
WILDFLOWERS

The Bulletin of the Botanical Society of Western Pennsylvania • January and February 2008

Next Meeting is January 14

The next meeting will be Monday, January 14, **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.

Joan Gottlieb will present "**New Zealand Ferns: Gondwana Revisited.**" Joan recently attended a "Ferns of New Zealand" workshop and will share her discoveries with the Society.

Joan is an environmental educator with a special love and interest in ferns; she is the author of many articles and has edited the "Directory of Fern Gardens, Nurseries and Reserves." With a M.S. and Ph.D. from Harvard University, she has taught biology and science at universities and secondary schools.

And the Next Meeting is February 11

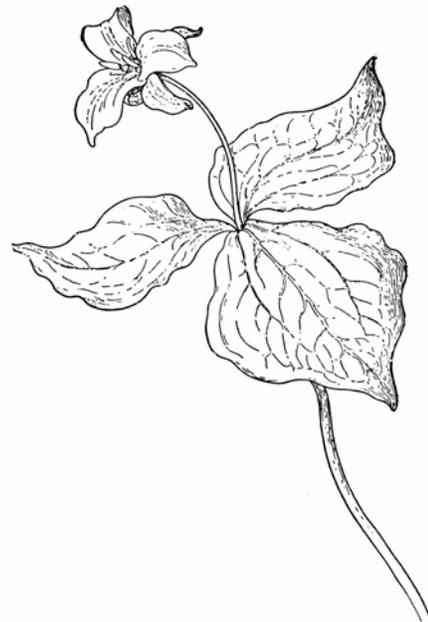
The next meeting will be Monday, February 11, **7:15 p.m.**, at **Kresge Theater**, Carlow University, 3333 Fifth Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA (Oakland).

Amanda Haney will present "**Early Spring Wildflowers of Central California.**"

Spring comes early in Central California. By late February and early March many spring wildflowers are in full bloom. *Trillium ovatum* and *T. chloropetalum*, and *Iris douglasiana* as well as less well know plants such as bush

poppy, star lily, blueshrub, and shooting stars cover the hillsides. This program will include plants from a variety of habitats: woodland, coastal and alpine, including Muir Woods National Monument, Pulgas Ridge Regional Park in San Carlos, Monterrey, Big Sur, and Point Reyes National Seashore.

Amanda is an avid gardener, traveler, teacher and an active member of the Allegheny Chapter of the North American Rock Garden Society. We welcome her recent membership to the Botanical Society.



Canyon Trillium - *Trillium ovatum*

Botany In Action Day at Phipps is Saturday, January 12

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 12, with the following lectures and public programs.

Putting Fieldwork to Good Use 11 a.m. to Noon

Botany In Action researchers will each answer the question of how their research can generate knowledge that can be used in the transformation of our culture to a sustainable one.

This panel discussion with Botany In Action grantees 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.

Public Programs in the Tropical Forest Conservatory 1 p.m. to 3 p.m.

These programs 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.

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.

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.

A New Wildflower Guide

Something badly needed for the nature bookshelf today is an up-to-date wildflower guide that is user-friendly for the general public. The two current leading field guides are 30 years or more old, way out of date and in need of revision.

These are “*A Field Guide to Wildflowers*” by Roger Tory Peterson and Margaret McKenny, published in 1968, and “*Newcomb’s Wildflower Guide*” by Lawrence Newcomb, published in 1977.

Both books have their pros and cons. Where one is deficient in some aspect, the other is superb. Even though the illustrations and the plant descriptions in the Peterson guide are far superior to those in Newcomb’s, you can identify the flower a little faster with the Newcomb’s. The drawback to the Peterson guide is its location system. Peterson arranged the flowers by color. There is no key, so you simply head to the color section and flip pages. The white flower section alone consists of ninety-seven pages, so it involves quite a bit of time-consuming page flipping and careful examination of species on each page. You could spend upwards of ten to fifteen minutes locating the plant you’re trying to identify.

Newcomb’s has a simple key system that quickly gets you to within a page or two of your plant. He arranges the plants based on the result of three questions based on the number of petals, leaf arrangement (opposite, alternate or whorled), and leaf shape (toothed, smooth edged, or divided). The result presents a three-digit number leading you to a key that tells you on what page to look. The key system should bring you to within 3 pages of where your plant is located if not the exact page. It is a little more difficult to use than the Peterson guide and the drawings and text are not as good, but you can usually find your mystery plant faster without a lot of page flipping. Newcomb’s also covers the shrubs and vines and therefore covers more species (1,375 compared to 1,293 in the Peterson guide).

What we could use is a book arranged by color with each color section followed by Newcomb’s key system, combined with the superior illustrations of the Peterson guide. A new volume, “*Wildflowers in the Field and Forest*” by Steven Clemants and Carol Gracie, comes close to doing that. It is a little more user-friendly. “*Wildflowers in the Field and Forest*,” like the Peterson guide, arranges the plants by color, but each color section is followed by a short key, based on simple observations, to narrow the search in that color section. Your first choice is whether the leaves are arranged opposite or alternate on the stem. Next you decide if the leaf is simple or compound, then you determine the number of petals. This brings you to the page where you begin your search. You may still have to do a little bit of page flipping, but the key brings you to the right section and usually within 3 to 4 pages.

The book, unfortunately, does have some drawbacks. All the illustrations are photographs instead of drawings or paintings. Most of the photographs are excellent, but some show only the flower and none of the leaves. The authors have tried to correct that by inserting a small inset photograph of the leaves into the flower picture. This remedies the situation to some degree, but you do not get an overall view of the plant.

There are some advantages of this book over the other two. The actual flower size is shown by a white line at the bottom of the photograph, so you don’t have to measure with a ruler. It also includes range maps, lacking in Newcomb’s and the Peterson guide. The keys are easier to use and it covers 1,450 species, seventy-five more than Newcomb’s. In addition, all the scientific name changes are up-to-date.

Although it does not replace the other two field guides, I think it is worth having for the range maps and name changes alone. Someday we’ll have a field guide to the flowering plants that has all the blessings of the three volumes above.

Dick Byers

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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