kimberly Metheny; **Recording Secretary:** Barbara Schomer; **Program Chairperson:** Christopher Tracey; 412-362-6750; E-mail: ctracey@ecologytechniques.org

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