



Native Plant News

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Spring 2016

Ethnobotany for Spring Trees

Sandra Walker

If you're out hiking this spring, keep your eyes open as you just might be walking through nature's pantry. The following native trees are active in spring and are best if used during this time.

Paper Birch (*Betula papyrifera*):

Grows in lowlands, subalpine areas and in bogs north to the tundra.

Uses: The sap in spring is used as refreshment and can be boiled down like maple sap but does not thicken as much. Young twigs, seeds and inner bark can be boiled for tea.

Nomadic tribes used birch baskets because they were lightweight and held water well. Birch bark biting also developed as an art form. The bark is good for starting fires, and the wood is hard and burns long. The wood can also be used for making furniture. Eastern Birch trees were often used to make canoes.

Medically, the plant is being researched to see if it can help with skin cancers.

River Birch (*Betula occidentalis*):

Grows on river banks and in moist soils in sheltered areas.

Uses: The sap in spring is used as refreshment and can be boiled down like maple sap, but does not thicken as much. Young twigs, seeds and inner bark can be boiled for tea.

The sap for birch spoils quickly so keep your collecting bucket covered and protected from spring rain and bugs. Collecting the sap in batches and filtering/processing as soon as feasible is advised. Kept cool, the sap can be used as a drink. The sap can also be made into vinegar and even birch beer or wine. The sap may also be boiled down or reduced into syrup.

Birch Beer:

At a ratio of every 18 litres of sap (~4 gallons) add 4.54 litres (1 gallon) of honey. Stir in honey and bring to a boil for about 10 minutes. Watch the brew and stir/adjust temperature to maintain a slight boil. Then add a few litres (or more to taste) of finely chopped young birch twigs and let brew cool to room temperature. Strain out the twigs while pouring the brew into a "primary" fermenting container (a clean bucket with a lid or a covered crock will do). Add yeast (brewers or wine yeast can be used – the latter turning out like mead) and let stand at room temperature away from sunlight and drafts until the brew starts to settle (usually about a week to 10 days). If you've used brewers yeast, a carbonated "beer" beverage is likely preferred and you should bottle the liquid at this time. Depending on your level of experience, you may want to move (or "rack" using a siphon/hose) the beer from the primary to another container (such as a "carboy"

or "secondary" container or bucket) just before bottling, to minimize sediment introduction into the final product. Let bottled batch stand in a dark place at room temperature for a few weeks or longer. Cool before serving.

If you've used wine yeast (especially champagne yeast) and a "bubbly" is sought, treat the same as beer, using bottles that can withstand pressures of carbonation (such as beer bottles). If a mead-like wine is sought, rack the wine from the primary into a secondary (with an air-lock) and let stand for a month or longer until clear (no bubbles) before bottling as a wine.

Manitoba Maple (*Acer negundo*):

Prefers low areas, streams and riverbanks. Used as a shelterbelt tree.

Uses: The sap is good for syrup. The hard wood is good for furniture and burning. Young branches were used for making snowshoes and bows.

Trembling Aspen (*Populus tremuloides*):

Often found in slight depressions, moist coulees, sheltered spots and in riparian areas; Trembling Aspen is the most common tree in North America. It is also circumpolar. The tree reproduces through seed and roots. The seed has a very short window for germination, and must do so soon after dispersal or the seeds die. The trees make up for this weakness by producing

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Native Plant News is a quarterly publication of the Native Plant Society of Saskatchewan (NPSS) and is one of the benefits of membership. Members are invited to submit articles, news, views, photographs and comments. Views expressed by the authors are not necessarily those of the NPSS.

Deadlines:

Deadlines:	Submission	Publication
Winter Issue:	November 1	December 15
Spring Issue:	February 1	March 15
Summer Issue:	May 1	June 15
Fall Issue:	August 1	September 15

Membership Dues (Year End November 30)

Individual \$30	Non-profit organization \$100
Family \$45	Corporate \$200
Student \$15	Life \$500

Please contact the NPSS office for information about the lifetime membership installment payment option.

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many seeds early in the spring when moisture conditions are usually good. The tree also reproduces by roots and suckering, and many bluffs consist of a single clone.

Uses: The inner bark is sweet and was a relished treat by many First Nations; high in vitamin C. Many people in Europe survived food scarcity during the World Wars by eating the inner bark. It can also be tapped and made into syrup. The young buds can be made into tea. The young sticky buds are also used as an aromatic and are used in commercial perfumes, cough syrups used to treat whooping cough, and as a part of a lineament for sore muscles. The wood burns well when dry and does not snap or make much smoke. Horses love to eat young shoots and leaves. Trembling Aspen bark produces a sparse white powder which can be used for sunscreen.

References: Euell Gibbons; *Stalking the Wild Asparagus*, Nancy Turner & Adam Szczawinski; *Wild Edible series*; and Janice Schofield; *Discovering Wild Plants*.

Editor's note: Sandra has recently written an ethnobotany book entitled "The Path to Wild Food" which will be in bookstores soon. *

Correction

In the "NPSS Pulls Together Another Successful AGM" article in our winter 2015 issue of the *Native Plant News* we stated that Jared Epp presented at our annual general meeting, when it should have stated Jared Clarke. Our apologies for the mix up. *

Brush Up on Botrychium!

Join us on **July 14-15, 2016** in **Cypress Hills Provincial Park** for an in-depth workshop on Moonworts (Botrychium). Lead by **Dr. Donald Farrar**, Professor Emeritus - Iowa State University and **Dr. Cindy Johnson**, Professor - Gustavus Adolphus College, this workshop is intended for keen botanists with plant identification skills. The workshop will consist of classroom and field components, and participants will be expected to provide their own transportation, meals and accommodations. **Please plan accordingly for field conditions (sturdy shoes, hat, sunscreen, water, etc.).** Please be advised that there is a daily entry fee of \$8 for the park (3 day, week or seasonal passes also available).

**Registration is a steal at only \$30
for the entire 2 day workshop!**

To register, click on the following link and go to the "events" tab in our online store page, then click on 2016 Botrychium Workshop. <http://www.npss.sk.ca/?s=8>

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Contact the NPSS for more details.

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Keeping Tabs on Invasive Species: Saskatchewan's iMapInvasives

The Saskatchewan Conservation Data Centre administers a GIS-based invasive species mapping & data management tool, iMapInvasives, which provides a platform for open data exchange and communication among regional invasive species efforts. By providing a central data repository for invasive species information, the SK CDC provides easily accessible, up-to-date information for land managers and citizen scientists. Data is entered into the database by registered users either through quality-controlled online submissions or through our newly developed bulk data upload forms.

iMapInvasives stores occurrence, treatment, and survey records for non-native plants and animals. In addition to keeping tabs on where non-native species are and how they are being managed, the system also has the capability of storing absence data, where surveys have taken place, but no target species were detected. For example, iMapInvasives is being used in province-wide early detection survey efforts for invasive Zebra and Quagga mussels which have not yet been found in Saskatchewan, but are established in neighboring jurisdictions. Survey details will be entered into our central data repository by local organizations and viewable by all users.

How will iMapInvasives support my work?

- Free access to a province-wide database where you can store and manage your data
- Stay connected! Keep up-to-date on other invasive species initiatives in the province
- Perform GIS spatial analyses and query data by species, location, organization, etc.
- Set up email alerts for your area and/or species of interest
- Produce customizable maps and reports

The power of this program stems from its ability to promote a collaborative environment – where interested members of the public can engage with provincial experts and managers to report and control invasive species. The more users reporting observations, the more powerful this tool becomes. More eyes and ears in the field helps us react quickly to new invaders and new infestations of known invaders. We're working on ways to make the system accessible to users with varying technical abilities and time commitments. We've recently developed bulk data load forms for streamlined submission of datasets and are also in the process of launching a new mobile app for iMapInvasives, so stay tuned!

Visit the Saskatchewan Conservation Data Centre's Invasive Species page for up-to-date links of bulk data load forms, iMap user manuals, provincial non-native species lists, and links to other regional invasive species initiatives: <http://www.biodiversity.sk.ca/Invasives.htm>. If you have any questions or comments about iMapInvasives, contact the Invasive Species Coordinator at imap.invasives@gov.sk.ca. *



PHOTO BY PHOTO BY AHDIA HASSAN

Ahdia Hassan testing out the initial (Beta) release of the iMapInvasives Mobile observation data collection tool! Mobile applications are in the works - stay tuned!

Upcoming Events

Native Prairie Appreciation Week (NPAW)

June 12-18, 2016

<http://www.pcap-sk.org/native-prairie-appreciation-week/npaw-registration>

NPAW 2016 TOUR

- "Blues, Bats & Blue Grama"

June 16 & 17, 2016 (Native Prairie Appreciation Week, June 12-18, 2016)

Maple Creek, SK

<http://www.pcap-sk.org>

Habitats & Hydrology Workshop

June 13-16, 2016

Cypress Hills, SK

Instructed by Dave Sauchyn and hosted by Old Wives Watershed

For more information please contact

Tech@oldwiveswatershed.com

Forages in the Field Workshop

June 23, 2016

Kisbey, Saskatchewan

www.saskforage.ca

2016 International Rangeland Congress

July 17-22, 2016

Saskatoon, SK

<http://2016canada.rangelandcongress.org/>

To submit your native plant related event to our events list, send your information (including date, contact, phone number and location) to info@npss.sk.ca.



Dodder Plant Found on NPSS Field Trip

On August 23rd, 2015, the Native Plant Society of Saskatchewan held a field trip to Nature Saskatchewan's Crooked Lake Fen property, located in the Qu'Appelle Valley north of Grenfell. About 15 people attended, including Rob Wilson and me. One of the plants we found growing in the fen was a species of Dodder (*Cuscuta* sp.). Rob called this plant the vampire plant, and asked me to write a short article about it for the Yellowhead Flyway Birding trail Association newsletter. That article is published below. In addition to that article, I've also included a list of *Cuscuta* species that may be found in Saskatchewan, and, a tentative key for Saskatchewan species given to me by Dr. Vernon Harms. This key was proposed by Dr. Mihai Costea, the *Cuscuta* expert who is writing the Flora of North America treatment on the genus (not yet published), after reviewing a key to *Cuscuta* species of Saskatchewan published by Dr. Harms in 2004.

The Crooked Lake field trip was the second time I have seen Dodder in Saskatchewan. The first time was in early August, 2008, when I found it growing among shrubs on the shore of the Red Deer River, just south of Hudson Bay, SK. There is a very good description of one species of this plant in the book *Rare Vascular Plants of Alberta*, and I was able to identify it as a Dodder species from having read its description in that reference book.

Dodder, a member of the Morning Glory family, is a parasitic plant, which does not photosynthesize but instead derives its nutrients and water from a host plant. Upon emerging from the soil as a seedling, time-lapsed photography shows the stalk of the seedling rotating around in a circle, almost like it's sniffing the air, the seedling is searching for a nearby host plant. You can see short videos of this behaviour on YouTube.

When a Dodder seedling contacts a host, it will coil itself around the stem of the host plant like a snake does around its prey. Out of Dodder's stems grow *haustoria*, tooth-like appendages which penetrate the host plant and allow Dodder to extract nutrients. Once



PHOTO BY GLEN LEE

Dodder vine coiling around host plant and exhibiting many flowers.

the Dodder seedling has attached to a host, the base of the seedling and root wither away and die, leaving the Dodder plant completely dependent on its host. This is something to look for if you find Dodder, see if you can find any roots beneath the Dodder stems, you likely won't find any.

Because the plant does not photosynthesize, it has no need of leaves, and its leaves have evolved into scales – little bumps along the stem. The stems lack chlorophyll and are typically yellow or orange in colour.

The survival rate of its seedlings is low, therefore Dodder's reproductive strategy is to produce clusters of many flowers, and a great deal of seed from its flowers. Dodder's flowers

are white in colour. My field notes from Hudson Bay list the flowers as bell-shaped, 5-lobed, 4 mm in diameter and 5 mm in length. We measured the vines growing to about 1 metre in height on its host plants (Willows).

Wikipedia states there are 100-170 species of Dodder worldwide, with the greatest species diversity found in subtropical and tropical regions. Dodder can be a serious weed in some areas. I have seen photos of a crop covered in Dodder vines, the field looks as though it was covered in mounds of spaghetti.

Dodder (*Cuscuta* spp.) is found in Saskatchewan on shores and moist sites, and uses shrubs or forbs for its host plants. Dr. Vernon Harms lists 6 species of *Cuscuta* as possibly growing in Saskatchewan in his book *Checklist of the Vascular Plants of Saskatchewan*, and lists the abundance of these species as uncommon to extremely rare. All of Saskatchewan's *Cuscuta* species are annual plants and are native species.

Identification of each species is difficult, you need to examine minute flower characteristics. Dr. Harms and Dr. Costea have produced a one page taxonomic key to identify *Cuscuta* species in Saskatchewan. We did not have this key with us on the Crooked Lake Fen field trip to identify the plant we found.

As a bit of research for this article, I had a look at the *Cuscuta* specimens in the University of Regina herbarium, which contains specimens of 3 species. Most of specimens were collected in the Qu'Appelle Valley, almost all of those from sites northeast of Moose Jaw, and one specimen was collected near Crooked Lake. There were also specimens from Manitou Lake, and the South Saskatchewan River Valley south



PHOTO BY GLEN LEE

Stem of Dodder vine pulled away from host plant, the tooth-like haustoria are evident.

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Another view of the haustoria.

PHOTO BY GLEN LEE

of Saskatoon. The *Cuscuta* specimens were using Willow, Golden Rod, Meadow Rue, Mint, Water-Horehound, and Stinging Nettle as host plants. It appears herbarium staff had a difficult time in identifying the specimens, as many were initially identified as one species and later renamed as a different species. A couple of the specimens were listed as 'probably' being identified correctly as the species under which the specimen was filed.

A Colorado State University Extension fact sheet lists the following other common names for Dodder: love vine, strangleweed, devil's-guts, goldthread, pull-down, devil's-ringlet, hellbine, hairweed, devil's-hair, and hailweed.

My thanks to Dr. Vernon Harms for his assistance in determining the *Cuscuta* species for the province, and providing a tentative key. *

Tentative Key to Possible *Cuscuta* species in Saskatchewan

Mihai Costea, University of Guelph, V.L. Harms, professor emeritus of Botany, University of Saskatchewan. This key was proposed by Dr. Costea after reviewing a *Cuscuta* key published by Dr. Harms in 2004.

- 1a. Flowers all or mostly 4-merous, in globose clusters; corolla (3-) 4 (-5) parted, cylindric-campanulate, the lobes erect; withered corolla capping capsule, but often soon cast off. ----- (to 2).
- 1b. Flowers all or mostly 5-merous; corolla lobes $\pm$ spreading. ----- (to 3).
- 2a. Corolla-lobes obtuse or rounded, much shorter than the tube; calyx-lobes shorter than corolla tube, not reaching sinuses, free nearly to base, very unequal, the outer much overlapping the inner; style equal or longer than capsule; scales short-toothed along margins and summit. ----- *C. cephalanthii*.
- 2b. Corolla-lobes acute, subequal to tube, with incurved tips; calyx reaching sinuses of corolla; scales of 2-cleft few-toothed narrow halves. ----- *C. coryli*.
- 3a. Calyx-tube short, the lobes triangular, acute; flowers 2-2.5 mm long, on pedicels longer than flowers. ----- *C. indecora* var. *neuropetala*.
- 3b. Calyx-lobes ovate, obtuse. ----- (to 4).
- 4a. Flowers 1.5-2 mm long, on pedicels subequal to flowers; calyx subequal to and enclosing corolla-tube; corolla-lobe tips inflexed; withered corolla basally attached until shed; calyx angled. ----- *Cuscuta pentagona*.
- 4b. Flowers 2-4 mm long, on pedicels shorter than to subequal to flowers; calyx shorter than and not enclosing corolla tube. ----- (to 5).
- 5a. Corolla-lobes erect; seeds 2-2.8 mm long; scales 2-cleft, long-fringed at summit, about half as long as the corolla-tube; styles $\frac{1}{4}$ as long as capsules. ----- *C. megalocarpa*.
- 5b. Corolla-lobes widely spreading; seeds 1-1.5 mm long; scales oblong, fringed nearly to base; nearly as long as corolla-tube; styles $\frac{2}{3}$ as long as capsule. ----- *C. gronovii*.

Dr. Harms: "I think SK *Cuscuta* species are all very poorly recorded in SK, with their abundance status and overall distributions really quite uncertain. There seem surprisingly few collections in herbaria – maybe the poorest collected genus in the province."

List of *Cuscuta* species in Saskatchewan and information courtesy of Dr. Harms.

UR = uncertain rarity ranking. **VER?** = Verification in SK needed. **UC** = uncommon.

N = native. **In** = introduced.

Cuscuta cephalanthii Engelm. -- BUTTONBUSH DODDER. **N VER?**

Cuscuta corylii Engelm. – HAZEL DODDER. **N UR?** Parasitic on *Solidago*, *Glycyrrhiza*, & elsewhere on various grassland herbaceous hosts. (Mortlach).

Cuscuta gronovii Willd. ex Schultes var. *gronovii* – GRONOVIIUS or COMMON DODDER; SCALDWEED. [*C. vulgivaga* Engelm. var. *laxiflora* Engelm.; *C. vulgivaga* Engelm. var. *glomerata* Engelm.; *C. vulgivaga* Engelm. var. *tetramera* Engelm.; *C. umbrosa* auct. non Bey. ex Hook.]. **N UR?** Parasitic on various hosts including *Solidago*, *Spiraea*, *Cicuta*, *Scirpus*, *Glycyrrhiza*, & *Salix*, usually of moist places such as river valleys. (Matador; Canton Bernard se of Demaine; Qu'Appelle R. e Crooked L.; Saskatoon; Fort Qu'Appelle).

Cuscuta indecora Choisy – LARGE ALFALFA DODDER; LARGE-SEED or SHOWY DODDER. [*C. indecora* var. *neuropetala* (Engelm.) AS Hitchc.]. **N UR?** Parasitic on *Sonchus* & *Solidago*, of river valleys & bluffs. (Canton Bernard se of Demaine; Qu'Appelle R. at Crooked L.). [Reported new for Saskatchewan & for Canada by Costea, Mihai, et al.. 2004. *Cuscuta indecora* Choisy (Convolvulaceae) new for Canada. Sida 21(2): 1229-1230.].

Cuscuta meglocarpa Beyr. ex Hook – LARGE-FRUITED DODDER. [*Grammica umbrosa* (Beyr. ex Hook.) W.A. Weber; *C. meglocarpa* Rydb.; *C. curta* (Engelm.) Rydb.; *C. gronovii* Willd. var. *curta* Engelm.]. **N UC?** Parasitic on numerous herbaceous & shrub hosts, including most frequently with us, *Solidago*, *Symphiocarpus*, *Mentha* & *Salix* spp., usually of moist river valleys. (western to central Grassland & central to eastern Parkland Regions).

Cuscuta pentagona Engelm. var. *pentagona* -- FIELD DODDER; BUSH-CLOVER or FIVE-ANGLED DODDER. [*C. campestris* (Yuncker) Hadac & Chrtek.; *C. gronovii* auct. non Willd. ex Schultes]. **N UR?** Parasitic mostly on legume species. (Moose Jaw & Regina, grassland region). *

The proposed *Action Plan for Multiple Species at Risk in Southwestern Saskatchewan: South of the Divide (SoD)* has now been posted on the Species at Risk Public Registry for a 60-day public comment period beginning **May 24, 2016** and ending **July 23, 2016**.

The proposed *SoD Action Plan* is available online at: http://registrelep-sararegistry.gc.ca/document/default_e.cfm?documentID=2923

City of Saskatoon Helps Make Homeowners' Yards Greener

The City of Saskatoon has recently created a "Healthy Yards" website to help homeowners make their yards more sustainable. The site contains helpful information on how to make your yard more environmentally friendly and has links to other resources, including the NPSS website.

The new website can be found at saskatoon.ca/healthyyards In addition to their new website, the City of Saskatoon has also updated their other sites on water conservation, composting and pesticide-free gardening. Links to these websites are here:

saskatoon.ca/bewaterwise
saskatoon.ca/homecomposting
saskatoon.ca/bepesticidefree

Another new resource entitled *Boulevard Gardening and Maintenance Guidelines* for the City of Saskatoon can be viewed at <https://www.saskatoon.ca/boulevards>

Planning for Planting: Seeding Native Species

Submitted By

SOUTH OF THE DIVIDE CONSERVATION ACTION PROGRAM INC.

As mild winter weather transitions into a warm spring, producers are gearing up for an early seeding season, including those who are planning to seed forages. For farmers and ranchers who are used to looking on the horizon for the next raincloud, seeded native grass species may be the ticket to long term sustainability. Producers who are considering

wheatgrass, purple prairie clover, green needle grass, blue grama, and June grass are most adaptable to local climates. “Native species are able to withstand weather extremes, particularly drought,” says Gabruch, adding that a well-planned native seeding project will adapt to changing weather conditions and patterns.



PHOTO BY LARRY GABRUCH

Prairie grass species, such as needle-and-thread and northern wheatgrass, are hardy, nutrient dense and drought tolerant.

Gabruch acknowledges that there are some misconceptions about natives, including the notion that native stands are far less productive than tame stands. “A lot of producers rely on tame grass in the southwest, and they work in many circumstances. However, a well-designed native planting including native legumes can rival performance compared to seeded tame forages. Over the long term, natives will withstand drought conditions and maintain longevity better than tame species, which is where the main differences and advantage comes in,” Gabruch explains.

The benefits of seeded native species don’t stop at producers. An established diverse mix will contribute to the overall biodiversity in an area. This diversity helps to provide quality habitat for species at risk as well as a source of food and an area for species to forage in. Species at risk, such as the burrowing owl, Sprague’s pipit and chestnut collared longspur, all require prairie grassland habitat to complete their life cycles. Native plantings can help connect fragments of habitat, fill in holes, and benefit the overall ecosystem, in addition to increasing grazing capacity on a farm or ranch.

seeding perennial forages should investigate whether native species are a good option for their operations.

The South of the Divide Conservation Action Program Inc. (SODCAP Inc.) is a species at risk conservation organization focused on working with producers in the Milk River watershed, also known as the South of the Divide. The group is currently offering programming to assist area producers who are interested in converting cultivated land to native prairie species.

“Producers will benefit from forage stand longevity when they choose to seed natives,” says Larry Gabruch, a native restoration agrologist working with SODCAP Inc. “Well-managed seeded natives hold their productivity over the long term,” Gabruch explains, adding that while tame stands may require rejuvenation or inputs, native species likely will not. For ranchers or farmers interested in a long-term low-maintenance method of increasing their grazing resources, native plants are a great option.

Because they are native to the region, prairie species such as needle-and-thread, northern



PHOTO BY LARRY GABRUCH

Winterfat is a native prairie species that is often sought after by grazing animals because it is high in protein.

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PHOTO BY LARRY GABRUCH

Species such as purple prairie clover, a native legume, are well suited to Saskatchewan climates.

When it comes to seeding native species, planning is key. Gabruch advises producers to implement a strong pre-seeding weed control plan and to plant shortly after a pre-seeding herbicide application to give the native seedlings a competitive advantage over weeds. Timing is critical, suggests Gabruch who says preventative weed control will save time and effort in the future. "Use high quality, weed-free seed that is well-suited to the area it will be planted in," he adds, saying that a seed analysis showing purity and germination will help determine the proper seeding rate.

For more information on SODCAP Inc.'s seeded native program which includes financial incentives and technical advice, contact agrologist Larry Gabruch at 306-716-9603. *

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