

Newsletter of the Native Plant Society of Saskatchewan



R O O T S

Vol. 29 No. 1

Spring 2024



Oxytropis splendens

Showy Locoweed

Photo credit: C. Neufeld

President's Message Andrew Stewart

Greetings!

Welcome to our spring issue of Roots! Spring means a busy time for the NPSS. The months of waiting and planning are now over and it is time for our field staff to hit the ground running. This year promises to be a very busy year as we continue to build on the success of many of our core programs. Rare Plants & Ranchers, Rose Creek Ranch Conservation Grazing Project, South of the Divide Invasive Species Strategy, and Flowering Rush mapping programs continue to grow and expand. To meet the increased needs of these programs the NPSS has hired two new field staff, Cassidy Flasch and Obaida Elshamy, on top of returning NPSS personnel, Hilary Pinchbeck and Reed Lewko. This is the largest field contingent of NPSS staff that I have seen as a Board member and I am extremely excited about all the good work they will accomplish this year!

On top of all of the coordination and execution of our field programs, the NPSS is busy planning exciting field trips, completing school and educational outreach, and planning for our 30th anniversary year in 2025! Keep an eye on our upcoming newsletters and on our social media (shout out to our Communications Coordinator who has been doing a fantastic job!) for more information on exciting events throughout the summer.

Wishing all NPSS members a fantastic summer ahead!

Meet the Team

My name is Cassidy, and I am thrilled to introduce myself as one of the new Project Assistants for the Native Plant Society of Saskatchewan this summer. I grew up in Yorkton and later moved to Nanaimo to pursue studies in nutrition at the Canadian School of Natural Nutrition. It was there, during a course in herbology, that my interest in medicinal plants and ethnobotany was ignited. This newfound passion led me to further my education by earning a Practical Herbalist Diploma from Wild Rose College.

Through my studies, I have developed a deep appreciation for the native plants of Western Canada, particularly those of Saskatchewan. These plants not only connect me to my roots but also offer the practical benefits of being accessible and requiring minimal maintenance.

Currently residing in Saskatoon, I have had the wonderful opportunity to get my hands dirty volunteering with the Meewasin Valley Authority. This experience has only intensified my enthusiasm for native plants and conservation efforts.

While I have spent the past couple of years working in the construction industry, where I have gained valuable skills, I am incredibly excited to embark on a new chapter in conservation with the Native Plant Society of Saskatchewan and look forward to working with the team.



Native Seed Collaborative Takes Root

The Saskatchewan and Manitoba Native Seed Collaborative is a new initiative formed by a diverse group of native seed producers and users. The group meets 3 to 4 times per year and shares information related to all aspects of prairie restoration including such things as existing seed supply and demand, effective seed collection, cleaning, and storage. The goal of the collaborative is to increase the availability of locally adapted native plant seeds, through contracts, shared resources, and potentially seed exchanges. The hope is that members will eventually be able to share seed collection and cleaning equipment, storage facilities, experiences, and knowledge to ensure quality seed is not a limiting factor for restoration activities in the two provinces. If you or someone from your organization would like to participate in the discussions, please reach out to: prairieseedcollaborative@gmail.com

Roots 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: 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

Native Plant Society of Saskatchewan

P.O. Box 21099, Saskatoon, SK S7H 5N9
Phone: (306) 668-3940 Fax: (306) 668-3940
E-mail: info@npss.sk.ca Website: www.npss.sk.ca
Twitter: @NPSS_SK www.facebook.com/npss.sk

Membership Dues (Year End November 30th).

Individual \$30 Family \$45 Student \$15
Non-profit \$100 Corporate \$200
Life \$500 *Please contact the NPSS office for info about the lifetime membership instalment payment option.*

Get your photo on the cover of... ROOTS! Submit your Saskatchewan native plant photos for future cover consideration to: info@npss.sk.ca

What's Growing on at the Greenhouse? Shelley Heidinger and Erin Chesney

The SaskPower Shand Greenhouse, located in Estevan, SK, has grown native forbs and grasses for the Native Plant Society of Saskatchewan's various projects for many years now. Projects have ranged from the old native plant nursery at Regina to plant material for school projects, highway reclamation projects or for distribution through the Wild About Saskatoon events to name a few!

This spring we will be growing Stiff Goldenrod (*Solidago rigida*), Dotted Blazing Star (*Liatris punctata*), Meadow Blazing Star (*Liatris ligulistylis*), Heart-leaved Alexander (*Zizia aptera*), Purple Coneflower (*Echinacea angustifolia*), Fascicled Ironweed (*Vernonia fasciculata*), Joe Pye (*Eutrochium maculatum*), a white-flowered version of Swamp Milkweed (*Asclepias incarnata*), Showy Locoweed (*Oxytropis splendens*), and Gaillardia (*Gaillardia artistia*).

Most seeds need preparation prior to sowing, usually soaking and stratification. The majority of the species sown this year, except Gaillardia and Stiff Goldenrod, have



Many native species are grown.
Photo by SaskPower Shand Greenhouse



Native plants in trays.
Photo by SaskPower Shand Greenhouse

been put into a 3-day soak and approximately 6 weeks of cold stratification. *Gaillardia* and Stiff Goldenrod can be sown directly. *Astragalus* or *Oxytropis* species may need mechanical scarification using two pieces of sandpaper, one coarse and one finer, to break through the seed coat to promote germination.

Good cultural practices can promote good growth with little disease or insect problems but often we require a dose or two of pesticides to prevent damping off or insects such as fungus gnats or aphids. Germination of many of the species can also be quite variable if the seed is older. We find the best growing trays to be the Roottrainers which have a variety of sizes offered and they provide the ability to check roots or move seedlings around easily without disturbing the plant.

At the time of writing, seed for spring 2024 was currently in stratification so here are some photos from previous years!



Miscellaneous wildflower seedlings.
Photo by SaskPower Shand Greenhouse



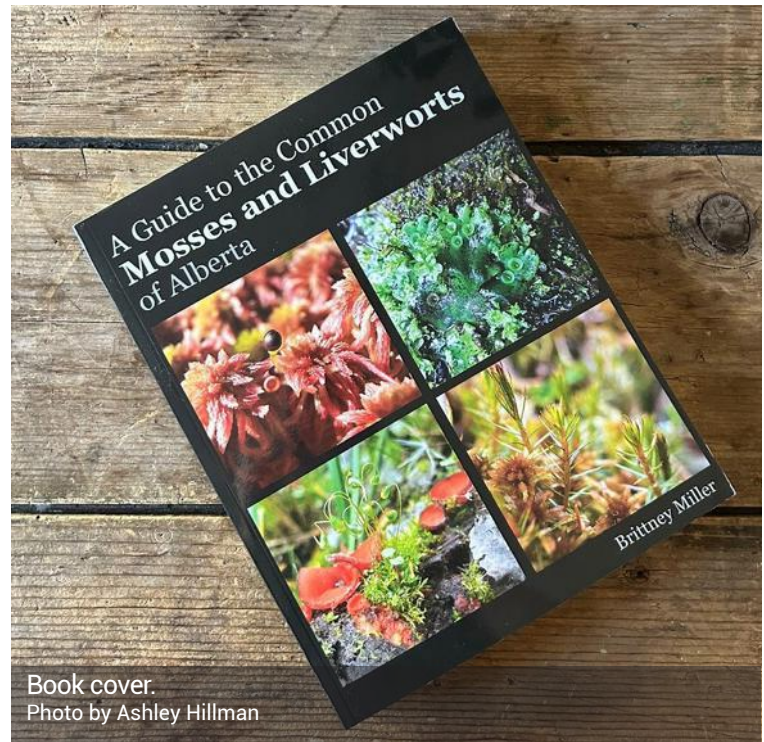
Oxytropis in open Spencer book.
Photo by SaskPower Shand Greenhouse

New Bryophyte Book

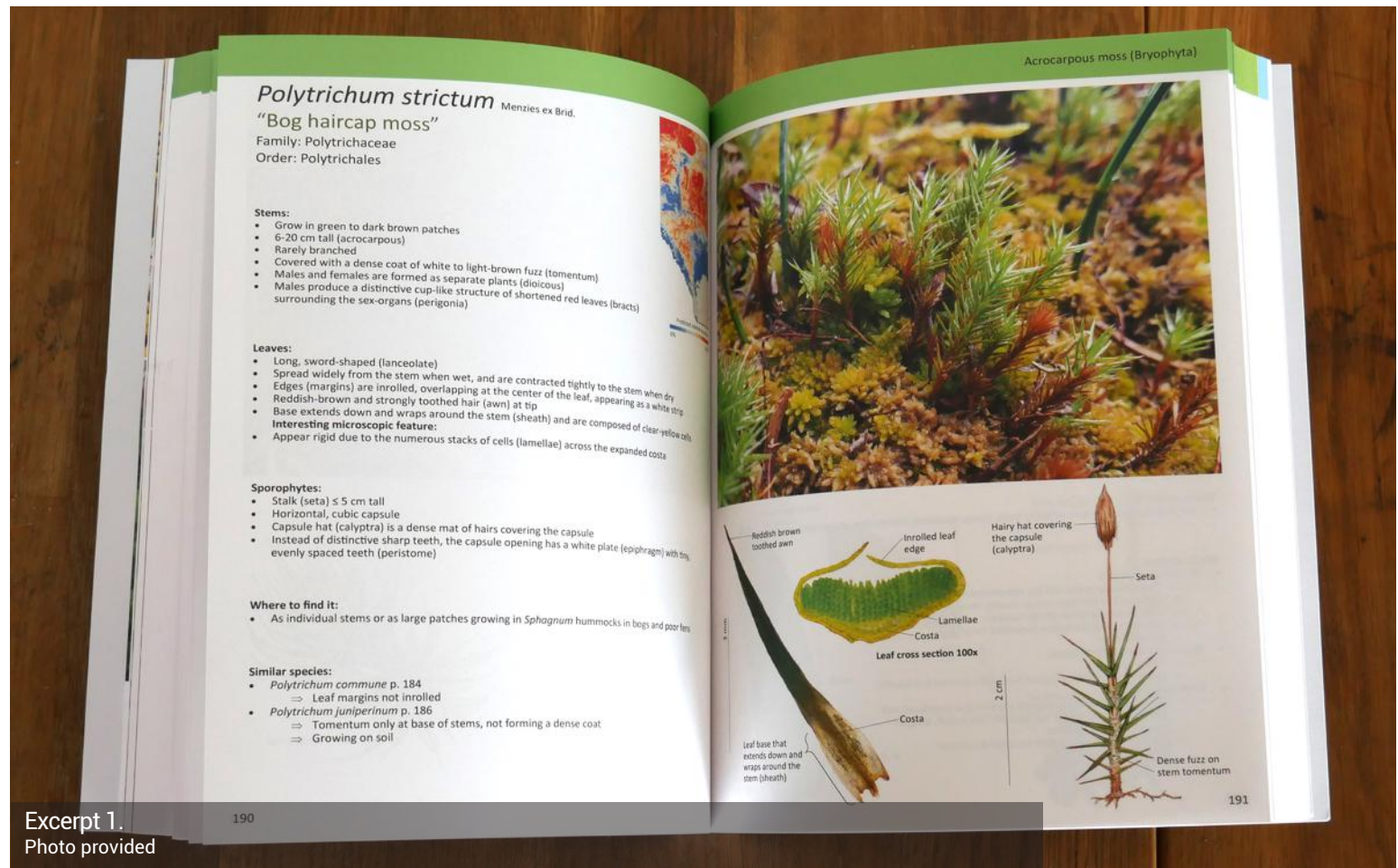
Have you ever been out botanizing and found yourself captivated by the exquisite mosses and liverworts around you, and thought to yourself, I wish I knew what these plants were? Or have you ever conducted a botany project and thought, I NEED to know what these plants are! Bryophyte expert Brittney Miller's newly published guide to *The Common Mosses and Liverworts of Alberta*, which includes 90% of the common bryophytes of Saskatchewan, will help you learn about the miniature leafy world around you and put a name to your discovered plants. The photos, details, and explained technical terms in this guide will make bryophyte identification accessible to all who want to discover the beauty of bryophytes!

Electronic and softcover versions of Brittney's new book can be purchased online at: <https://www.blurb.ca/b/11941887-a-guide-to-the-common-mosses-and-liverworts-of-al>

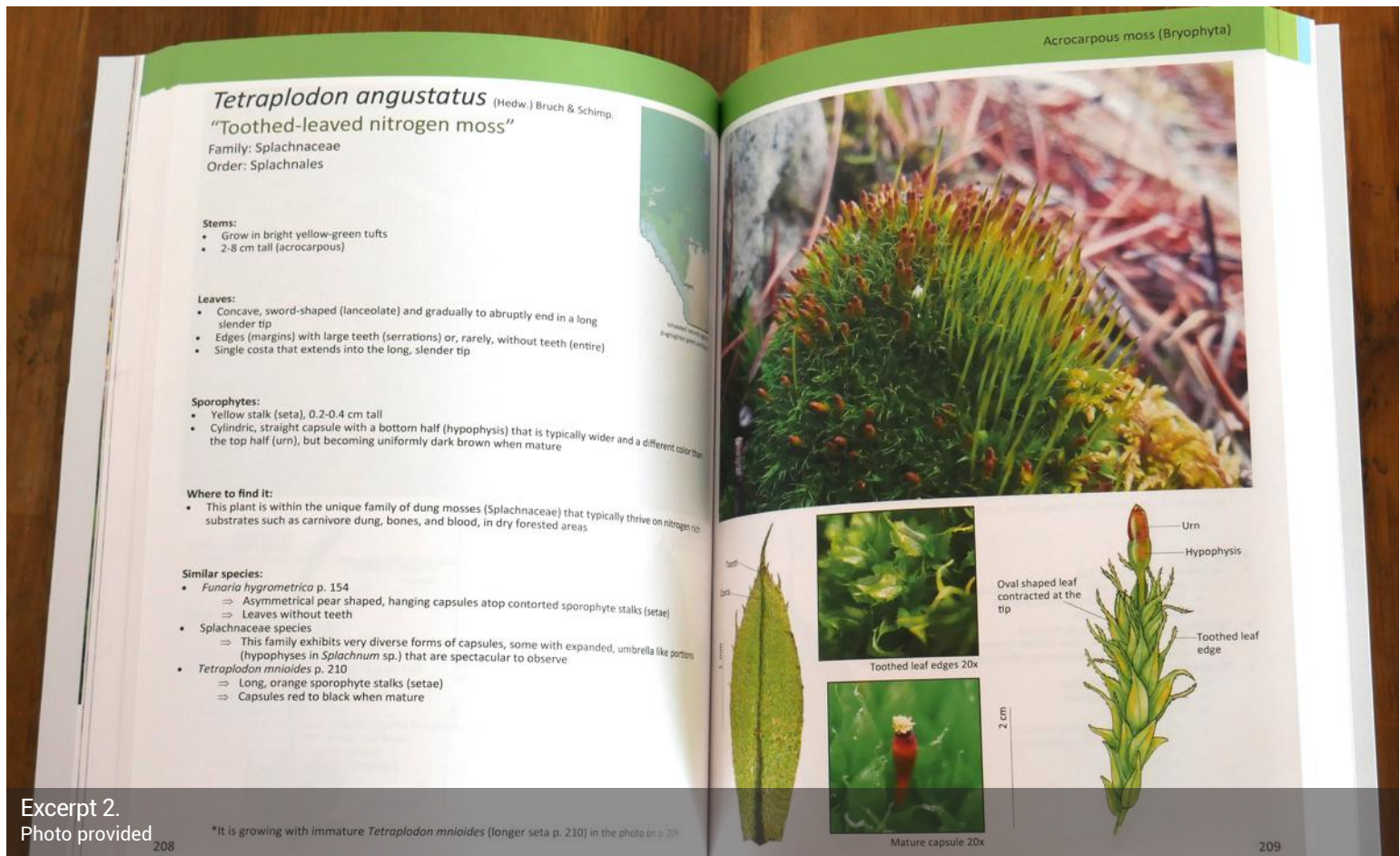
Editor's note: Participants at our recent annual general meeting will remember Brittney's excellent presentation. We are also hoping to arrange a bryophyte workshop with Brittney later in the year.



Book cover.
Photo by Ashley Hillman



Excerpt 1.
Photo provided



Excerpt 2.
Photo provided

*It is growing with immature *Tetraplodon mnioides* (longer seta p. 210) in the photo on p. 209

Have Your Say and Be Entered to Win a Cash Prize!

You are invited to participate in the Native Plant Society of Saskatchewan's market assessment of the native plant materials industry in Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba.

This survey is incredibly important as it is only done once every ten years and the information collected will help guide the industry into the future. This will help both users and producers of native plant materials by making a more efficient and effective marketplace.

Everyone who completes the survey will be entered to win a cash prize of \$200! Your odds of winning are good as only a select number of people will be asked to participate. The survey is less than thirty questions and a bar will show your progress. Your survey responses will remain anonymous, and your contact information will not be shared with anyone.

For providers of native seed or plants, please go to the following link:
<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/WM5WHT8>

For users of native seed or plants, please go to the following link:
<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/WNMKNDN>

These links can also be found on our website at www.npss.sk.ca

Everyone who completes the survey will be sent a report on the results.

Please pass this on to anyone involved with native plant materials. For providers of native plant materials, it would be great if you could send this information on to your customers so that their survey information can help your business and make their experience using native plant materials better.

If you have any questions, please contact us at (306) 668-3940 or info@npss.sk.ca

Thank you for your participation!

Rooting for Change Youth Summit in Ottawa Reed Lewko

On the weekend of February 2-4, 2024, I attended the Rooting for Change Youth Summit in Ottawa as a coordinator with a group of nine Youth Nature Keepers (YNK) volunteers from Saskatchewan. The event was hosted jointly by the Canadian Council on Invasive Species (CCIS) and the Invasive Species Council of British Columbia (ISCBC).

It was a great learning opportunity for YNK and the ISCBC's youth volunteers. Presentations by Kristen Elton of New Brunswick and Jen Llewellyn of Ontario kicked off the festivities and provided great background on how invasives were introduced to North America and their effects on our ecosystems. Ken Donnelly presented a workshop on behaviour change to promote the reduction of invasive species spread, which was very informative.

Volunteers also had the choice to either visit the Canadian Museum of Nature or attend an art workshop by Catherine Tamaro, a Spotted Turtle Clan FaithKeeper, both of which were highly praised by attendants.

My favourite part of the weekend was the youth project showcase, where volunteers presented on their community projects. These projects included multiple native pollinator gardens, invasive species mapping and removal, and a native species colouring book! It was very inspiring to see all of the different ideas that volunteers have come

up with throughout Canada, from BC to the Maritimes. There were so many engaged youth that attended the conference who are very motivated to prevent invasive species from taking over our ecosystems. It gave me hope for the future.

It was a really great networking opportunity for me and all of the youth that came to Ottawa. I also got a chance to meet the youth engagement coordinators from other provinces in real life for the first time, after working together for many weeks virtually, which was awesome. Speaking with like-minded people is always very refreshing and encouraging.



Delegates of the 2024 Rooting for Change Youth Summit.
Photo provided

Help Needed at tatawâw Park Rich Pickering

tatawâw Park in Moose Jaw, is a city owned park encompassing about 200 ha of habitat types ranging from river to riparian to prairie to "desert conditions". The park was home to the former Moose Jaw Wild Animal Park and since the mid 1990's there has been no active use or management of the land other than hay cropping.

There is a proposal being prepared to develop an Indigenous led Heritage Center in the park which would include land-based training and returning Bison back to the park.

About 25 years ago there was a plant survey conducted that listed over 150 species, along with their approximate locations, but not much has been recorded of the current conditions in the park, especially where the Bison pasture would be located.

One part of the development proposal is to establish baseline

checklists of the flora and fauna in the park to help in developing management goals and future use plans for the park.

We are planning on doing a series of bioblitzes, along with ongoing monitoring and cataloguing of the resources, and we would welcome anyone who would be interested in participating in the bioblitzes or in the ongoing monitoring and documenting of the park.

There is also a project on iNaturalist called "tatawâw Park in Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan, Canada", where we are hoping to encourage casual observations by people who walk in the park on a regular basis.

If you are interested in participating, please contact Rich Pickering at r.pickering@shaw.ca or 306 690 6267.

This issue's COVER PLANT

Oxytropis splendens

Showy Locoweed is a flowering perennial plant in the legume family (Fabaceae), native to the Great Plains, west to the Rockies, east to Ontario, south to New Mexico and north to Alaska. It is commonly found in the Saskatchewan, thriving in open woods, on rocky slopes and banks, and in open grassland. Showy Locoweed prefers dry, open slopes, well-drained meadows, and ditches.



This plant is covered with dense, silky hairs, giving its foliage a greyish-white appearance. Mature plants form compact tufts. The plant produces bright pink/purple flowers in dense spikes up to 15 cm long. The basal leaves are pinnate, with leaflets whorled around the rachis.

The plant spreads through seeds contained in egg-shaped pods that disperse up to a few meters from the parent plant. Showy Locoweed blooms in summer between June and August and has a lifespan of 3-5 years.

This species is not consumed by either humans, wildlife, or livestock. The name "locoweed" actually refers to the toxic effect that the plant causes due to chemicals in the plant named alkaloids, specifically locoine. Locoine is a type of alkaloid that causes "locoism" (crazy/abnormal behavior) when ingested; horses are most susceptible to this. Locoine is present in all parts of the plant and remains after drying. *Oxytropis* seeds were traditionally used by the Blackfoot people in ceremonial rattles.

Showy Locoweed's ability to thrive in disturbed areas makes it valuable for ecological restoration projects due to its ability to grow well on disturbed, rocky, contaminated, and nutrient poor soils. It is known as an early successional species and plays a role in mitigating erosion on exposed soils by covering small surface areas and anchoring subsurface soil particles with its roots.

Showy Locoweed is used horticulturally due to its colorful inflorescences and ease of growth, and would be particularly useful addition to a rock garden, though it will grow anywhere that has full sun and drier soil. The flowers attract various species of bumblebees depending on the region where the plant is found, highlighting the role of Showy Locoweed in supporting pollinators. Plants and seed of Showy Locoweed are available from a number of retailers. Those purchasing seeds will need to break the seed coat to enhance germination by lightly scuffing it with sandpaper. Sources for Showy Locoweed can be found on the NPSS website here: www.npss.sk.ca/rsu_docs/documents/native-plant-source-list-2024.pdf

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