

Newsletter of the Native Plant Society of Saskatchewan



R O O T S

Vol. 29 No. 4

Winter 2024



Cypripedium passerinum

Sparrow's Egg Lady's-slipper

Photo credit: C. Neufeld

Executive Director's Message Chet Neufeld

Happy New Year! I hope everyone had a restful holiday season. I want to personally thank everyone who donated their time and money to the NPSS in 2024. We could not have accomplished what we did without your support. Even being a member is incredibly valuable; as the saying goes, there is strength in numbers, and you are the backbone of the society. Our membership is over 400 strong and growing.

2025 is the 30th anniversary of the Native Plant Society of Saskatchewan, and we have so many exciting things planned. First off, our annual general meeting and conference is coming up on March 8-9 at Wanuskewin Heritage Park in Saskatoon. The theme is on protected areas and features an exciting line-up of speakers. Registration is open now and you can also renew your membership at the same time. See the announcement later in this newsletter for more details. We will also be hosting a silent auction as part of the event, so please contact me if you have any items you'd like to donate.

Another way we're celebrating our anniversary is with some new merchandise, specifically a buff and a three-pin set. The designs are almost finalized, and we hope to have them ready for the annual general meeting.

Finally, we are marking our anniversary by offering a grant of up to \$3,000 to help fund a native plant-related project in Saskatchewan. Details on this can be found later in this issue of Roots.

These are just some of the things we have planned for 2025 celebrations; in spring we will announce a native plant giveaway and release our summer field tour schedule. As a teaser, I'll let you know that we're partnering with the Métis Nation of Saskatchewan and touring a large parcel of their land across the river from Batoche which includes botanical treasures like the beautiful and provincially rare Elephant's Head (*Pedicularis groenlandica*). Stay tuned for more details!

Aside from this newsletter, some other great ways of staying in touch are to follow us on Facebook, where we not only have a page, but also a group called "Saskatchewan Native Plants – Native Plant Society of Saskatchewan". We are also on Instagram and X/Twitter and have a LinkedIn group where we post botany related job opportunities

AGM Announcement

Register now for the Native Plant Society of Saskatchewan's 30th annual general meeting and conference. The event will be held at Wanuskewin Heritage Park in Saskatoon, SK on March 8-9, 2025. The theme this year is "Protecting Our Wild Home Places" and features a line-up of fantastic speakers and a Master Naturalist workshop. Speakers include author Merle Massie, Jeffrey Harder with Environment and Climate Change Canada, Dale Gross with the Ministry of Parks, Culture and Sport, Sarah Rheubottom from Parks Canada, Erica Maier with Meewasin Valley Authority, Ian King from Redberry Lake Biosphere Reserve, and more!



The event is for everyone and will feature top-notch speakers from across Saskatchewan.

To register, go to the following link or QR code:

<https://www.zeffy.com/en-CA/ticketing/2025-native-plant-society-of-saskatchewan-annual-general-meeting-and-conference>

You may also renew your NPSS membership when registering. For non-members, purchasing a membership when registering entitles you to member rates for the event.

For more information, please contact info@npss.sk.ca

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

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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

New Flowering Rush Population in the Province

Hilary Pinchbeck – NPSS Project Coordinator

A new Flowering Rush (*Butomus umbellatus*) population was discovered last fall (2023) through a social media post. This season, our staff quickly surveyed and assessed the extent of the infestation. In early September, we surveyed 40 crossings where Gainsborough Creek meets the road, covering approximately 100 km. Unfortunately, we found flowering rush at four crossings, although the other 36 appeared clear from our vantage point.

While surveying the area, we also encountered about 100 painted turtles and a provincially rare plant species I had never seen before: Tall Bur-marigold (*Bidens frondosa*; S3). The infestation of Flowering Rush starts at the town of Bellegarde, SK, and extends southward. We launched kayaks at a few locations, and our surveys indicated that the infestations range from medium to high density. This means we will need plenty of hands for potential manual removal efforts in the coming years!

Cutarm Creek Update:

For the past few years, the NPSS has been working in the Cutarm Reservoir and downstream along the creek to survey and remove Flowering Rush. Cutarm Creek is located near Esterhazy, SK, where an initial population was discovered in a dugout near the reservoir. Water flowing downstream has contributed to the spread of this plant. NPSS staff dedicated two weeks this summer to removal efforts on Mosaic-owned land within the reservoir, successfully removing thousands of plants. We noticed a small improvement in the number of plants compared to last year, which is always encouraging! Additionally, NPSS staff spent a week hiking and kayaking along the creek through privately owned land to survey and remove any plants we encountered. A big thank you to all the landowners along the creek for granting us permission to access their properties! I personally have high hopes that we can control this species within the next couple of years!



Bidens frondosa.
Photo by Hilary Pinchbeck



Flowering Rush infestation at Gainsborough Creek.
Photo by Hilary Pinchbeck



Surveying the Cutarm Creek for Flowering Rush.
Photo by Reed Lewko



Flowering Rush removal at Cutarm Creek.
Photo by Hilary Pinchbeck

South of the Divide Invasive Alien Species Strategy Update

Reed Lewko – NPSS Project Technician

The South of the Divide Invasive Alien Species Strategy aims to improve habitat for species at risk (SAR) within the South of the Divide (SOD) region (the southwest corner of the province in the Milk River drainage basin). One of the objectives of our project is to map invasive species in SAR habitat and on adjacent lands within the SOD area. Our goal for this 5-year project has been to collect 1,000 invasive plant points per year from 2020–2024 with a grand total of 5,000 points in the region. The points act to compensate for the relatively low amount of invasive species data from SOD submitted to the provincial database (iMapInvasives).

This past field season, our NPSS summer employee, Cassidy Flasch, conducted roadside invasive species surveys within SOD (specifically, in the Rural Municipality of Mankota). Cassidy collected 1,190 points in total! The invasive species she found and mapped on the roadsides were Smooth Brome (*Bromus inermis*), Downy Brome (*Bromus tectorum*), Canada Thistle (*Cirsium arvense*), Crested Wheatgrass (*Agropyron cristatum*), Kochia (*Bassia scoparia*), Field Bindweed (*Convolvulus arvensis*), Kentucky Bluegrass (*Poa pratensis*), and Baby's Breath (*Gypsophila paniculata*). Unfortunately, there is definitely no shortage of invasive species on the roadsides of Saskatchewan.

Throughout the last 5 years of this project, the NPSS has taken invasive plant points along grid roads and highways in the Rural Municipalities of Reno, Maple Creek, White Valley, Frontier, Arlington, Lone Tree, Grassy Creek, Val Marie, Wise Creek, Auvergne, Glen McPherson, and Mankota, with a grand total of 5,901 points, surpassing our goal by 901!

These data will help guide the development of our invasive species strategy for the SOD region, inform local stakeholders, be used to identify invasive species hotspots, improve invasive species and SAR management, and be cross-referenced with SAR data to determine areas where they pose a significant threat to particular SAR populations.

Hericium Species in Saskatchewan

Written by Donovan Thiesson / Photos provided courtesy of Kyla Fremont

If you ask an amateur mushroom picker ‘why did you get into the hobby?’ you’ll be met with a myriad of reasons: exercise, adventure, science, something to do during Covid times. A better question to ask, and one that tends to have less whimsical answers, is “what *mushroom* got you into mushroom picking?” Morels and chanterelles dominate the landscape of Saskatchewan’s gateway mushrooms, however from time to time you get the answer, “lion’s mane”, aka *Hericium erinaceus*.

One can only understand the frustration of entering the rabbit hole of Saskatchewan foraging only to find that Lion’s Mane does not grow here. Yet, a bit of research into the *genus* is all that is needed to brighten a budding hobbyist’s day. Even though *Hericium erinaceus* does not occur here, we have our own common *Hericium* species, the Combs Tooth Mushroom, or *Hericium corraloides*.

Hericium corraloides is a beautiful fungus, sporting a look akin to branched icicles jutting from a snowy hill. It is a wood loving saprobic species commonly found on decaying hardwoods in Saskatchewan’s boreal forest and appearing mid-summer throughout the autumn season. Many who read this and see the pictures will say to themselves “well I’ve never seen anything that looks like *that* before.” Combs Tooth Mushrooms like damp conditions out of the sun, so if you’ve never stepped off the path, here’s why this elusive delicacy has evaded your detection for so long.

Hericium species are what we mycophiles refer to as a toothed mushroom. This means those teeth, or little spines you see jutting out and hanging down like tinsel on a Christmas tree, are where the spores are formed. I would describe this delightful little fungus as soft yet firm, off white in color and tanning with age.

Beginners to the hobby looking to bolster their dinners should take special note here, as *Hericium* species have no toxic look alike in Saskatchewan (or really, anywhere), making it a great starting point for safe mushroom picking. *Hericium corraloides* is not as dense or as meaty as *Hericium erinaceus*, however that succulent, nearly indescribable taste remains just the same. Any lion’s mane recipe online will work splendidly, be it deep-fried fruiting bodies or vegan crab cakes. And for those who grow lion’s mane at home? *Hericium corraloides* may



Hericium corraloides.
Photo by Kyla Fremont



Hericium corraloides.
Photo by Kyla Fremont

be something to try inoculating logs with outdoors, as a native species will be better suited to Saskatchewan's cold weather and dry conditions.

Of special mention is Saskatchewan's other *Hericium* species, *Hericium cirrhatum*, the Tiered Tooth Mushroom. This fungus is rare throughout its entire range, which includes occasional sightings in Saskatchewan. It has the appearance of an oyster mushroom, only with teeth instead of gills. If you do come across this stark beauty, I would encourage you to enter it into the iNaturalist app to help gain a better understanding of this mushroom's range.

For those interested in learning more about picking Combs Tooth Mushrooms, the *Hericium* genus, or are just interested in the hobby itself, feel free to join Saskatchewan's two mushroom Facebook groups, *Sask Mycology* and *Saskatchewan Mushroom Picking*.



Meet the Team – Morgan Stubbs

Hi everyone! My name is Morgan Stubbs and I joined the NPSS as both a member and board member in the past year, and most recently have stepped into the role of secretary. I was born and bred in the temperate rainforests of Vancouver BC by a family of scientists and dedicated gardeners, which instilled a deep love of nature in me. After some years working and travelling, I went back to school and earned a BSc in Biological Sciences, with a specialty in Ecology & Evolution, at Simon Fraser University. While still on the west coast I spent a few years working as a researcher, lab technician, and field assistant studying salmon ecology in the Great Bear Rainforest and the endangered Oregon Spotted Frog in the Fraser Valley, with a stint in Winnipeg as a lab technician looking at the effects of aquaculture on the Great Lakes. I became a 'temporary' Saskatchewan transplant in 2011 and 13 years later am happily living in the wonderful community of Weyburn with my husband, child, and pets. Since moving here, I have worked in a variety of roles at SaskPower, starting at the Shand Greenhouse in Estevan where I got my first introduction to native prairie plants and the NPSS, then as a material handler for the linemen in Weyburn, and currently as part of the Environment department in Regina. Though I had a special place in my heart for the ferns and mosses of my home forest, my favorite Saskatchewan plant is one of the first I was introduced to and that still grows every year in my front garden, Gaillardia, a beautiful sunset of a flower. Looking forward, I am excited to explore more of Saskatchewan, become intimately acquainted with the amazing variety of native plants on the prairies, and take part in some fun NPSS events with all of you!



Native Plant Society of Saskatchewan 30th Anniversary Legacy Grant

To celebrate 30 years of promoting native plant conservation, the Native Plant Society of Saskatchewan (NPSS) is offering up to \$3,000 to support a project that creates or enhances a public space using native plants. This grant will support a project that promotes the use and appreciation of native plants, benefits the community, and leaves a meaningful legacy for NPSS's 30th anniversary. Eligible projects might include garden boxes or signage in natural areas and may take place where native plants are already present or will be introduced as part of the project.

Eligibility: Applications are widely open to community groups, schools, non-profit organizations, and municipal or Indigenous governments. Projects must take place in Saskatchewan.

Requirements: Projects must focus on native plants, provide community or educational benefits, and include a long-term maintenance plan.

Grant Details

- Amount: Up to \$3,000
- Deadline: March 1, 2025
- Project completion: October 31, 2025

The successful applicant must use the funds as outlined, recognize NPSS in project materials, and submit a report with photos upon completion.

How to Apply

Complete the following application questionnaire by **March 1, 2025**. Applications should include:

- Project description and goals
- Location and connection to native plants
- Detailed budget
- Expected outcomes and success measures

Contact

For questions, email npss@npss.ca or call (306) 668-3940.

Help us celebrate 30 years of native plant conservation by making a lasting impact in your community!

To apply, go to: https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=DQSIkWdsWoyxEjajBLZtrQAAAAAAAAAAAAO__ToiirURTA4VklLRklSUVFaUEQ2NkI5RDVTVUVi4u



Sowing the Seeds for the Future

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: prairiseedcollaborative@gmail.com

Executive Director's note: the Native Plant Society of Saskatchewan is a member and is dedicated to advancing the goals of the collaborative.

This issue's COVER PLANT

Sparrow's Egg Lady's-slipper - *Cypripedium passerinum*



Also known as Franklin's Lady's-slipper, this beautiful plant is a species of lady's-slipper orchid found across northern North America, belonging to the orchid family (Orchidaceae). *Cypripedium* is derived from the Greek words "Cypris," an early reference in Greek mythology to Aphrodite, and "pedilon" for sandal. Rare and ranked as an S3 by the Saskatchewan Conservation Data Centre, it grows in spruce forests, thickets, openings, bogs, tundra, and coarse soils of terraces and stream banks, usually in calcareous soils. Native to Alaska, across Canada from British Columbia to Quebec, and south to northern Montana in the United States, it grows farther north than any other *Cypripedium* species. Interestingly, *C. passerinum* that grow in Alaska are so well adapted to cold that their shoots sprout up under the snow in the spring.

Sparrow's Egg Lady's-slipper is perennial herb from slender rhizomes with coarse, fibrous roots; its stems are 10-35 cm tall, but can grow up to 39cm tall. The alternate stem leaves, 3 to 5 in number, are broadly lanceolate to elliptic, 5-16 cm long, sticky-hairy, ribbed, and have a sheathing, clasping base. A single flower is usually found on each stem, with the lower lip being an inflated pouch (a slipper), white with reddish-purple spots inside. The lateral petals, shorter than the slipper, are oblong-shaped and semi-transparent. The sepals are green, with the top sepal arching over and nearly covering the slipper, while the lateral sepals are joined at their base and grow under the slipper. The slipper has been measured at only 15 mm long, appearing small compared to the height of the plant and size of the leaves.

It can reproduce by seed but more often spreads vegetatively via its rhizomes. Little is known about its ecological importance, but some insects like moths, sawflies, and leaf miners have been observed feeding on it. *Cypripedium* species use deception to attract pollinators, relying on colour and scent, but providing no nectar reward. Pollination is completed when the insect crawls into and out of the pouch, forcing them to brush by the pollen-bearing anthers. *C. passerinum* is considered globally secure, but it is extremely rare and threatened by habitat loss in some areas like Montana due to oil/gas exploration. Conservation efforts are ongoing in places like Wagner Natural Area near Edmonton. Like other orchids, *Cypripedium passerinum* relies on a fungal association to help its seeds sprout and for growth and survival throughout its lifecycle. While this orchid would be stunning in a garden, no commercial sources exist because of the difficulty in propagating and growing it, and no native plant should ever be dug from the wild, so it is best enjoyed where it grows.

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



Environment and
Climate Change Canada

Environnement et
Changement climatique Canada



Flying Creek Trees



CanNorth
Canada North Environmental Services

