



Native Plant News

Vol. 22, No. 1

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Spring 2017

Lessons Learned Through Landscaping With Native Plants

By Chet and Candace Neufeld

In 2007, we decided we wanted to try to landscape our entire yard using native plants. Our yard in Saskatoon was unfinished, leaving us with a clean slate and bare soil with which to design our landscape. The possibilities were endless, but the amount of work threatened to be endless as well. We trenched a dry creek bed into the front



PHOTO BY C. NEUFELD

Forest walkway.

yard, which gets fed by our downspouts. When it rains, the creek flows and pools at the end, where Red-osier Dogwoods (*Cornus stolonifera*) soak up the water. Bordering part of the creek bed are some native flower beds, and beyond that the remaining front yard is planted to a lawn primarily of Blue Grama (*Bouteloua gracilis*) and June Grass (*Koeleria macrantha*). The backyard consists of a vegetable garden (the only non-native area in our yard), a few raised native flower and shrub beds, a central native grass lawn, and a small bog garden filled with wetland plants and fed by the overflow from a rain barrel through an underground pipe. We also have a heavily shaded area along the side of our house that we planted to native woodland species. We used a combination of native seed and plants to establish the yard, and aside from the area with woodland species, we planted the native flowers in groupings to try to stay consistent with the look of the neighbourhood. Our landscape plan is also consistent with permaculture principles, although it was not one of our primary goals. A lot of careful planning went into the design of our yard, with considerations for plant species and locations, wildlife, and aesthetics.

Ten Years After - Successes, Challenges and Lessons Learned

A lot has changed, for better or worse, since we completed our yard. Everything established quite quickly, and grew about 20-50% larger than what we were used to seeing in the wild, especially during the first few years. June Grass is a bunch grass, and Blue Grama has very short rhizomes, so our native grass lawn still has small spaces between the plants that have yet to be filled in. On years where we have a lot of snow that sticks around late into spring, we had some grass patches die off that we had to re-seed. Weeds are our biggest problem, and consist primarily of very aggressive perennial grass species such as Kentucky Bluegrass (*Poa pratensis*), Creeping Red Fescue (*Festuca rubra*) and Perennial Ryegrass (*Lolium perenne*). These have crept in from the neighbouring yards, both as rhizomes and as seed blowing through the fence (we ensured our native seed mix and soil was free of weeds to avoid direct introduction). Anticipating this issue, we positioned our raised native flower beds and bog garden against fence lines to act as a buffer for the lawn, laid down landscape fabric and wood mulch on

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Summer Sessions Planned for the NPSS' Saskatchewan Master Naturalist Program

Building on last year's successful program debut of two learning modules, Citizen Science and Urban Ecosystems, we are once again developing and delivering two new modules. The Ecological Engagement and Prairie Ecosystems modules are in the development phase and will be ready for August, though the exact date is still to be determined. The Ecological Engagement module will complement the Citizen Science module as it will build on topics previously addressed such as environmental awareness and natural areas stewardship, while the Prairie Ecosystems module will focus on the fundamentals of one of the most endangered ecosystems on the planet. As always, the modules will be developed and delivered by the province's leading experts on the subjects, and will follow the format of a day of classroom instruction and exercise followed by a field day. This year our field day for both learning modules will be taking place at Last Mountain Lake National Wildlife Area (transportation will be provided). For those who have missed the learning modules that were delivered in 2016, we plan to hold them once again in 2017, although the dates have yet to be set. Because we have been oversubscribed

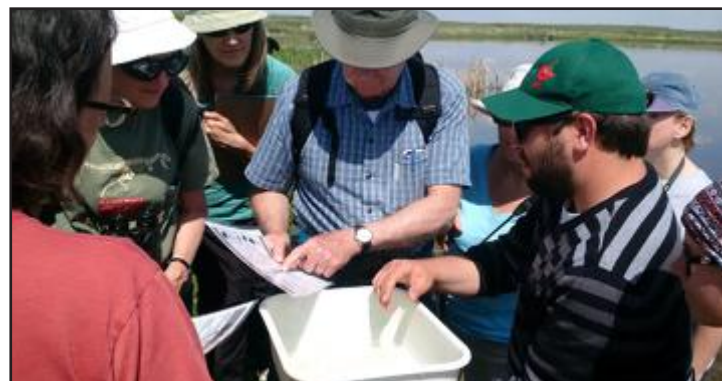


PHOTO DANIELLE LEVESQUE

from the beginning (we currently have approximately 100 people interested in taking the program), we will continue to repeat the learning modules until everyone has had the chance to take them. The Saskatchewan Master Naturalist program has been incredibly popular since its debut, having received media attention from EcoFriendly Sask, CBC and most recently on the Prairie Naturalist Radio Show on CJTR Regina (podcast available at <https://soundcloud.com/theprairienaturalist> - the Saskatchewan Master Naturalist segment starts at the 20 minute mark).

For more information on the Saskatchewan Master Naturalist program, go to <https://www.npss.sk.ca/news-and-events/projects/9>

Thanks to our generous sponsors:

This project was undertaken with the financial support of:
Ce projet a été réalisé avec l'appui financier de :



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

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PHOTO BY C. NEUFELD

Front creek bed.

the flower beds, and installed 6-8 inch pound-in lawn edging where our fence came into direct contact with the grass in the neighbours' yards. However, grass rhizomes have grown underneath the

removing the "bad" non-native grass from the "good" native grass, and I'm sure our neighbours wonder why we're always digging grass out of our lawn! Dandelions (*Taraxicum officinale*) and other weedy forbs are also very problematic as they establish in the spaces between the Blue Grama and June Grass. We have remained herbicide free so far which makes control of these weed species more difficult as it has to be done manually; apart from the obvious health and environmental concerns we have with using herbicides, we want to avoid killing the native forbs and native grasses that have established voluntarily in our lawn. We noticed native bird species like Chipping Sparrows, Goldfinches and Dark-eyed Juncos eating the weed seeds off the plants we hadn't gotten to so we felt a bit better about our weeds, and the dandelions provide a season-long food source for pollinators.

It's not all doom and gloom though. We find it exciting that each year our lawn seems to have new native species appearing and establishing in it, some likely through the wild-harvested native grass seed mix we initially used, and



PHOTO BY C. NEUFELD

Native grass and flower bed with bog garden at far right.

landscape fabric and lawn edging for more than a meter in places. The worst areas of grass invasion though are where seed has blown in and established. Due to the deep and extensive root system and rhizomes, it is very difficult

some likely through natural dispersal by wind and wildlife. While our initial intention with the native grass lawn was to mimic a traditional lawn by using short-growing native grasses,

Upcoming Events

Canada 150 Bioblitz Event

June 9-10, 2017

Regina, SK

For more information, contact Sarah Schafer at sarah.schafer@gov.sk.ca or go to bioblitzcanada.ca

Wings Over Wascana

June 10, 2017

Regina, SK

For more information, go to <http://www.wascanamarsh.ca/wow-festival>

Saskatchewan Stock Growers Association 104th AGM and Convention

June 11-13, 2017

Moose Jaw, SK

For more information, go to <http://skstockgrowers.com/event/ssga-104th-agm-convention/>

Native Prairie Appreciation Week

June 18-24, 2017

Across Saskatchewan

For more information, go to <http://www.pcap-sk.org/native-prairie-appreciation-week/2017-native-prairie-appreciation-week>

Swift Current Research and Development Centre Grazing and Forage Field Day

June 27, 2017

Swift Current, SK

For more information, go to <http://www.agr.gc.ca/eng/news/events/swift-current-research-and-development-centre-grazing-and-forage-field-day/?id=1491931372491>

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.



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it is actually starting to look more like a native prairie than a traditional lawn, and we have so far allowed that to take place within reason. Western Wheatgrass (*Pascopyrum smithii*), Pussytoes (*Antennaria sp.*) and various native sedges (*Carex sp.*) have started to help fill the spaces between the Blue Grama and June Grass. Western wheatgrass adds contrast with its bluish leaves, as do the silvery mats of the Pussytoes. An as-yet-unidentified native sedge is spreading by rhizomes, and has formed small, dense clones where even Kentucky Bluegrass can't establish. We are actively collecting the seed from this sedge and planting it in other parts of the lawn in the hope that it will become more dominant. It is unfortunate there aren't commercial sources of many native sedges! The Blue Grama planted in the street frontage has filled in much better than the rest of the yard. This is likely due to it being frequently mowed by the neighbour, triggering rhizome growth, whereas the rest of Blue Grama gets mowed once yearly. Knowing this, we may mow the rest the native grass areas more frequently to help it fill in now that we're not collecting seed from it, although it will be at the cost of mowing some of the interspersed wildflowers. Blue-eyed Grass (*Sisyrinchium montanum*) has spread from the flower beds into the lawn with vigour and provides a burst of cheery, blue flowers. Other



PHOTO BY C. NEUFELD

Native lawn with creek bed in 2010.

native forbs like Prairie Coneflower (*Ratibida columnifera*), Gaillardia (*Gaillardia aristata*), Black-eyed Susan (*Rudbeckia hirta*), Meadow Blazing-star (*Liatris ligulistylis*), and Heart-leaved Alexanders (*Zizia aptera*) have also spread into the native grass area from adjacent flower beds. Some of these species spread prolifically by seed so we occasionally have to thin them out of the lawn and the flower beds to avoid them taking over. Native plants like Philadelphia Fleabane (*Erigeron philadelphicus*), Tufted White Prairie-Aster (*Symphyotrichum ericoides*), Little Bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*), Big Bluestem (*Andropogon*

gerardii), Wild Mint (*Mentha arvensis*) and a few provincially rare plants like Yellow Evening Primrose (*Oenothera flava*) and Northern Blue-eyed Grass (*Sisyrinchium septentrionale*) have appeared on their own, some in recent years.

The creek bed, while still low maintenance, is becoming more work as Kentucky Bluegrass threatens to establish amongst the cobblestone sides, despite the lack of soil and lining of landscape fabric underneath. The pea gravel bottom of the creek bed has also proven to be a very good growing medium for native flower seed from adjacent flower beds. We try to transplant larger forbs that obscure the creek, but we usually leave a scattering of smaller plants like Blue-eyed Grass and Lance-leaved Stonecrop (*Sedum lanceolatum*) to dot the cobblestone niches. Indiangrass (*Sorghastrum nutans*) and Switchgrass (*Panicum virgatum*) serve as beautiful specimen grasses adjacent to the creek bed.

The native flower beds have done very well. We have healthy stands of forbs like Wild Bergamot (*Monarda fistulosa*), Dotted Blazingstar (*Liatris punctata*), Crocus (*Anemone patens*), Purple Prairie-clover (*Dalea purpurea*), Echinacea (*Echinacea angustifolia*), Silvery Lupine (*Lupinus argenteus*) and the aforementioned Gaillardia, Meadow Blazingstar, Black-eyed Susan, and Prairie Coneflower, among many others. We have also managed to grow



PHOTO BY C. NEUFELD

Native lawn with creek bed in 2012.

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a Yucca (*Yucca glauca*) from seed and there are three small ramets next to the original plant, despite ants trying to take it out with their huge anthill. We struggle to maintain Smooth Blue Beardtongue (*Penstemon nitidus*) and Scarlet Globemallow (*Sphaeralcea coccinea*), likely due to soil being too rich and moist for their liking. We tried growing Yellow Monkeyflower (*Erythranthe guttata*); it is an annual, however, so it popped up in various places around the yard for a few years but then disappeared. The Saskatoons (*Amelanchier alnifolia*) and Western Sandcherries (*Prunus besseyi*) now grow quite large and have to be pruned back, along with the non-native fruit bushes we have in the flower beds.

Some of our favourite areas now are the woodland area and the bog garden. The woodland area was planted to Western Canada Violet (*Viola canadensis*), Downy Yellow Violet (*Viola pubescens*), Early Blue Violet (*Viola adunca*), Tall Lungwort (*Mertensia paniculata*), Ostrich Fern (*Matteuccia struthiopteris*), Twinflower (*Linnaea borealis*), Veiny Meadow-rue (*Thalictrum venulosum*), Fringed Loosestrife (*Lysimachia ciliata*), Wild Columbine (*Aquilegia canadensis*), Star-flowered Solomon's-seal (*Smilacina stellata*), Bearberry (*Arctostaphylos uva-ursi*) and a few other species including a bunch of smaller native ferns. Fireweed (*Chamerion angustifolium*) established on its own, and is frequently pulled in order to manage its numbers. We also thin the Ostrich Ferns once in a while. Two species that we experimented with in the woodland area were Red Indian Paintbrush (*Castilleja miniata*) and Stiff Yellow Indian Paintbrush (*Castilleja lutescens*). As they are hemi-parasitic, both paintbrushes took a while to establish until their roots were able to attach to a host plant, likely the Bearberry they were planted next to. Overall, everything planted in the woodland area has coexisted without issue. We suspect that this is because most of the species planted there are equally competitive and adapted to the shade.

The bog garden continues to do well, and the Marsh Marigold (*Caltha palustris*), Blue Flag Iris



PHOTO BY C. NEUFELD

Our bog garden.

(*Iris versicolor*), and Shooting Star (*Dodecatheon pulchellum*) have not spread much but have just grown larger to fill the space. We hope to try adding some taller plants at the back of the bog garden like Spotted Joe Pye (*Eutrochium maculatum*) this year.

Why did we do it?

The first obvious reason is that we wanted to practice what we preach, so to speak. Being that we are both grassland ecologists, and passionate about native prairie conservation, we like to promote the use of native plants in landscaping. The second reason was environmental. We wanted to eliminate the need to water, fertilize, mow, or use pesticides in our yard. Due to ongoing onslaught and management of invasive species, our yard is by no means maintenance-free, but we have managed to avoid watering (with the exception of initial establishment and occasional watering of the forest and bog area during really hot, dry periods), mowing (with the exception of once a year to remove litter), fertilizer, and pesticide; if only prescribed burns were allowed in yards! The third reason was to try to increase biodiversity by creating our own little “prairie” ecosystem in a city full of monoculture sterile lawns. During the last 10 years, we have had about 110 different native plant species in our yard, some of which have disappeared and some of which are still appearing. We have also had some really interesting insects in our yard including many different species of native butterflies, moths, bees, wasps, beetles, dragonflies, damselflies, spiders, grasshoppers and ants! In fact, we’ve counted over 5

different native grasshopper species and well over 20 different species of spider in our yard at the same time; we also have numerous species of ants building hills and mounds in our grass and flower beds. For most people this would be a nightmare, but for us, it is really neat to see our little ecosystem at work and thinking that we might be providing a refuge for these species year-round. We’ve also had visits from numerous bird species, a few mammals (Northern Pocket Gopher, Field Mice, Muskrat), and a Wood Frog as well. Lastly, we love the look of a native prairie, and although we personally feel there is no way to “restore” a native prairie that has evolved over 10,000 years and has hundreds of species living in it, particularly in the confines of a small urban yard, we are proud that we have something unique in our neighbourhood. We haven’t had any official complaints (to our faces anyways), although we’re sure many think of us as “those crazy people”!

Recommendations for those starting out

- Plan for the worst and hope for the best.
- Start small and work in manageable amounts.
- Think like an ecosystem and manage your yard accordingly. Trying to force things will almost always end up being more work, and may eventually prove to be unsuccessful. It’s best to try and identify what is working and encourage these trends.
- No matter how nice your neighbours are, assume their yards are enemy

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territory and will invade your fragile habitat if given the chance.

- If something works, repeat it elsewhere in your yard. If it doesn't work, change it.
- If you want a native lawn and your yard borders an area with Kentucky Bluegrass or another invasive grass, either plant an isolated patch of native grass with a large buffer area, or install a deep, permanent barrier around your yard like a concrete retaining wall sunk about

2 feet deep. Using aggressive native grasses would also help but may affect the plant community in your own yard; we have seen Buffalograss (*Bouteloua dactyloides*) lawns which were quite dense due to the clonal nature of Buffalograss but you may have issues walking on the pokey female burs. Blue Grama and June Grass will not make a sod-type lawn no matter how thickly they are seeded, so it is best to include at least one other native grass or sedge

species (preferably with rhizomes) that will fill in the spaces. Perhaps one day soon a low-growing, sod-forming native sedge species will be commercially available.

Chet is the Executive Director of the Native Plant Society of Saskatchewan. Candace is a Grassland Ecologist for the Canadian Wildlife Service, Environment and Climate Change Canada. 🌱

Celebrate Canada's 150th Birthday by Getting Outside!

What better way to celebrate Canada's 150th birthday by immersing yourself in a piece of it? Come and explore everything our beautiful province has to offer this summer by joining the NPSS on our field tours! We are offering a tour every month this summer starting with two in the Saskatoon area. All tours are free but registration is encouraged so that we can notify you of any changes. E-mail Chet Neufeld at info@npss.sk.ca to register. If you need to contact Chet on the day of the tour, he can be reached on his cell phone at (306) 381-8603.

Northeast Swale Prescribed Fire Tour - Wednesday, June 21, 2017. 6:30-8:30 pm.

Meet at the entrance gate to the Northeast Swale, located on the northeast edge of Saskatoon. The entrance gate is on Range Road 3050, just north of the junction of Agra Road (Township Road 372) and Fedoruk Road.

Our first field tour of the year after the NatureCity Festival, but this time we are celebrating Native Prairie Appreciation Week, June 18-24, 2017. The Northeast Swale may be familiar for many, but we will explore the parts less visited and learn about how the area is being managed, including the use of prescribed fire. Renny Grilz, Resource Management Officer for the Meewasin Valley Authority, will take us through several different areas that were burned in late 2016 and early 2017, as well as areas that

have not been burned recently. It will be interesting to compare the different areas, and if you think that the burned areas will be black and devoid of vegetation you are in for a surprise! We may also see the beautiful Western Red Lily (*Lilium philadelphicum* var. *andinum*) which is not only Saskatchewan's provincial flower (and a beautiful one at that) but also a plant that responds very well to fire.

Biddulph Natural Area - Sunday, June 25, 2017. 1-4 pm.

Meet at the gate to the pasture, approximately 25 km south of Saskatoon on Highway #219. The land location is NE 12-34-6-W3 (RM of Dundurn, No. 314). It is on the east side along the last stretch of road before entering the Whitecap Dakota First Nation. You will see a sign as well as cars parked at the gate along the highway.

Our second June tour is also a celebration of Native Prairie

Appreciation Week. The Biddulph Natural Area is located approximately 25 km south of Saskatoon in the Moose Wood Sandhills. The area is a transition zone between the mixed prairie to the south and the fescue prairie and mixed wood section of the boreal forest to the north. The area is located on sandy, stream delta deposits and boasts habitats such as a riparian ecosystem, wetlands, stabilized sand dunes, open grass and shrub dominated plant communities. The land is used by the University of Saskatchewan for teaching and research purposes, and there is currently an ongoing international research project on the effects of climate change. We are very fortunate to have been granted access by Dr. Eric Lamb, as the site is not generally accessible to the public. If there is interest and time left at the end of the tour, we may stop by the nearby Beaver Creek Conservation Area to look at the effects of a prescribed fire that was recently conducted on the prairie.

More tours across the province will be announced in our summer newsletter. Stay tuned for details. 🌱



PHOTO BY C. NEUFELD

The NPSS' Newest Face: Natasha Mackintosh

On May 1, the NPSS welcomed Natasha Mackintosh in her role as the new Project Coordinator for our Rare Plants and Ranchers program. She had stiff competition, as the NPSS contract posting drew many qualified candidates. Natasha brings a unique skill set and wealth of field experience which will help to further the program and the society in general. Natasha replaces Danielle Leveque, whose contract expired earlier this year. We wish Danielle all the best! Natasha will work closely with Executive Director Chet Neufeld on the Rare Plants and Ranchers program, but will also be involved in other projects and events; you will likely see her around throughout 2017 and 2018, so stop and say hi if you do! And now a few words from Natasha to introduce herself:

I grew up in a small town near Lethbridge, Alberta and spend most my life outside. My time outside and my need to avoid a desk job drove me to take the Renewable Resource Management program at Lethbridge College. From there, I transferred to the University of Alberta where I completed my Bachelor of Science, majoring in Conservation Biology. My passion for botany and rangeland management did not come naturally. I wanted to be a wildlife biologist, but something just kept pushing me towards the world of plants. After working with the Department of National Defence, the Canadian Wildlife Service, the Alberta Conservation Association, and the University of Alberta, all in vegetation and rangeland positions, I FINALLY realized that this is the field that I am passionate about and meant to be in. In my free time I enjoy hunting white-tailed deer, fishing, shed hunting, and curling. I have previously worked in Saskatchewan for a summer and enjoyed it immensely. I am looking forward to working there again and being able to explore even more of the province. *



PHOTO SUPPLIED

Seeking Input on the Proposed Management Plan for the Hairy Prairie-clover in Canada

Environment and Climate Change Canada is developing a proposed *Management Plan for the Hairy Prairie-clover in Canada*. The Hairy Prairie-clover is a plant listed as Special Concern under the federal Species at Risk Act. In Canada, the Hairy Prairie-clover occurs on partially stabilized sand dune complexes in



PHOTO BY CANDACE NEUFELD

Hairy Prairie-clover.

southwestern Manitoba and south-central Saskatchewan.

For all Special Concern species, Environment and Climate Change Canada must develop a management plan that provides information on the species and its habitat, establishes a management objective, identifies threats, and recommends broad strategies and conservation measures to address those threats and achieve the management objective.

The proposed *Management Plan for the Hairy Prairie-clover in Canada* was posted on the Species at Risk Public Registry on **March 30 for a 60-day comment period ending May 29, 2017**. Following this comment period, we will consider all comments received and work to finalize the document. We will also notify you when the final document is posted to the registry.

We invite your review of the *Management Plan for the Hairy Prairie-clover* during this 60-day comment period. Your support will help to make this recovery document a success.

The proposed Management Plan is available online at:

http://registrelp-sararegistry.gc.ca/document/default_e.cfm?documentID=3145

You may submit your comments or questions at the link provided above or by contacting our office at:

Email: ec.leprpn-sarapnr.ec@canada.ca

Mail: Canadian Wildlife Service, 115 Perimeter Road, Saskatoon, SK S7N 0X4

Phone: 1-855-245-0331 (toll free)

Fax: 306-975-4089

Thank you for taking the time to consider this information. If you would like us to communicate with any other individuals regarding species at risk, please contact our office and provide us with their information.

To learn more about species at risk in Canada and what is being done to help them, please visit the Species at Risk Public Registry (www.sararegistry.gc.ca). *

What's Blooming?

Do you want to know what's blooming before you go out for a hike, or are you trying to find a certain native plant to photograph at its best? Look no further than the NPSS website! We keep an updated list of all of the native plants currently flowering, compiled from reports we receive from our members across the province. The list can be found on our homepage, or by visiting the following link:

<https://www.npss.sk.ca/news-and-events/255>

Are there species that we've missed? Tell us and we'll add them. We will continue to update the list until the end of September. *

Spot the Crocus Contest Winner

This year's "Spot the Crocus" contest winners are Allan and Linda Leslie. They spotted this one blooming near Little Manitou Lake on April 6. Their sighting and all of the others are submitted to Plant Watch, a citizen science-based program that relies on submissions of plant growth data to track our changing environment, such as monitoring climate change. Thanks to all who participated! *



PHOTO BY ALLAN AND LINDA LESLIE

Crocus (*Anemone patens*).

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