
WILDFLOWERS

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

Next Meeting is September 11th

The next meeting will be Monday, September 11, 8:00 p.m., at the Kresge Theater at Carlow College, 3333 Fifth Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA (Oakland). Program details will be in next month's newsletter.

Lou Ammon is again coordinating the monthly speakers. If you would like to present a program, or can offer a suggestion, please call him at (412) 798-0886 or e-mail him at LNAmmun@aol.com.

Nature by Max Henrici

Max Henrici was a noted local nature columnist. This article was published in the Pittsburgh Sun-Telegraph in the 1940's.

These columns are mostly reports on what I see on weekend walks in the country near Pittsburgh. If they are overloaded on the botanical side it is because I find it easier and more fascinating to study flora than fauna.

Let me offer an illustration. Last Saturday W. E. Buker, F. H. Beer and I botanized in Butler and Lawrence counties. We started on the Connoquenessing Creek at Ribold. On our arrival there Buker remarked that just for the fun of the thing he would jot down the names of the wild flowers that we were able to identify on sight.

Within half an hour he had 40 species on his list. By the time we left there, a couple of hours later, the list had grown to 123 species. At the West Liberty and Plain Grove bogs, where we

continued our search, Buker added 27 more species, to make an even 150, then stopped.

Among the hundred and fifty were four that were brand new to me - the grass of Parnassus (*Parnassia glauca*), the purple fringed orchis (*Platanthera psycodes*), the brook lobelia (*Lobelia kalmii*), and the wild bean (*Apios americana*).

If this had been a field trip in search of birds I doubt if we would have found as many as 30 different kinds, and I doubt if we would have found any that were brand new to us. And while I do not know very much about insects, I doubt if an entomological expedition would have repaid us as richly as this botanical expedition did.

I am not disparaging these other branches of natural history nor attempting to belittle their interest or importance. I am merely explaining why these columns are so heavily weighted on the side of botany.

If you wish to continue in the library the studies begun in the field, you will find, I believe, that botany offers much richer material than the other biological sciences.

Take, for example, what I learned in books about the grass of Parnassus on my return home Saturday night. It is not a grass at all but belongs to the Saxifrage Family. It was given the name "grass of Parnassus" by the ancient Greek botanist Dioscorides, who flourished about the time of the Roman Emperor Nero. Dioscorides states that he found the plant growing on Mount Parnassus.

The English botanist John Gerard (1545-1612) is indignant about the plant's having been called

the grass of Parnassus, declaring in his "Herbal" that "if this plant be a kind of grasse then may the Butter-burre or Colte's-foot be reckoned for grasses- as also all other plants whatsoever."

To this the English botanist John Parkinson replies, a half century later: "It is very probable that the cattle feeding thereon, became fat and well liking, as our Clover or three-leaved Grass, doth with us, and thereupon took the name, as is usual in divers countries to call herbs by the name of Grass, although they have no likeness with Grass indeed."

Max Henrici

Train with Green and Growing

Green and Growing brings environmental and horticultural programs to public and private schools in Allegheny County. It is an outreach program sponsored by the Pittsburgh Garden Place.

This exciting program is looking for volunteer docents to teach these fascinating programs to elementary age students. Interested volunteers will join a Docent Training Class, beginning Thursday, September 28, 2000, and continuing for nine weeks. Topics cover basic botany, trees, roots, shoots and the web of life.

Call Nancy Smith at Garden Place at (412) 441-4442, ext. 210.

Teachers in Allegheny County can bring these ASSET-linked programs to their classroom. The classes are interesting, challenging, and offer hands-on activity for pre-kindergarten through the sixth grade. Call Nancy Smith to schedule a program.

No ATVs on Public Lands

The Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources is considering expanding the number of miles of trails for ATV use in state forests and other state lands.

Those who love our native plants and wildflowers know the destruction that these vehicles can do to plants, soil and wildlife. In addition, do we want our state forest employees, trained in forestry, ecology, or wildlife management, to spend valuable time policing and monitoring the few riders who will disobey the rules and ride in forest areas off-limits to ATVs?

Write to Secretary John Oliver and request that no new ATV trails be added and that any existing ones that have caused any ecological damage be eliminated.

Secretary John Oliver
DCNR
Rachel Carson State Office Building
Harrisburg, PA 17105-8552

Get Well Soon

We wish a quick and healthy recovery for member Al Shriver from his recent illness and operation. Best of luck, Al!

More Mushrooms from the Forest

What exciting mushrooms can await you if you visit an old growth hemlock and white pine forest in western Pennsylvania this summer? Last year, the editor presented a list of mushrooms from our field trip to Heart's Content on August 21. Member Dorothy Fornof greatly supplemented that list with an even more diverse and challenging list of mushrooms. Among the most unusual:

Two-colored Bolete – *Boletus bicolor*
Red Mouth Bolete – *Boletus subvelutipes*
Carbon Balls – *Daldinia concentrica*
Bear's Head Tooth – *Hericium coralloides*
Deceptive Milky – *Lactarius deceptivus*
Shaggy Parasol – *Lepiota rachodes*
Bleeding Mycena – *Mycena haematopus*
Radiating Phlebia – *Phlebia radiata*
The neat Russula – *Russula lepida*

Field Trip Schedule

Registration is not required. Everyone is welcome, including non-members. Trips are not cancelled due to rain. For questions, call the trip leader or Loree at (412) 521-9425.

Sunday, August 13, 2000

Presque Isle State Park, Erie County

Leader: Tom Lawrie (814) 455-0890

Time: 10 a.m.

Directions: Take I-79 north to Erie. Exit at 26th Street. Turn left and drive approx. 1 mile until 26th St. intersects Rte. 832 (Peninsula Drive). Turn right and continue to the Park entrance. Travel through the Park to the Pontoon launching area just past the Misery Bay Bridge. We will meet here.

Spaces are available for a Pontoon Lagoon Interpretive Tour at 9:00 a.m. (before the 10 a.m. field trip). If you wish to arrive earlier and join the 45-minute tour, call Maggie Harlan of the Pennsylvania Native Plant Society at (814) 349-5029, or e-mail her at harlanmm_1999@yahoo.com.

Saturday, August 26, 2000

Montour Trail, Allegheny County

Leader: Esther Allen (412) 366-0786

Time: 1 p.m.

Directions: From Pittsburgh, take I-79 south to the Southpointe exit (Exit 10). Turn left at end of ramp. At the stop sign, turn left on Morganza Road towards Hendersonville. Go 1/4 mile and turn right onto Georgetown Road. Look for Fiddler's ice cream on the left and for a little dirt driveway. Follow this driveway to the Montour Trail parking lot.

Back to Basics

The last floral whorl is called the gynoecium. This whorl contains the female reproductive cells, or eggs, which develop inside ovules (immature seeds).

Break open a fresh green pea pod and inside are round ovules that soon mature into seeds. Now imagine millions of years ago a flattened leaf-like structure that had these ovules along the margins. As evolution continued over millions of years, this ovule-bearing leaf folded its margins over and eventually inclosed these ovules in a new structure called a carpel.

Ovules are usually found in pairs. One method of counting carpels is to count the number of ovule pairs. Cut a cucumber in half and count the number of seeds (seeds are mature ovules) and divide by two to get the number of carpels.

The pistil is the most visible part of the gynoecium. The pistil's swollen base, called the ovary, contains the carpels. The elongated middle section is called the style, and the terminal part of a pistil is called the stigma.

The stigma contains the receptive surface for pollen during pollination. The number of styles in a pistil can sometimes reveal the number of carpels. Miami Mist (*Phacelia sp.*) has two styles, and thus contains two carpels.

To learn these terms, find a good identification guide that uses these terms to describe plants. Another approach is to look up specific plants and the structures you want to learn in an identification guide. Then collect the particular plant in the field and see for yourself the structure described in the identification guide.

Soon you will be able to use these terms to describe an unknown plant you find in the field, then later use this written description to identify the plant from the guide.

Another way to review these complex terms is to write all you can about an already known plant that you come across in the field. Then compare your technical description to the one written in the identification guide.

Jeff Polonoli

Botanical Society of Western Pennsylvania – August 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>.