
WILDFLOWERS

The Bulletin of the Botanical Society of Western Pennsylvania • December 2004

The Holiday Party is December 13

Our annual Christmas Party will be Monday, December 13, 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.

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!

This is also Member's Night where we share our great plant sightings over the year. A member can bring up to twelve slides.

The annual election of officers will occur at the December meeting. Several nominations were made at the November meeting, and additional nominations can be presented at the December meeting.



Blue-Eyed Mary and a Call for Artists...

As you know, members selected Blue-eyed Mary, *Collinsia verna*, as the wildflower to represent the Botanical Society of Western Pennsylvania.

Now it is time for the Society's artists, amateurs and pros, to step forward and submit a drawing of this flower to be used on an embroidered patch, which will incorporate the flower's beautiful blue and white color pattern.

Please forward your entry to Dr. Mary Joy Haywood at 3333 Fifth Ave., Pittsburgh, PA 15213-3165.

Tips for Creating Graphics for Embroidered Emblems - To the extent a graphic can be modified for embroidery, these instructional tips can be used.

1. Bolder is better. Bold design elements embroiderer better and are more visible.
2. Strong contrast is better. Strong contrast is better than light on light or dark on dark colors.
3. Open block lettering is more legible.
4. Capture Lines. Capture lines, thin black lines defining graphic details, are difficult to embroider. If some or all of them can be removed the end result will be better. When capture lines are essential, consider thickening the capture lines to the point where they can be accomplished in a back and forth stitch.

*Adapted from the AB Emblem website,
www.abemblem.com.*

Hunt Institute holds its 11th International Exhibition

The Hunt Institute of Botanical for Botanical Documentation will present the 11th International Exhibition of Botanical Art & Illustration through February 28, 2005. Celebrating the 40th anniversary of the International series, this show features 94 artworks by 62 artists from 12 countries. The Institute established the International series in 1964 with the hope of supporting and encouraging contemporary botanical artists.

This exhibition of paintings is open to the public free of charge, on display on the fifth floor of the Hunt Library building at Carnegie Mellon University. Hours: Monday–Friday, 9 a.m.–12 p.m. and 1 p.m.–5 p.m.; Sunday, 1 p.m.–4 p.m. The Institute will be closed December 17, and December 23 through January 2. For information, contact the Institute at 412-268-2434 or visit the website at www.huntbot.andrew.cmu.edu.

Best Wishes

Member Bob Morgan, a former president of the Botanical Society, is recovering at home from bypass heart surgery. We wish him a full recovery and rest over the holidays.

David Templeton's Seldom Seen: Tree-mendous

So there I sat, 10 years old, with my mother playing Joyce Kilmer's "Trees" on the piano and demanding I sing the tree-loving lyrics with a voice that would woo Canada geese.

"I think that I shall never see/A poem lovely as a tree," I honked.

And there in the next room lay my brother with only his head protruding into the doorway. Of course, I laughed till I choked, prompting Mom

to threaten to swat me. She made me start over. I haven't been normal since.

But to overcome this mark against my childhood -- and forgive my mother for making me honk, and my brother for turning me into Curly and Mom into Moe -- I've embraced the spirit of those lyrics and searched southwestern Pennsylvania for trees that inspire music and poetry.

And, wow, did I find them -- awe-inspiring champion trees that moved me to sing.

German, Fayette County, claims the state co-champion white oak, which is reputed to be the second largest in the nation. This majestic tree is humongous.

I think that I shall never see/ Trees as magnificent as these.

Tree experts judge tree size with a point system based on trunk diameter 4 1/2 feet above ground, height and foliage spread.

In 1993, the champion white oak in German scored 378 points, the highest total of any Pennsylvania tree, with the co-champion in Adams County scoring 377 points. Months ago, the Fayette County tree scored 382 points, reflecting only a nominal point increase due to weather damage that left it 7 feet shorter than in 1993.

This Incredible Hulk grows on the Joe Bukovitz farm near Footedale but outside of public view. Joe's son, Jerry Bukovitz, took me to see the green giant.

"People from all over Fayette County come to look at this tree," said Bukovitz, owner of a wild animal farm nearby. Leaning against the tree, he looks like a mouse resting against an elephant's leg.

Its circumference is 263 inches -- almost 22 feet -- with a crown spread of 45 yards, or the distance of a respectable punt in pro football.

While not very high at 85 feet, its bulk and spread command reverence from anyone beholding this wooden spectacle.

To get its exact age, one would have to cut it down and count the rings, or do a core drilling. To prevent injury, experts estimate age by multiplying its diameter by a factor of five for white oak trees. (The age factor ranges from 3 for the pin oak, for example, to 8 for the horse chestnut.)

With a diameter of 84 inches, the Bukovitz white oak tree figures to be 420 years old, which means it took root about 1584 -- 92 years after Columbus discovered the New World and 36 years before Pilgrims landed at Plymouth Rock. That would make it about two centuries older than the nation.

"I want to get up into that tree," said Bob Crusan, a tree expert from South Bend, Armstrong County, who did the official measurement. "It makes you realize their history and how temporary we are as humans. It's awe-inspiring and puts things in perspective for us as living things." Crusan, a Christmas tree farmer, has remeasured local state champion trees to prepare for the next edition of "Big Trees of Pennsylvania," which will detail the state's largest trees of each species.

Most champion trees are in eastern counties. The only other regional champion is a Japanese lilac tree in Scottdale, Westmoreland County.

But white oaks are the giants of local trees, as Bukovitz's monster proves.

My wife, Suellen, a tree guru of sorts, informed me of a notable white oak tree near Green Haven Road in East Finley, about which I told State Forester Bill Wentzel. He measured it and dubbed it Washington County's largest.

"It's quite impressive, with one branch touching the ground," he said of the East Finley tree on the Baum and Cora Brownlee farm.

That white oak's circumference is 205 inches, or 17 feet. It draws attention from passers-by, especially those bound for Jack and Melinda Kane's riding stable west of the 110-acre Brownlee farm. The tree can be admired from the road.

Grazing goats used to climb the large branch touching the ground to lounge in the branches and avoid coyotes.

"The goats looked like ornaments in the tree," Kane said, noting that people at the riding stable often discuss the tree, take photographs and even try doing paintings of it.

The Brownlees also have abundant oak tree tales.

Cora said her son, Joe, once saw their dog chase a wild animal, which ditched into a hole in the tree's hollow base. The dog squeezed through the hole and could be heard chasing the critter inside.

Afterward, the dog couldn't get out of the hole, so Joe dug a hole in the ground to free the dog.

Wentzel said it was almost equal in size to a white oak behind West Greene High School, Greene County, which is that county's largest.

A shingle oak near Center Avenue in Franklin, Greene County, is reigning state champion. Crusan, who measured it, said it was 14.3 feet in circumference, 110 feet tall with a crown spread of 65 feet.

"If only these trees could talk," Wentzel said. "They could tell us what happened under their branches."

Which leaves me one final chorus to sing:

I think I shall forever croak/
About the grandeur of the mighty oak.

By David Templeton, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette. Seldom Seen, Templeton's Seldom Seen appears weekly in the Washington Sunday edition of the Post-Gazette.

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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 23th 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