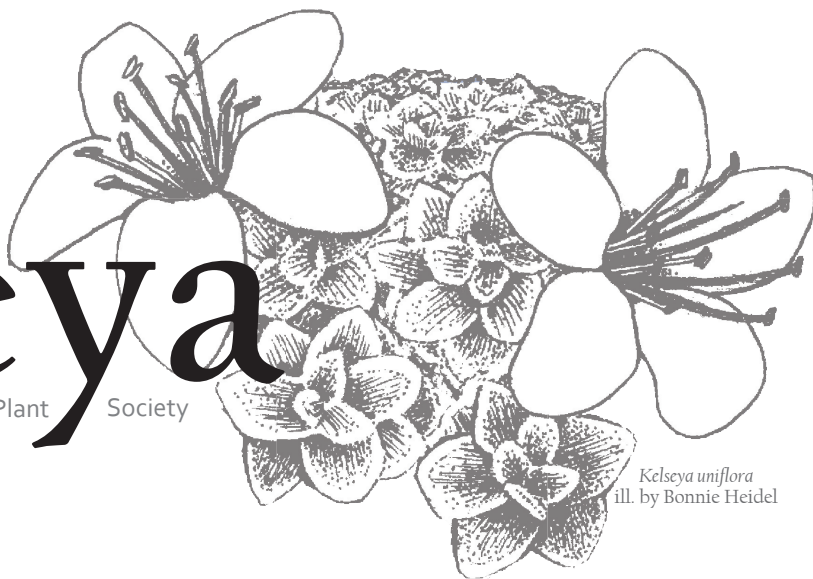


Kelseya

Newsletter of the Montana Native Plant Society



Kelseya uniflora
ill. by Bonnie Heidel

Before Columbus By Dennis Nicholls

[Editor's Note: Although I did not have the fortune to know Dennis Nicholls, the stories contained in the remembrances submitted by MNPS members prompted me to look up some of his writings from past Kelseyas. I thought it would be fitting to reprint one here, from the Summer 1998 issue, which originally appeared in the September 1997 issue of The River Journal. In his own editor's note to the article, Dennis wrote: "I was the man who measured and bored that ancient larch in the summer of 1997. And standing quietly in its presence, at the base of its massive trunk, I, too, heard the music." I wonder whether the larch still stands nearly 13 years later? —CKJ]

Ten years. It can seem like a long time. But anymore, a decade flies by like a month of Sundays. Those first ten years, however—the years of discovery, the years of youth—can seem like a lifetime. And if a decade is a lifetime, then I have lived fifty lifetimes since those first ten years.

You see, ten years before Columbus sailed the ocean blue, if the nursery rhyme about 1492 is correct, a seed germinated on a ridge above Sparrow Gulch, and I was born. The first thing I remember hearing was the song of the river a quarter mile away. The canyon narrows precipitously just below here, and the Vermillion tumbles through a gorge in a series of spectacular cascades, falls and rapids. The melody was a soothing lullaby day after day in the early years, like the voice of the land singing and laughing. It has since become a thread woven into the very fabric of my existence.

I am a Larch, or a Tamarack, some will call me. And this year, 1997, I turned 515 years old. I never knew Christopher Columbus, but I can tell you I was a strapping young sapling the day he "discovered" the New World.

1482 was a good seed year for larch. Following some long forgotten fire, my ancestors cast a bumper crop of cones upon the land, and a bunch of us seedlings sprouted. We grew to be a forest in the isolated heart of the Vermillion River canyon, with our cousins the Douglas fir and pines, the cedar and cottonwoods along the river, the spruce and subalpine fir on the mountaintops above.

They're all gone now, those pines and fir and spruce, and most of the larch from those days. But there are four of us left. I can see the other three from where I stand, though they likely cannot see me. Nearly a century ago I lost my top. My memory fails me, but I guess some big wind swept upriver from the big valley and snapped it like a toothpick. I'm barely a hundred feet tall now.

The big fellow down below also had his top snap off years ago, but he was so huge that I can still see his limbs raking the sky. In the more fertile soil of the creek bottom, he reached six feet in diameter and twice the height I am now.

Further up the slope, one of the other two is having quite the struggle, and I fear



Photo credit: K.D. Swan. Originally from
US Forest Service. United States, MT,
Kootenai National Forest, Yaak Post Office.
1926. Courtesy of plants.usda.gov

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News & Notes

Annual Meeting Roundup:

Community, Contributions and Conviviality

A record 127 plant enthusiasts from all over Montana and beyond gathered this summer in Hungry Horse for the 2009 MNPS Annual Meeting. While the flowers and scenery of Glacier National Park were spectacular, the wonderful MNPS community in camp was the real highlight. Everyone who attended had a role in the successful weekend, from the kitchen crew that provided scrumptious fare, to the poets, musicians and singers, the generous donors and buyers of silent auction and raffle items, field trip leaders and photographers, and the blessed crew that stuck around to clean up camp. Mother Nature even helped out with a banner beargrass bloom. Field trip photos are posted online at www.mtnativeplants.org under Annual Meeting.

The Flathead Chapter thanks everyone for making this a rewarding event to host. Next year the Annual Meeting will be hosted by the Calypso Chapter, July 16-18 at Birch Creek near Dillon.



Dave Hanna presents the Lifetime Achievement Award to Jerry DeSanto at the MNPS Annual Meeting. Photo by Pat McClelland.



Achieving Green

Calypso Chapter members joined Montana Tech dignitaries and Butte-Silver Bow leaders in celebrating the dedication of a new greenhouse at Montana Tech on July 1. The Gless/Sawyer Greenhouse is the first named building on campus and honors the work of the late Elmer Gless, biology professor and department chair, and biological sciences professor and botanist Paul Sawyer, a founding member of the Calypso Chapter. During tours of the new facility, chapter member Krystal Weilage demonstrated methods for scarifying native seed and also discussed her forb mat project.

With the help and encouragement of other Calypso members, Kriss Douglass prepared the proposal to the Resource Indemnity Trust Fund, which granted the funding to construct the modern new greenhouse. The greenhouse is considered an essential component of a project to propagate local native plants for the mining-impacted uplands of the Butte Hill and the Upper Clark Fork River Basin, which has sustained over 100 years of habitat damage due to mining activities.

Kriss Douglass, Krystal Weilage and Rick Douglass have been gathering local native forb and shrub seeds and cuttings from shrubs for this project. More than 80 species have been collected with high germination success. As of mid-August, nearly 100 shrubs have been planted with the help and cooperation of Butte-Silver Bow.

Forb sods are being produced to facilitate getting species on the ground that are tender and difficult to handle. These small mats act as dispersal islands and produce seed for increasing species diversity in the depauperate habitats of the area. This native plant propagation project is operating under a three-year grant from the Natural Resource Damage Program.

~Rick Douglass, Kriss Douglass and Debbie Mueller



A sampling of photos from the Annual Meeting field trips



President's Platform



Every year is different. Each year brings its own unique combination of cold snaps, heat waves, timing of precipitation and other weather variables. Plus, what happens one year is built on the uniqueness of previous years, which sets the stage for how the next year's events will play out. For native plant enthusiasts this means that every year there are a few species that are more noticeable than usual—they are more abundant, bigger, with more flowers, more fruits or just stand out as doing better than anything around them. If you were at the annual meeting in July, you noticed that the beargrass (*Xerophyllum tenax*) in Glacier National Park was one of those noticeable species this year—the slopes were white with all the flowers!

More recently, at summer's end here on the Rocky Mountain Front, curly-cup gumweed (*Grindelia squarrosa*) put on quite a display. This native species prefers roadsides, disturbed pastures and seasonally wet areas in grasslands, so it was quite noticeable just driving down the highway. It probably loved the unusual late-July moisture we had. But since this species is a biennial or short-lived perennial, this year's display was a product of conditions both this year and last, which are not likely to be repeated in the same way anytime soon. So while I heard some alarm around here about "all that gumweed," it will probably be fairly inconspicuous next year. Next year, we'll be treated to a great display of some other species, maybe even one we've not paid much attention to before. I wonder what it will be?

~ Dave Hanna

Get 'Em While They Last

High and Dry: Gardening with Cold-Hardy Dryland Plants Available at Discount

The Flathead Chapter has copies of this "thorough and engaging" book (see review in Spring 2009 *Kelseya*, or online at www.mtnativeplants.org), available to MNPS members for \$25 (cover price is \$35). To reserve a copy, contact your chapter representative before the early November board meeting. Flathead Chapter members can reserve one to pick up and pay for at the October 21 meeting by contacting Betty at bkuropat@centurytel.net. Or send \$30 (includes shipping) and your return mailing address to Betty Kuropat, 2688 Witty Lane, Columbia Falls, MT, 59912.

Welcome New Members

The Montana Native Plant Society welcomes the following new members:

Flathead Chapter: Stacy and Mitchell Burgard, Michele Disney, Shelley Joe Isaak, Sue Kates, Don and Dot Wood, Center for Native Plants

Clark Fork Chapter: Bill Borrie, Zach Wallace, Sherry Bromley, Robert Pal

Valley of Flowers Chapter: Jon Siddoway

Calypso Chapter: Ann Eagan

Eastern At-Large: Curtis Kruver, Wilbur and Elizabeth Wood

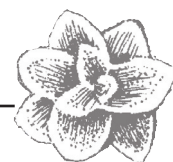
SAVE THE DATES

February 9-10, 2010

6th Montana Plant Conservation Conference, The University of Montana, Missoula
Topics include Using Herbicide in Managing Wildlands, Getting Familiar with Plant Conservation Databases, Updates to Montana's Threatened Plants, Important Plant Areas. More information will be emailed to past participants. Watch for details in the Winter *Kelseya*, or go online to www.mtnativeplants.org.

March 24-27, 2010

Northwest Scientific Association and the Cascadia Oak-Prairie Partnership Joint Meeting, Centralia College Campus, Washington. This year's theme is Mount St. Helens to Oak-Prairie Lowlands: Disturbance, Biological Legacies and Conservation. Info: (NWCA) Pat Pringle, ppringle@centralia.edu or (COPP) Hannah Anderson, handerson@tnc.org.



Around & About

Northwest Montana Hike

Fourteen folks, including some from as far away as California and Minnesota, met back in June between Libby and Troy for a few hours of plant identification, great conversation and the sharing of past botanical experiences. It was the annual Montana Native Plant Society hike for northwest Montana, led by Peter Lesica. Two short hikes were planned for the day – first along historic Highway 2 to Shannon Lake, and then to Flower Lake.

The group met in the morning, then drove to the northern terminus of the Highway 2 trail. Hike coordinator Jon Reny suggested the pace of this hike should be “leisurely.” We planned to reach Shannon Lake by lunch time – a whopping three miles. But alas, the group was in such a leisurely mood we only reached the juncture to the lake before deciding to turn back. The pace allowed for great opportunities to discuss not just the showy plants, but smaller, less obvious ones as well. Bronze bells (*Stenanthium occidentale*), rattlesnake-

plantain (*Goodyera oblongifolia*), fairy bells (*Disporum* spp.), starry Solomon’s seal (*Smilacina stellata*) and false Solomon’s seal (*Smilacina racemosa*) were in display. We also ran across many examples of the “feral” variety of columbine (*Aquilegia*), to the great interest of our leader.

To get to the second hike, we had to drive through Libby. A member of our group, Vicky Lawrence, had received one of MNPS’ small grants a number of years ago and did a wonderful landscaping project there. We stopped for a brief tour, then drove to the trailhead for Flower Lake and began a hike to see its floating mats. The water level was very high, however, and we could not get out to the mats. So Peter made the quarter-mile trek in his ditch boots and used a fallen log to get to the mats. He brought back a sample of sundew (*Drosera anglica*) for the group to look at. Pretty cool stuff!

In addition to the out-of-town folks, three people from Heron, two from Troy and six from Libby made the hike. Thanks to everyone who showed up.

~Jon Reny



Virginia Vincent points out landmarks during lunch.
Photo by Ken Stolz.

Trip to Stark Mountain Lookout

The day after the Fourth of July was beautiful and sunny. About 20 of us headed west from Missoula to Tarkio, then wound our way up to the top of Stark Mountain (passing lots of beargrass) where MNPS member Virginia Vincent was waiting to greet us. Virginia’s been the Lookout at Stark Mountain for 38 summers—it’s her 7,352-foot-high summer home-sweet-home.

There were still drifts of snow in places beneath the old wooden lookout; glacier lilies poked through, and nearby, where snow had recently melted, was a profusion of spring beauties. Bistort abounded on the rocky mountaintop. We also saw white-blossomed sandwort (*Arenaria capillaris*) about 4-5” tall. And right where we sat to eat lunch was the high-country arnica species (*Arnica rydbergii*) with its dark stems and three blooms at the end of the stalk. Other botanical treats were a few patches of red mountain heather and 10- to 12-inch-tall stalks of butterweed (*Senecio integerrimus*).

We climbed up the tower to visit Virginia’s neat digs. At the center was her alidade, the flat, round instrument she uses to sight and locate telltale columns of smoke. She showed us the numbers around the edges of the disc, degrees of north, that allow a dispatcher at the other end of a phone line to “see” what she sees, replicating it with a map and protractor. But the Lookout still has to have lots of visual knowledge of the landscape to

be able to guess how far away the fire is.

It was a fascinating visit, thanks to Virginia and also Paul Alaback, who talked about the ecosystem at that elevation and about Project Budburst, the worldwide project in which citizens observe and record what’s blooming at the same times each year—something Virginia has been doing on her own for as long as she’s been going to Stark Mountain. We bid a fond farewell to Virginia and trundled back down the mountain, stopping to admire white rein orchids at a lush green spring on the way down.

~Beth Judy



Snowcrest Field Trip

In July Wayne Phillips led a small group on a walk in search of blue Colorado columbine. We traveled out of Dillon, across the East Fork of Blacktail Creek toward the Snowcrest Range, staying to the right of Crows Nest Creek.

Vegetation in this small canyon drainage was lush, thanks to extensive moisture this summer. We hiked up to aspen trees and were not disappointed in finding the columbine. It was a delightful day, especially having Wayne's undivided attention. As a novice, I learned so much, especially about identifying members of the parsley family. The majestic desert parsley (*Lomatium dissectum*) stood before us, as did poison hemlock with its purple striations, lovage, angelica and cow parsnip. We learned the fern-leaved lovage (*Ligusticum filicinum*) has "walrus hairs," as Wayne calls them, at its base (last year's growth)—a great way to distinguish it from desert parsley.

Other flowers new to me were the narrow-leaved collomia (*Collomia linearis*) with its beautiful pink flowers, and Wayne told us that where you find this species you usually find the small blue-eyed Mary (*Collinsia parviflora*) growing as well—and he was right. It was a delightful time and I thank Wayne for sharing his knowledge on a beautiful day!

~Janey Eudaily

Garden Tours Expose, Educate, Inspire



Helen Atthowe leads a tour of BioDesign Farm. Photo by Kelly Chadwick.

More than 80 native plant enthusiasts visited five private gardens in the Bitterroot Valley in June on MNPS's Biennial Native Plant Garden Tour. Open to the public, the tour offered participants the chance to see, learn about and be inspired by native plant gardening, which creates habitat for insects and birds, conserves water and reduces the need for fertilizer and insecticides. These gardens blend with the local landscape while restoring the ecology of our backyards.

First stop was Carol Word and David Briscoe's Woodland Creek Garden, designed by Sharon Browder of Stone House Landscape Design. This dry shady garden surrounds a striking log home overlooking Kootenai Creek. No lawn exists; plants in this garden tolerate browsing pressure from local deer and provide year round interest. Jennie Meinershagen of Rocking M Design was the gracious docent.

Lunch was at Sam's Spade Garden Tools & Wares, located in an historic home in Hamilton. Samantha O'Byrne opened her high-quality garden store especially for our tour, and provided goodies and a shaded lawn for picnicking.

After lunch we traveled east to Judith and Peter Reynolds' place. Roughly an acre, Meadowlark Gardens is

an extension of their straw-bale house and is landscaped with native trees, shrubs and herbaceous plants mixed with food-producing plants and traditional drought-tolerant ornamentals.

Just down the road we explored Dean and Patty Jackson's Grassland Getaway. This is a newly established garden, also designed by Sharon Browder. The colorful, low-maintenance planting transitions smoothly into the surrounding grasslands. Sharon was on site to provide information about the plants and design.

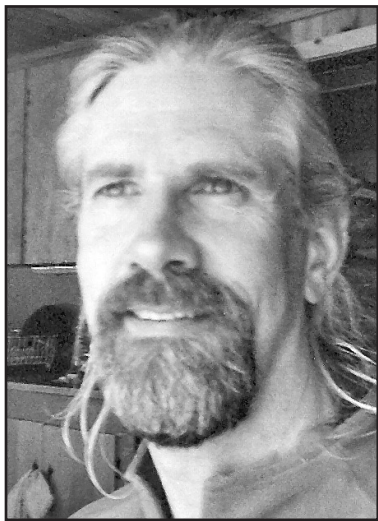
Forests Delights was a real treat. Jean and Jack Atthowe welcomed us to their lush, well-established garden of mixed water-wise and native flowers, shrubs and grasses nestled into a dry hillside beneath mature ponderosa pines. Jean shared her years of gardening experience and provided personal stories about many of the plants in her gardens.

We ended the day with a farm tour and a reception at BioDesign Farm. Helen Atthowe gave a tour of her native plant nursery greenhouses, seed beds and gardens. Afterward, participants mingled with fellow gardeners at a lovely reception featuring local food. The menu included Lifeline cheese, Blackdog Bakery bread, chips and salsa made at Pattee Creek Market with local ingredients, specialty dips from Yum Rising, lavender infused limeade provided by Lavender Lori (Lori Parr Campbell), and fresh salad mix and vegetables from BioDesign Farm, provided by Helen Atthowe. Beth Judy, Archie McMillan, Jean Pfeiffer, Lois Puckett, Tarn Ream and Chin wan Reinhardt baked delicious cookies for dessert. Special thanks go to Helen Atthowe, Sharon Browder, Ginny DeNeve, Lynn Elsner, Jennie Meinershagen, Sheila Morrison, Samantha O'Byrne, Alice Okon, Ken Stolz, Missoula County Extension and University Catering Services for their work and generous donations that made for a beautiful day.

~Kelly Chadwick



In Memoriam: Dennis Nicholls July 25, 1956 - May 5, 2009



An enthusiastic member of the Montana Native Plant Society, Dennis served us well as editor of *Kelsey* from Spring 1998 to Fall 2000. He conceived, initiated and chaired the committee for the 2001 MNPS Annual Meeting at Bull River, near Noxon, Montana. He was also Western Montana representative of MNPS from Fall 1993 to Winter 2001, and from Summer 2003 to Winter 2005.

But these facts only scratch the surface of the deep feelings and commitment that Dennis had for the conservation of Montana's native flora (and fauna) and the wild lands that support them. According to his friends, in his

enthusiasm for botany he was "like a child in a candy store." He carried his "Hitchcock" with him when he hiked, and would often plop down to dissect a flower and key it out right on the trail.

Dennis grew up in Richmond, Virginia, but showed wanderlust for the mountain West at an early age. While in high school he worked two summers with the Student Conservation Association in Rocky Mountain National Park. Here he met Barry Nilson, who convinced Dennis to join him at Flathead Valley Community College in Kalispell in the fall of 1975. Dennis and Barry became roommates and fast friends as they studied Forest Technology together at FVCC. However, Dennis' emerging passion for botany led him to switch his major to biology. During and after his studies, Dennis worked for the US Forest Service. In 1978 Dennis enrolled in a bible college in Calgary, Alberta for two years, and then traveled to England, where he lived for another two years. In 1982 Dennis returned to western Montana for good, establishing a consulting forestry business called Vermillion Forestry. He did contract forestry work for both the US Forest Service and private clients until 2005.

To supplement his forestry business, in December 1993 Dennis started publishing "The River Journal." It was "a newspaper worth wading through," Dennis said, serving the communities along the lower Clark Fork River of Heron, Noxon and Trout Creek, Montana, as well as Clark Fork and Hope, Idaho. In 2001 his close friend and employee, Trish Gannon, purchased the business and still publishes and distributes 6,000 copies in 16 communities today.

During these years Dennis also sometimes published "The Sandpoint Sunday," "The Monarch Mountaineer," "The Cabinet Mountains Echo," and contributed articles to "Sandpoint Magazine."

An avid hiker, Dennis said "there was a time when I would walk a thousand miles in a summer, every summer." To share his love of mountain trails, Dennis wrote "Trails of the Wild Cabinets" in 2003 and "Trails of the Wild Selkirks" in 2004, both books published by Keokee Books, Sandpoint, Idaho. In the winter of 2007-08, Dennis hiked more than 600 miles along the Missouri River from Williston, North Dakota to Loma, Montana. He wrote a manuscript of his experience titled "Walking Into Winter," which his friends and family hope to publish soon.

Dennis passed away in May 2009 of valley fever, a respiratory fungal disease. His ashes were placed near Pinnacle Rock in the Cabinet Mountains by his brother, Archie, and a friend, Jim Rowe. A fitting place indeed, between "Hope (ID) and Paradise (MT)," as Dennis was fond of describing his home near Noxon.

Home is in Montana

*Home is in Montana
In the springtime of the year
When the prairie flowers are blooming
And bird songs fill the air
Across the grasslands of the Elkhorns
Beyond the Big Belts shining domes
In the living spring Montana is my home*

*Home is in Montana
When the summer shines bright
The Madison roars thru its canyon
The Gallatin serenades the night
Before the great wall of the Rockies
Grizzly bears are known to roam
In the summertime, Montana is my home*

*Home is in Montana
When autumn leaves begin to fall
The Beartooth gleams with fiery colors
And the bull elk sounds its call
From the rugged peaks of Glacier
To the banks of the Yellowstone
During autumn's fire, Montana is my home*

*Home is in Montana
When the winter winds blow cold
Round a campfire in the evening
Tales of love of home are told
Twilight settles on the Bighorn
The Missions bask in alpenglow
Winter in Montana brings me home*

*In the deep snows of December
Glistening on the Great Divide
In the breaks of the Missouri
Sprawled beneath an ocean sky
From the Valley of the Flathead
To the Mussell Shell my love has grown
For this last best place I'm proud to call my home*

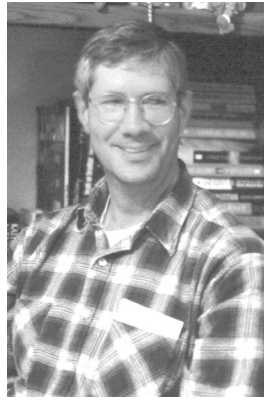
Each day that dawns, Montana is my home

~ Dennis Nicholls, 2008



Remembrances

I will never forget the first time I met Dennis and had the pleasure of working with him to promote the Montana Native Plant Society in northwest Montana. Around 1991, not long after I had moved to Missoula to start work for the Forest Service, I got a call from him. We had never met before, and I'm not sure how Dennis got my name, but his unbridled enthusiasm for native plants and MNPS was immediately obvious over the phone. He wondered if we could offer a plant hike in the Cabinet Mountains, and also thought it would be a good idea to have a presentation afterwards about the rare plants in Montana. So we planned a gala, all-day MNPS event for Noxon—the first in that part of the state, if memory serves. So it was set: for the hike, we decided to wander up the Berray Mountain trail. We had a small group of 10 people or so, and it turned out to



Dennis, circa 1999

be a glorious walk—at “plant speed,” of course, because every flower, shrub, and grass captured our fancy. After the hike we returned to the only venue that Dennis was able to find to have a slide show—the Hereford Bar in Noxon, a local watering hole along Highway 200. I think Dennis actually reserved the “meeting room” for us, which, as it turned out, amounted to setting up the projector in the back of the bar, gathering a few chairs and looking at slides over the din of video poker machines and bar room chatter. I believe this was the first (and only?) MNPS meeting to be held in such a locale—and we had a great time! It was one of those special days when botany and camaraderie came

together, which is what Dennis always cherished. I will certainly miss him and his devotion to MNPS. I'm sure he is wandering the woods and mountains now in his new life, delighting in every species that he encounters.

~Steve Shelly

*Dennis Nicholls was an integral part of the Montana Native Plant Society for many years. His quiet charm, great sense of humor and observations about the natural world are memorable. The annual “exploding car battery” hikes he organized, led by Peter Lesica, and the articles he wrote about them enlivened Kelseya for several years. During his time on the Board, Dennis secured funding for the Bull River Nature Center, which offered hikes and programs to the residents of western Montana. Dennis was particularly interested in big trees, and several of the hikes he organized were looking for the biggest. One white pine measured by Dennis and others after the annual meeting in 2001 didn't quite topple the record, but a red alder (*Alnus rubra*) discovered by Peter Lesica and visited by Dennis and several MNPS members, now holds the state record for that species. And speaking of annual meetings, Dennis was an important part of the western Montana group that hosted the 2001 annual meeting at the historic Bull River Ranger Station. Called “2001: A Plant Odyssey,” the meeting featured author Jack Nisbet in a campfire talk about David Thompson, along with great hikes. As Kelseya editor, Dennis produced 10 issues of the newsletter and several field trip booklets. His down-home style and understated sense of humor, along with a perceptive mind that always seemed to be teasing out the puzzles of nature, made for a unique and highly readable writing style. Even after retiring as editor, Dennis continued to submit articles and news items. Dennis will be remembered by all of us as a wonderful person and a great ally of Montana's native plants.*

~Kathy Lloyd

Early in this career at MNPS, Dennis began organizing an annual hike in the Noxon area. He chose the destination and I drove up to provide botany. Dennis worked contractually for the Forest Service doing timber cruises or planting trees, so he knew lots of trails. On one of the early trips we were driving up a gravel road, and one of the older cars stalled. It was decided to try to start it with jumper cables; bad idea. We all stood around and watched as the stalled car's battery exploded, throwing acid on several of us. From that point on it was called the “annual exploding car battery hike,” and those of us who had them would wear our partly disintegrated shirts as a memorial. On one trip we found *Githopsis specularioides*, the first record for Montana. On another trip we took measurements of the state's largest red alder that Dennis had found. We always had fun and saw lots of wildflowers.

~Peter Lesica



Chapter Events

Clark Fork Chapter

Evening Lectures: *Thursdays, 7:30 pm*

Room L09 Gallagher Business Building, UM Campus, unless otherwise noted:

October 8—UM Professor Cara Nelson discusses "Rethinking Forest Restoration Strategies in the Western United States: Matching Practice to Theory."

November 12—Loren Bahls, a nationally recognized authority on diatoms, presents "Weeds, Relicts and Endangered Species: Exploring the Little World of Diatoms and a Parallel Universe of Montana Native Plants."

January 14—Biologist Kristi DuBois and her husband Bert Lindler talk about their travels and "The Natural History of The Gambia in West Africa."

Christmas Potluck: *December 10, 6:30 pm*

Our annual event will be held in the Del Brown Room in Turner Hall, UM Campus, northwest side of the Oval. Parking will (hopefully) be available in the Gallagher Building lots or on the streets near Arthur and Connell. Bring plates, utensils and a dish to share. Alcoholic beverages are okay! Don't forget to bring a few of your favorite slides or digital photos from the summer. Info: Peter, 728-8740 or Kelly, 258-5439.

Kudos

Calypso Chapter member Rich Producers was a key player in the successful reestablishment of imperiled woolly twinpod (*Physaria didymocarpa lanata*) in a voluntary conservation effort at the Spring Creek Mine in Decker, Montana. The project was awarded one of the Office of Surface Mining's 2009 National Awards for Excellence in Surface Coal Mining.

Also this summer, Producers led a delightful whirlwind tour of restored vegetation in the Silver Bow Creek drainage. Nine plant-spotters joined the car caravan to count as many reintroduced natives as possible in a four-hour span. Several stops yielded a multitude of species but, sadly for Rich's wallet, the total fell a few short of the 100 he guaranteed would be seen. Ever the gracious loser, the happy group finished the day at the Dairy Queen in Anaconda for the promised milkshakes. Thank you Rich! We hope a species list will be forthcoming as promised.

Flathead Chapter

Monthly meetings are held the 3rd Wednesday of most months, October through May, at Discovery Square, 540 Nucleus Ave. in Columbia Falls (the old First Citizen's Bank). Programs start at 7:00 pm unless otherwise noted. Members are encouraged to attend the 5:30 pm general meetings beforehand to discuss and plan MNPS activities and business. Feel free to bring your supper.

Volunteer Days at Discovery Square Garden: *late September - October, dates and times TBA*

Big crowds enjoyed the new shade garden this summer during market nights. Watch your email for dates and times of work parties to expand and maintain this new community gem!

Potluck Dinner: *10/21, 5:30 pm*

Share summer adventures and plan events for the coming year. No formal program gives us time to socialize and get to know new members.

Butterflies and Plants: *11/18*

Steve Kohler will talk about his studies on the ecological relationship between Montana species.

Christmas Party: *12/16*

Visiting and refreshments at 5:30 pm, potluck supper at 6:30. Gather at Edd and Betty Kuropat's house, 2688 Witty Lane, Columbia Falls.

Watch your email for directions or call Betty, 892-0129. Bring a dish to share, beverages and an inexpensive or recycled gift. See you there!

Noxious Weeds and Cooperative Management: *1/20/10*

Glacier National Park resource staff members Joyce Lapp and Dawn LaFleur discuss a cooperative effort to pull together federal, state and county weed managers with local gravel pit operators to improve weed management.

Kelsey Chapter

For information about upcoming chapter programs and events, call Kathy at 449-6586.

Valley of the Flowers Chapter

Meetings held on the second Tuesday of the month in Room 108 of the Plant Sciences Building, South 11th, at 7 pm unless otherwise noted.

2009 Yellowstone National Park BioBlitz: *10/13, 7 pm.*

Hear from members about their experiences and what was found, especially relating to plants, mushrooms and ferns.

Pine Beetles and Spruce Budworms: *11/10, 7 pm.*

Bozeman City Forester Ryan Stover will discuss the current infestation.

Planting Project: *October 24 or 31, time TBA*

Sharon Eversman will lead a planting on the project with junipers on the Kagy cut. More details to come.



Chokecherry: An American Legend

[Editor's Note: Traveling between Lewistown and Fort Benton this summer, I was struck by the incredible lushness of the chokecherry crop. This excerpt from *Dakota Flora: A Seasonal Sampler* by David J. Ode, South Dakota State Historical Society Press, 2006, is used with permission.—CK]



Photo courtesy of David Ode

In the mythology of novelist Frederick Manfred's *Siouxland*, there is a place called Chokecherry Corner "where a tiny, crooked chokecherry tree cowered beneath thirteen massive cottonwoods." The chokecherry of Manfred's description comes from the dark years of the 1930s when all trees and shrubs were hard pressed to endure the prolonged drought. The chokecherry of more recent, milder times has fared better. Indeed, the chokecherry is one of the tallest and most abundant shrubs on the Northern Great Plains. In favored locations, it may grow as tall as twenty feet, but usually tops out at ten to fifteen.

The chokecherry (*Prunus virginiana*) is especially important to wildlife. Its thicket-forming habit provides winter cover for gamebirds and fawning cover for whitetail and mule deer alike. Its succulent fruits, despite their sour-tasting name, are relished by both birds and mammals. The leaves and twigs of chokecherry are also nutritious for browsing animals, and this shrub is rated as one of the best sources of winter browse for deer and elk because the protein content of its stems increases during the fall and winter. The leaves and stems are also relatively high in carbohydrates, calcium and phosphorus when compared to other native shrubs.

Over the years, there has been some debate as to whether chokecherry leaves are poisonous to livestock. The presence of cyanide-containing sugars in the leaves and seeds (or pits) of chokecherry causes the concern. These cyanide sugars are not poisonous themselves, but when plant material is crushed, eaten or decomposed, enzymes cause hydrogen cyanide to be released. The aroma of bitter almonds (a relative of chokecherry) is that of hydrogen cyanide, and at high concentrations, hydrogen cyanide is a metabolic poison to most animals, including humans.

Cyanide sugars are found in hundreds of plant species and are especially common in trees and shrubs of the rose family. They perform at least two important functions in plants. The presence of cyanide in the embryo of seeds

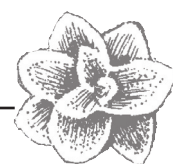
inhibits germination until suitable conditions release the hydrogen cyanide into the atmosphere and allow germination. Cyanide sugars are especially prevalent in actively growing young leaves of chokecherries and certain other plant species. Their presence discourages insects and other herbivores from eating the new growth. At the same time, many animals can detoxify cyanide-containing compounds, and it has recently been shown that livestock can acquire the ability to detoxify such plant material if they consume small amounts of it over an extended period of time. Thus chokecherries will poison livestock only if [the plants] are consumed in large amounts without prior exposure.

Do not let this discussion of cyanide deter you from dining on chokecherry fruits, which, when properly picked and prepared, are tasty and nutritious. They lose much of their bad taste when they are fully mature. Historically, chokecherries were relished by all of the Plains Indian tribes. So important are chokecherries to the Lakota people that they refer to the month of July as the "black cherry moon."

A discussion of chokecherries would not be complete without at least one recipe, and my choice is rancher Charlotte Hyde's sour-cream chokecherry pie. The ingredients are:

- 1 1/2 to 2 cups cooked and pitted chokecherries
- 1 1/2 cups sugar
- 1/2 cup water
- 2 cups home-soured cream (or store-bought sour cream sweetened with whipping cream)
- 3 tablespoons cornstarch
- 4 beaten egg yolks
- 1 baked pie crust
- Meringue made from the left over egg whites

Mix the pitted cherries, sugar and water and boil for ten minutes. Cool. Add the sour cream, egg yolks, cornstarch and cook until thick. Pour into the pie shell, top with meringue and bake until the top has browned.



Annual Meeting Planning Under Way

Calypso chapter is already hard at work on preparations for next year's Annual Meeting, to be held July 16-18 at the University of Montana's Birch Creek facility in the Pioneer Mountains. Our theme will be "Pioneer Plants," emphasizing plants used by area pioneers and Native Americans. We'll be doing some "planning while dining" at our next chapter meeting, October 1 at 6 pm in Melrose at the Hitching Post. Info: Linda Lyon, 683-2878.

Photo Deadline Extended

The Calypso chapter is extending the deadline to submit photos for our native plant fundraising calendar until February 1, 2010. Please follow the directions in the past two issues of *Kelsey* (also at www.mtnativeplants.org) when submitting photos. We have many great ones, but need autumn and winter shots as well. Please also send us some significant dates to be included, such as your favorite botanist's birthday or plant days around the world. We also want your best guesses for plant blooming dates in Montana, so folks can go out and look for them. Finally, we need quotes relating to wildflowers, grasses, trees, shrubs, etc. for each month. We need your input to make this calendar educational as well as beautiful. Please forward suggestions to Catherine Cain, nativeplants@montana.com.

Publications & Guides

Free from MNPS Publications:

- MNPS membership brochures
- Plant Collection Guidelines for Teachers brochures
- Echinacea Cultivation Information
- Plants Collected in Montana During the Lewis & Clark Expedition. Please send a SASE to 1270 Lower Sweet Grass Road, Big Timber, MT 59011 to request any of these publications.

Online at www.mtnativeplants.org:

- Guidelines for Selecting Horticultural Plant Material for Montana (voluntary guidelines by MNPS and the Montana Nursery and Landscape Association)
- Lewis & Clark Plants Collected Elsewhere That Occur in Montana, an inclusive list of Lewis & Clark plants found in the state.
- Guide to Missoula and West-Central Montana Landscaping with Native Plants

Flathead, Kelsey and Valley of Flowers chapters also offer inexpensive booklets about gardening with each respective area's native plants. Watch for an updated list in the next *Kelsey*.

Before Columbus, cont'd

we'll lose him some year soon. Perhaps he is already dead. From my vantage point, I can't tell. All I see are skeletal gray branches stark against the azure summer sky.

My nearest companion appears to be in the best shape of any of us, though that doesn't really say much. He's got a full green crown, but every limb looks to be infected with mistletoe. Though he's near the ridgeline, like I am, he's managed to keep his top all this time, and, by God, he is still putting on some growth.

By the time I was 115 years old, I was boasting a diameter of over 17 inches. Not bad for having to tough it out in the shallow, rocky soil of this mountainside. However, it has taken 400 years to add another 17 inches to my waistline. It now takes ten years to add a simple one tenth of an inch to my diameter. Talk about a decade seeming like a lifetime!

It's okay, though, I reckon me and my friends ought to count ourselves lucky to still be here. A lot of younger trees have fallen to the saw and been cut into lumber. Maybe that's my fate, too. Just a week ago, a man wrapped his measuring tape around my belly and sunk a steel bore into my wood to see how big and old I am.

The forest has come and gone a dozen times. Flames have scorched my bark and singed my branches. Ice has coated my trunk and snow has piled up on my head. The wind has rushed through my foliage like waters over the falls in the gorge below. But don't think I've grown numb after all these years, these decades, these five centuries-plus. I am still alive.

The world is a fascinating place, even from the single isolated ridge from which I have surveyed it through time. I don't expect I'll be here another 500 years, but where else could I have grown up and grown old that is more beautiful, more enchanting than right here in the Cabinet Mountains?

I still hear the melody of the river. It never stops. I never cease listening. I can't. It feeds me, nourishes me. We are bound by the land that cradles us like a mother protectively embracing her young. And today she hums a lullaby, the same soft music that welcomed me into this world before Columbus came to these shores.

In that, I have found contentment for 500 years. I will leave this world when my time comes, but the music will continue unabated.



MNPS Chapters & the Areas They Serve

CALYPSO CHAPTER - Beaverhead, Madison, Deer Lodge, and Silver Bow Counties; southwestern Montana

CLARK FORK CHAPTER - Lake, Mineral, Missoula, Powell, and Ravalli Counties

FLATHEAD CHAPTER - Flathead and Lake Counties plus Glacier National Park

KELSEY CHAPTER - Lewis & Clark, Jefferson, and Broadwater Counties

MAKA FLORA CHAPTER - Richland, Roosevelt, McCone, Sheridan, and Daniels Counties

VALLEY OF FLOWERS CHAPTER - Gallatin, Park, and Sweet Grass Counties plus Yellowstone National Park

All MNPS chapters welcome members from areas other than those indicated. We've listed counties just to give you some idea of what part of the state is served by each chapter. Watch for meeting announcements in your local newspaper. Ten paid members are required for a chapter to be eligible for acceptance in MNPS.

Your mailing label tells you the following:

CHAPTER AFFILIATION: CAL=Calypso; CF=Clark Fork; F=Flathead; K=Kelsey; MF= Maka Flora; VOF=Valley of Flowers

YEAR YOUR MEMBERSHIP EXPIRES: Memberships expire in February of the year listed on your mailing label.

Use this form to join MNPS only if you are a first-time member! To renew a membership, please wait for your yellow renewal card in the mail. **Moving? Please notify us promptly of address changes.**

Membership in Montana Native Plant Society is on a calendar-year basis, March 1 through the end of February of the following year. New-member applications processed before the end of October each year will expire the following February; those processed after November 1 will expire in February of the year after. Membership renewal notices are mailed to each member in January. Please renew your membership before the summer issue of *Kelseya* so your name is not dropped from our mailing list. Your continued support is crucial to the conservation of native plants in Montana. THANK YOU!

MONTANA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP

Name (please print)_____E-mail_____

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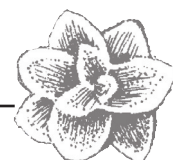
If you wish to be affiliated with a chapter (see above), list it here_____

You will receive membership acknowledgement by email, as well as a pdf of the most recent Kelseya. Future newsletter issues will arrive by mail.

Membership Level	Dues w/affiliation	Dues w/o affiliation
Individual	\$20	\$15
Family	\$25	\$20
Business/Organization	\$40	\$35
Living Lightly	\$15	\$15
Lifetime (one-time pymt)	\$300 per household	-----

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About Montana Native Plant Society

The Montana Native Plant Society (MNPS) is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit corporation chartered for the purpose of preserving, conserving, and studying the native plants and plant communities of Montana, and educating the public about the value of our native flora. Contributions to MNPS are tax deductible, and may be designated for a specific project or chapter, for the Small Grants fund, or the general operating fund.

Your yearly membership fee includes a subscription to *Kelseya*, the quarterly newsletter of MNPS. We welcome your articles, field trip reports, book review, or anything that relates to native plants or the Society. Please include a line or two of "bio" information with each article. Drawings should be in black ink or a good quality photocopy. All items should be typed, saved in Microsoft Word or rich text format (rtf), and sent electronically to: carokurtz@gmail.com or mailed to Kelseya Editor, 645 Beverly Avenue, Missoula, MT, 59801.

Changes of address, inquiries about membership, and general correspondence should be sent to MNPS Membership, P.O. Box 8783, Missoula, MT 59807-8783.

Advertising space is available in each issue at \$5/column inch. Ads must be camera-ready and must meet the guidelines set by the Board of Directors for suitable subject matter; that is, be related in some way to native plants or the interests of MNPS members.

The deadline for each issue is Fall–September 10; Winter–December 10; Spring–March 10; Field Trip Guide–April 10; Summer–June 10. Please send web items to our webmaster concurrent with these dates.

If you want extra copies of *Kelseya* for friends or family, call the Newsletter Editor, write to the above address, or email: carokurtz@gmail.com. No part of this publication may be reprinted without the consent of MNPS. Reprint requests should be directed to the Newsletter Editor.

Visit our website at: www.mtnativeplants.org or contact our webmaster Bob Person at: thepersons@mcn.net

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Montana Native Plant Society

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