Volume 33 No. 1 | **Fall 2019**

Kelseya

Newsletter of the Montana Native Plant Society



Kelseya uniflora
ill. by Bonnie Heidel



Photo courtesy of Bob Person

2019 Annual Meeting Roundup

Foul Weather, Beautiful Plants, Fine Fellowship

The 2019 Annual Membership Meeting, June 21-24, had it's weather challenges but nevertheless was a successful and fun gathering.

Co-hosted by the MNPS Kelsey Chapter and the Saskatchewan Native Plant Society at Camp Shagabec in the Centre Block of the Cypress Hills Interprovincial Park in Saskatchewan, the event drew 101 registrants and 99 attendees.

Half and full-day field trips were organized for all three days of the meeting this year, with leaders from Saskatchewan and Montana to the extent possible. Eight



Photo by Dee Blank

Above: MNPS meeting participants enjoy the drizzly prairie view on Sunday at the Annual Membership Meeting.

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Chapter Events

Calypso Chapter

Info: Catherine Cain at 498-6198, nativeplants@montana.com.

Clark Fork Chapter

Info: Anne Garde at 721-7627, anniegarde@yahoo.com.

Thursday, October 10, 6:30 p.m. The State of Montana Arboretum, which is the University of Montana Campus, has the largest collection of different woody plants in Montana. Take an evening stroll through this arboretum with UM horticulturalist Kelly Chadwick and visit some old and new woody friends. Meet in The Root, directly north of Main Hall and south of our Montana Native Botanic Gardens. Note earlier time.



Thursday, November 14, 7:00 p.m. Prior to European settlement The Northern Great Plains was home to many millions of prairie dogs that altered the grasslands and the animals they supported. Join Kristy Bly, wildlife biologist for the World Wildlife Fund, who will tell the story of North America's Prairie Dog Ecosystem. North Valley Library, 208 Main Street, Stevensville. **Note different venue.**

Thursday, December 12, 6:30 p.m. Our annual Christmas Potluck will again be held in the Del Brown Room, Turner Hall, UM Campus, on the northwest side of the Oval. Parking might be available west of the Gallagher Bldg., in lots or on the streets off 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 digital wildflower photos from the summer. Info: Peter at 728-8740 or Kelly at 258-5439.

Monday, January 13, 7:00 p.m. Climate is one of the most important factors determining where a plant will or won't grow. Come hear Kelsey Jensco, lead author of Montana's Climate Assessment, explain our climate and what can be expected from climate change. This will be a joint meeting with Montana Audubon, Room 123, Gallagher Business Bldg., UM Campus. **Note different day and location.**

Eastern At-Large

Info: Jennifer Lyman at 426-1227, jenclyman@gmail.com.

Flathead Chapter

Info: Tara Carolin at 260-7533, mnps.flathead@gmail.com.

Friday, October 18, 7:00 p.m. Jack Nisbet's latest book, "The Dreamer and the Doctor," unveils the remarkable adventures of John and Carrie Leiberg. Join the author for a slide presentation entitled "Making Their Mark: John and Carrie Leiberg in the Salish Country 1884-1907," that explores how the Leibergs fit into western Montana and Idaho history, and how their adventures resonate with issues that still confound us today. Doors open at 6:15 at The Northwest Montana History Museum, 124 Second Avenue East, Kalispell (formerly the Museum at Central School). Beer and wine will be for sale before the program; Jack will sell copies of his book afterward.

Thursday, November 21, 7:00 p.m. Join Teagan Hayes as she explores "Arctic Wild Life: Flora and Fauna of Iceland and Greenland." Hayes, a former botanist with the MPG Ranch now in her final year of grad school in the Wildlife Program at UM, will talk about plants and animals adapted to survive harsh arctic realities, as well some of the fascinating human history of these sparsely populated lands. We will meet at the United Way main conference room at the old Gateway Mall, 1203 Highway 2 West, Kalispell. Use the west entrance, near the United Way conference room sign.

Wednesday, December 11, 5:30 p.m. Flathead Chapter Holiday Party. Chapter members and friends of MNPS are welcome to join in a holiday gathering at Maria Mantas' home in Ferndale. Bring a potluck dish to share and a small gift for our traditional gift exchange. 13786 Ridge Loop Road, Bigfork. Info: 407-2045.

Kelsey Chapter

Info: Bob Person at 443-4678, thepersons@mcn.net.

Maka Flora Chapter

Info: Dave Branson at 489-0463, dhbranson@gmail.com.

Valley of Flowers Chapter

Info: Beth Madden, 224-1012, bethmadden64@gmail.com.

October 16, 6:00-8:00 p.m. Second Annual Valley of Flowers Plant Trivia Night at MAP Brewing in Bozeman. Beginners to experts are welcome to test their plant knowledge during a fun evening of trivia. Info: Ryan Quire at (502) 330-8433, rquire@confluenceinc.com.

Western At-Large

Info: Kris Boyd at 295-9414, boyd.kristina@yahoo.com.

MNPS News

Steve Shelly Receives MNPS Special Achievement Award

"For your significant accomplishments and lifelong dedication to the conservation of native plants throughout your valued career as a botanist for the State of Montana and the U.S. Forest Service in Montana, Northern Idaho, and the Dakotas."

So reads the plaque presented to Steve Shelly as the 2019 recipient of the Special Achievement Award presented at the MNPS Annual Membership Meeting in June. The Special Achievement Award is granted to an individual — MNPS member or not — whose work has contributed in a significant way to the mission and goals of MNPS.



Photo by Bob Person

Maria Mantas presents Steve Shelly with his award.

Steve's entire adult life has been dedicated to the conservation, preservation, and research of native flora. Moreover, he uses his knowledge to teach the value of native plants and to mentor those who wish to learn from his vast knowledge and experience.

After obtaining several degrees in botany and working seasonally as a botanist for the USFS and the BLM, he landed a permanent job as the first botanist for the Montana Natural Heritage Program. There he developed the very first list of Montana's Rare Plant Species to be tracked by MNHP, and developed Montana's first rare plant conservation program.

In 1990, he assumed a collaborative job position funded by The Nature Conservancy and the USFS to become the first Botany Program Coordinator for Region 1 of the USFS. That position eventually transitioned to his current job as Botanist for the Northern Region of the USFS.

Steve was instrumental in building the first native plant conservation programs in the state. He oversaw the growth of the botany program from the creation of the first national forest botanist position to the large network of botany professionals working today.

Shortly after he became the Regional Botanist, Steve took over the Research Natural Areas Program. He has been a passionate advocate of RNAs and during his tenure many natural areas have been established. Steve also made sure that these areas were used by research scientists to expand our understanding of plant and community ecology. Most recently, Steve worked with North Carolina dendrochronolgist/geographers Paul Knapp and Pete Soule on the effects of increased CO2 on mature trees in RNAs, documenting effects of climate change in western Montana. He currently is assisting a research ecologist from the Czech Republic in a study evaluating the effects of climate change on alpine species in the Line Creek RNA, near the Beartooth Plateau.

When Jim Olivarez retired, Steve took on the Regional Invasive Species Program and has been a staunch advocate in the fight against weeds, acknowledging that invasive species pose one of the greatest threats to native plants and biodiversity.

Steve has stayed grounded in the pure science of botany throughout his career, publishing numerous manuscripts and articles on plant systematics, plant biology, and plant ecology. He has a particular interest in fen peatlands and water howellia, conducting field research and publishing on these topics.

In addition to the award certificate, Steve was presented with a beautiful wood burned image of slimpod shooting star *(Dodecatheon conjugens)*, created by Swan Valley artist Laura Cannon.

Results Are In

Kris Boyd of Troy was elected as the new Western At-Large Representative; Gretchen Rupp was re-elected to a second term as President; and Shannon Kimball and Jenny Tollefson were re-elected to another term as co-treasurers. ***Thanks to all who voted!***

WELCOME ABOARD!

The Montana Native Plant Society welcomes the following new members:

Clark Fork Chapter
Nanette Ault, Victoria Boothe, Edward Callaghan, Michelle Long, Louise McMillin, Catherine Nolan

Kelsey Chapter
Autumn Coleman, Sue Leferink, John Russell, Desirae Starling

Flathead Chapter
Brad Anderson, and Chris & Monica Graff *(renewing as lifetime members)*

Maka Flora Chapter
Kathy Holte, Glen Lee, Harvey Nyberg

Valley of Flowers Chapter
Carol Anway, Lou Ann Harris, Hillary Johnson, Erin Lyons, June Molgaard, Doug Rand, Kimberly Schlenker

Western-At-Large
Linda Healow



Photo by Lauren Dillon Photography

Mark Your Calendars!
2020 Annual Meeting:
J Bar L Ranch, Centennial Valley

Leave the fanfare of fireworks behind and spend the Fourth of July weekend in the quiet paradise of the Centennial Valley.

The Valley of Flowers Chapter is pleased to host the 2020 MNPS Annual Membership Meeting, July 3-5, in this remote, high elevation valley in southwest Montana. Nestled on the edge of the Continental Divide, with unpaved road for 60 miles, this vast area of sagebrush steppe, grassland, forest, and riverine wetlands supports a strong network of public and private conservation land. Our venue will be the J Bar L Ranch, a holistically managed cattle and guest ranch situated on the north side of the valley. The J Bar L is working with us to create a comfortable encampment for our meeting. There will be plenty of room for tent and RV camping, and also beds available in the fully restored homesteads on the ranch. At ranch headquarters, a large event tent, porta-potties, and a catering service will complete our base. For venue details and photos visit www.jbarl.com. Driving time to J Bar L from Missoula is four hours; Bozeman, 3.5 hours; West Yellowstone, two hours.

The Centennial Valley also is home to the Red Rock Lakes National Wildlife Refuge; the Centennial Sandhills Preserve; and the Centennial Valley Association, which strives to preserve traditional ranching as a way of life, and to maintain quality open space, habitat, water quality, and migration corridors as they exist today for future generations. Stay tuned for meeting details, and factor in some extra days for exploring this exceptional part of Montana.

2019 Small Grants News: Hello/Goodbye

By Betty Kuropat, Small Grants Committee Chair

The Small Grants Committee is welcoming some new members and saying goodbye to others. Kathy Knudsen, Mark Majerus, and Heidi Anderson are joining the committee and looking forward to reviewing your grant proposals. They bring a wealth of botany experience and professional knowledge to the group.

At the same time, we say goodbye to Drake Barton, who has been on the committee for at least 20 years, often representing us when the chair was off somewhere having fun. Jennifer Lyman also has decided she has enough else to do. For the last five years she has lent her botany and university-professor skills to give us valuable input, while doing double duty as the Eastern At-large Representative most of that time. Becky Richards has been on the committee for two years. In that short time, her critical eye and attention to detail found things in our process that needed improvement, in addition to her timely and valued review of proposals.

The committee for 2020 has seven members: Betty Kuropat (Chair), Leslie Eddington, Rebecca Durham, Annie Garde, Kathy Knudsen, Mark Majerus, and Heidi Anderson. ***Thank you all!***

2020 Call for Proposals

Proposals for 2020 MNPS Small Grants are due January 31.

The annual Small Grants competition is for projects or studies that: 1) stimulate research, conservation, and/or educational activities that help foster an appreciation of Montana's native plants and plant communities; and 2) promote native plant conservation through better understanding of Montana's native flora and vegetation and factors affecting their survival. Project or study proposals must pertain to Montana native plants and applicants must address specific criteria and formatting requirements. All proposals that meet the criteria will be considered for a grant up to $1,500. Proposals that demonstrate initiative and cooperation with others, and those that generate data or public support for conservation of native plants in the wild, are preferred. Proposals must be emailed by January 31, 2020. Grant recipients will be required to submit a final report of the study or project accomplishments by January 2021.

Complete eligibility criteria and application instructions are on the "Call for Proposals" page on the MNPS website (www.mtnativeplants.org/Small_Grants_Program) or contact Betty Kuropat, Small Grants committee chair, at blueirismt@gmail.com.

President's Platform



IN THE LAST ISSUE OF *KELSEYA*
I wrote about the roles served by the Montana Native Plant Society, and why I think the organization must persist. Here are some ideas regarding the trends bearing on our continued success. Some of these are broad in scope, while others are specific to our state. As always, your feedback, to the Board and within your local Chapter, is very welcome!

Early this summer a friend and I visited a lovely big-city botanic garden. Many people were out enjoying nature – except they mostly weren't. Almost everyone between the ages of 10 and 40 was gazing – not at the blooms – but at their phone screens. It was perplexing to us why they were even there. Had they experienced some atavistic impulse that they didn't know how to respond to? Nationally, young adults spend most of their waking hours interacting with the world through a screen of some sort. More generally, people just spend less time outside in nature than they did a generation ago. This decline inhibits the development of affection and connection to the natural world that's been essential in fostering a conservation ethos.

Within MNPS, those who founded and have mostly run the organization to this point are getting ready to hand over the reins, but we aren't finding a superabundance of younger members ready to take on responsibility in our all-volunteer organization. Our younger members are starting careers and families, and are less interested in evening programs and paper newsletters than their elders. And of course, we always face the challenge of the tremendous geographical dispersion of our members. Who wants to drive 50 miles in a snowstorm, in the dark, for a 60-minute presentation, no matter how alluring the plant?

Ironically, we can also have the opposite problem attracting people to our events. In the cities, Bozeman and Missoula in particular, there's enormous competition for everyone's free time. On any given evening there may be a half-dozen or more educational, cultural, and conservation events that attract the same set of folks.

Many conservation organizations are experiencing a dearth of younger members/activists. One outstanding exception, though, are political organizations. Many young Americans seem eager to engage politically, and many are passionate about conservation. This is a bright spot in a difficult landscape that we should take advantage of.

Our challenge, then, is to figure out how to meet the needs of 20, 30, 40, even 50-something Montanans while furthering the mission of the Montana Native Plant Society in the 21st Century. I'll write about that this winter. What are your ideas? Please send them to me at beesgrmt@gmail.com.

– Gretchen Rupp



Photo by Tom Lyman

A number of plant enthusiasts, led by Jennifer Lyman, enjoyed a beautiful display of flowers during a July MNPS field trip to the Quad Creek area of the Beartooth Plateau. Among a number of species, the group found *Castilleja nivea, Antennaria aromatica, Dryas octopetala,* and *Erigeron rydbergii* as they wandered across the alpine turf and associated wetlands, until the usual mid-afternoon thunderstorms sent them scurrying back to Red Lodge. Participants included Nancy Krekeler, Leslie Marty, Gail Howe, Matthew Arman, Carole Howe, Margery Howe, Deborah BanDrosky, Theresa Whistler, Mary Anne Depesquo, and Glenn Clifton.

Planned High-Country Outing Becomes a Walk in the Park

By Anne Garde, Clark Fork Chapter

A dire weather forecast (severe thunderstorms and hail by noon) morphed a planned August trip to the Montana-Idaho border into a short drive to the Bitterroot River to view late-blooming plants on gravel bars.

Peter Lesica led the trip and gave us the new scientific names of everything and identified plants I never thought to name. Steve Kloetzl from the Nature Conservancy in Ovando added a land manager's perspective and Paul Buck was on his knees peering at plants with his hand lens to help with ID-ing when we had to refer to Pete's flora. Dee Blank came all the way from Whitefish, full of cheerful curiosity about river plants. We saw a fair number of weeds, as you'd expect in town: reed canary grass *(Phalaris canariensis)*, red top *(Agrostis stolonifera)*, Lady's thumb *(Polygonum persuaria)*, curly dock *(Rumex crispus)* and more. Natives included coneflower *(Rudbeckia occidentalis)*, goldenrod *(Solidago gigantea)*, and water sedge *(Carex aquatilus)*.

Oh, and one more highlight: Steve found a couple of western pearl mussel shells – a native bi-valve! All in all, a great afternoon with fine folks.

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Photos by Bob Person



Top:
Annual Meeting attendees surrounded by misty greenery at Camp Shagabec.

Bottom:
Jane Fournier leads a cozy botanical drawing workshop.

different trips had been planned, and a couple of others improvised when the inclement weather set in on Saturday.

Artists Jane Fournier, Kelsey Chapter, and Heather Peat-Hamm, NPSS, each conducted a botanical-art related workshop on Friday afternoon. Heather also conducted a session on Saturday morning for people who preferred to stay indoors.

Over the years, different Annual Meetings have produced their own weather-related memories. This one will stand out in the minds of hardy plant lovers who persevered in finding colorful, rare plants in fog, pouring rain, and hail. The weather rode in from Montana so we couldn't complain too much to our Canadian comrades, and, although a few people left the meeting early on account of it, most bore up with a fine philosophical resignation. Sunday morning was much nicer despite some precipitation, including hail, out in the hills.

This one will stand out in the minds of hardy plant lovers who persevered in finding colorful, rare plants in fog, pouring rain, and hail.

In addition to all the Kelsey Chapter folks who worked hard to put on this year's meeting, a special thank-you is due to Jane Fournier for designing two logos, which were used in publicity and on T-shirts, and to NPSS Executive Director Chet Neufeld, who played a vital role in planning and implementation of the meeting.

Hike to Bitterroot Bonanza

By Jon Reny, Western At-Large Chapter

This was the year to see our state flower in bloom! Veterans of this annual trek all said the display was the best in memory. Not only were the bitterroot blossoms in great quantity, but they were found in sites where the plants had not been seen before. All in all, it was pretty neat!

Seven of us met the morning of June 15 and drove to the parking area just above our main destination. There is a small, rocky opening just below where we park. Over the years, we've seen a few plants in this area and their number can be a gauge of conditions further down the ridge. Well, this year that small opening had so many beautiful blossoms...we were simply in awe. We walked down to the main area, took off our packs, and enjoyed the scenery, the views, and the company.

Every year, I am amazed to see this large and showy flower growing out of what appears to be solid rock. Again, pretty neat.

So we hung around for a while before heading back up the hill. At the parking area, we found plants growing above the road. I had long thought this would be a good site for bitterroot, but had not seen any blossoms there before in the years I've been coming. At least, not that I remember.

We recorded 30 other species in flower that day, including seven in the Aster family, four figworts, and three roses. Nothing too out of the ordinary, just a wonderful display of the beautiful bitterroot flower.









Photos by Jon Reny

Save Plants, Save The Planet, Save Ourselves:
Nature-Based Solutions to Climate Change And Other Threats

By Emily B. Roberson and Doug Tallamy, Native Plant Conservation Campaign

Sea level rise, record breaking heat waves, floods, pollution, mass extinction – 2019 is frightening! What if there were one simple thing individuals, businesses and communities could do to address these problems? There is! Plant native plants!

Native wildflowers and trees are beautiful. They remind us of what is special, even unique, about the places we live. However, as ecological threats to people and the planet intensify, we must recognize another characteristic of native plants. They support our ecosystems and the essential ecosystem services they deliver in ways that introduced plants cannot. Why is this so?

Ecosystems are run by plants and animals. The key is that, through eons of co-evolution, only native plants can sustain the abundance and diversity of the animals we need to run our ecosystems: the 4,000 species of native bees in North America, the hundreds of species of insectivorous birds, bats, lizards, bears, and foxes. Above all, only natives can support the insects that provide essential protein for these creatures. Those birds whose morning songs brighten your day rear their young on insects. A world without native plants and insects is a world without biological diversity, and a world without biological diversity is a world without humans!

The good news is that by saving wildlife with native plants, we also battle climate change and other environmental woes. Let's compare native grasses with lawn grass. Our native grasses have deep roots that make them drought resistant, reduce soil erosion and flooding, filter pollutants from ground water and increase rainwater infiltration. Best of all, these plants remove tons of carbon from the atmosphere and pump it into the soil and out of harm's way. Lawn grass, in contrast, increases storm water runoff, and adds countless tons of polluting chemicals to our watersheds, and is the worst plant choice for carbon sequestration.



NATIVE PLANT CONSERVATION CAMPAIGN

Nothing sequesters carbon and manages watersheds as well as native forests. New York City's celebrated tap water quality does not depend on expensive filtration. Instead, the city invests in conserving and restoring watersheds in the Catskills to purify water for its nine million residents. Philadelphia is creating a "green mosaic" of gardens, green roofs, and wetlands that reduce flooding, water pollution, and sewage spills during severe storms. These cities save taxpayers at least $15 billion that would otherwise be spent to update grey infrastructure (storm drains, filtration plants, etc.) to address these problems. Other cities are adopting parallel strategies.

Leaves and shoots act similarly, absorbing air pollutants, including greenhouse gases, while simultaneously releasing the oxygen we breathe. According to the U.S. Forest Service, urban trees in the United States remove 784,000 tons of air pollution annually. Planting more native trees, shrubs, perennials, and annuals would provide even more pollution control. Restoring native plant communities could absorb enough carbon to compensate for more than 20% of U.S. greenhouse emissions.

Native plants also moderate local climates. The water that a single tree releases daily into its surroundings has a cooling effect equivalent to two domestic air conditioners. Trees also create shade, lowering local temperatures and reducing energy use and emissions from building cooling.

Naturally dense native plant communities can also buffer severe storms. Roots and shoots absorb energy from wind and water, lessening storm strength and damage. Salt marshes, wetlands and other native plant communities prevented more than $600 million in property damage during Hurricane Sandy. Native plants can provide coastal storm protection at substantially lower cost than concrete breakwaters and flood barriers.

Collectively these processes are called Nature-Based Solutions. The United Nations, World Bank, and European Union are among those promoting Nature-Based Solutions to confront climate change, natural disasters, and other perils. Nature-Based Solutions protect us at a lower cost, and require fewer chemicals, less water, and less maintenance than nonnative plants or grey infrastructure.

So let's fill our parks, gardens, roadsides, and open spaces with natives, and then sit back, count our savings and enjoy the rewards. You can do it in your garden or on your farm. Cities can do it along roadways, in parks and public spaces. Our gardens and communities will become more ecologically resilient, comfortable, safe, and low maintenance.

Plant natives help save people and the planet. Do it for the wildflowers, birds, and butterflies; do it for your children; do it for fun. Do it for cleaner air and water. Do it to lower your taxes and cut your power and water bills. Contact your local native plant society or botanic garden to find out more and get started!

For more information on Nature-Based Solutions, see the Ecosystem Services section of our website (www.plantsocieties.cnps.org).

Books/Conferences

2020 International Conference on Five-Needle Pines

Submitted by Cathie Jean, Valley of Flowers Chapter

The Whitebark Pine Ecosystem Foundation (WPEF) announces an upcoming international conference on the Research and Management of High Elevation Five Needle Pines in Western North America, to be held September 15-17, 2020, in Missoula.

Forest managers, researchers, advocates, and the public are invited to attend this important event! Visit the conference website at www.highfivepines.org for details on presenting your paper or poster, becoming a sponsor, volunteering, or attending. Registration and presentation submissions will begin in February 2020.

Why an international conference? Many high-elevation, five-needle pine forests are rapidly declining throughout North America. In particular, the six species the conference will focus on are of great ecological and symbolic importance to both the U.S. and Canada: whitebark pine *(Pinus albicaulis Engelm)*, limber pine *(P. flexilis James)*, southwestern white pine *(P. strobiformis Engelm)*, Great Basin bristlecone pine *(P. longaeva D.K. Bailey)*, and Rocky Mountain bristlecone pine *(P. aristata Engelm)*.

With this conference the WPEF intends to: (1) bring together scientists, managers, and concerned citizens to exchange information on the ecology, threats, and management of these important pines; 2) learn about the threats and current status of pine populations; (3) describe efforts to mitigate threats through restoration techniques and action plans; and, (4) build a foundation for the synthesis of research efforts and management approaches.



Photo by Cathie Jean

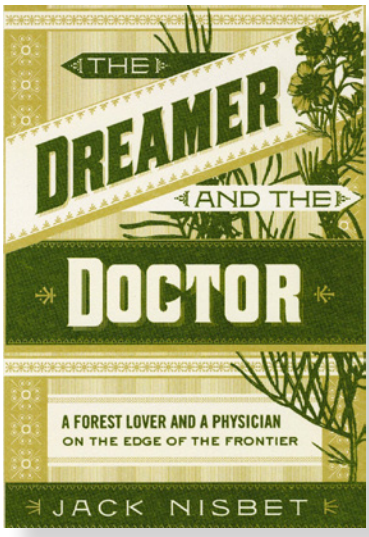
Local Bookstore Events

"The Doctor and the Dreamer," by Jack Nisbet

JOHN LEIBERG WAS A SWEDISH IMMIGRANT AND IDAHO PROSPECTOR WHO LOVED PLANTS. Through an unlikely series of events, he carried out landmark railroad and forest reserve surveys across the Bitterroot Range in the 1890s. His wife, Carrie, a practicing physician, supported John's efforts while carving out her own role in our regional history as "the only female railroad surgeon in the known world."

Join author Jack Nisbet for a presentation that explores how the Leibergs fit into a landscape at once exotic and familiar, and how their adventures resonate with issues that we still grapple with today. He'll be at Chapter One in Hamilton at 6:00 p.m. on October 16, and at Fact & Fiction in Missoula at 7:00 p.m. on October 17.

Nisbet is the author of several collections of essays that explore the human and natural history of our region, including "Ancient Places and Visible Bones" and an award-winning biography of naturalist David Douglas. His influential books "Sources of the River" and "The Mapmaker's Eye" track fur trader and cartographer David Thompson across the Intermountain West. His latest book, "The Dreamer and the Doctor," chronicles John and Carrie Leiberg's adventures through the Intermountain West and beyond. For more information visit www.jacknisbet.com.



Gardener's Notebook

Using Native Plants in Backyard Landscaping

Skunkbush

Rhus trilobata (Anacardiacea)

By Kathy Settevendemie, Clark Fork Chapter

Rhus trilobata (aka *Rhus aromatica v. trilobata*) is known by the unfortunate common names of skunkbush, aromatic sumac, ill-scented sumac, squawbush, tri-lobed sumac, and sourberry.

While malodorous to some when the leaves are crushed, it's a great landscaping plant and especially attractive during the fall.

R. trilobata is an easy-to-grow, long-lived perennial shrub with a round habit in the wild that reaches three to eight feet high and wide. In commercial applications it is sometimes kept trimmed low, which produces a thick, low-growing look. It needs little attention when provided with well-drained soils, low water (although it will tolerate moderate moisture), and full sun.

In spring, prior to leaf emergence, tiny yellowish flowers in terminal or axillary racemes are pollinated by hundreds of tiny native bees. *Rhus trilobata* is polygamodioecious, having female and male flowers on separate plants, as well as bisexual flowers on the male plants. Pollinated flowers transform into one-seeded nutlets inside orange-reddish, sparsely pubescent and slightly sticky berries approximately 1/4 inch wide with an aroma similar to limes and a very sour taste.

Shiny, green trifoliate leaves cover it's many branches. Young branches are red, turning grey as they mature. In autumn the leaves turn bright orange-red, maroon, and sienna.

Fibrous roots and a taproot and are present in its extensively branching root system. Although disturbance produces suckers that sprout up several meters away, plants that are not disturbed rarely produce sprouts.

Skunkbush's native habitat is quite varied, ranging from deserts to 7,000 feet throughout the western half of the United States. In Montana it is generally found east of the Rockies in many different plant communities, from grasslands to mountainous shrublands. It is found on dry rocky slopes, streamsides, seasonal drainages, pastures, roadsides, and waste places — in sun or partial shade in a wide range of soils from sand to heavy clay. Given it's flexibility, it adapts to most landscaping situations.

In addition to being used as an ornamental shrub, *R. trilobata* is useful in windbreaks, shelterbelts, and, because of the strong root development, for erosion control. It is often planted at recreation sites, rest areas, and along roadsides.

While not usually heavily browsed, skunkbush does provide some browse for deer, elk, and pronghorn antelope when more preferred forage is unavailable. Fruits, which persist through fall and winter, provide a food for birds and small mammals when other foods are scarce or unavailable. When it forms dense thickets it provides hiding and nesting cover for small birds and mammals.

For the more adventurous among us, skunkbush berries can make a kind of lemonade. Soak ripe or dried berries in cold water for 10 minutes, then mash them and let sit for 30 minutes or so. Pour the liquid through cheesecloth and squeeze to separate the juice from the solids. Dilute this liquid is to the desired strength and sweeten with sugar or honey. You might like to add crushed mint for taste. Chill and serve iced. Enjoy!





Photos by Kathy Settevendemie

Growing *Rhus trilobata*

Height: 3-8 feet

Width: 3-8 feet (round habit)

Light: Full sun to light shade

Soil: Well-drained; sandy, rocky to heavy clay

Water: Low; tolerates moderate

Planting: Allow plenty of room for plant to spread out; plant in spring or fall.

Germination: Remove outer husk from seed; 1) plant outdoors in fall and keep moist in spring; or 2) stratify seeds for 90 days prior to planting in spring.

SOURCES:

Ladybird Johnson Wildflower Center, Native Plants Database.

Oregon State University, College of Agricultural Sciences, Dept. of Horticulture.

www.scienceviews.com.

www.sevenoaksnativenursery.com/native-plants/shrubs/rhus-trilobata/

www.santafebotanicalgarden.org/march-2016/

"Manual of Montana Vascular Plants," By Peter Lesica.

www.fs.fed.us/database/feis/plants/shrub/rhutri/all.html

MONTANA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP

Name (please print)_____ Phone_____

Address_____ City/State/Zip_____

E-mail_____ Chapter Affiliation (optional) _____

Delivery preference _____ paper by USPS* _____ digital by email

You will receive membership acknowledgment by email, as well as a pdf of the most recent Kelseya. Future newsletter issues will arrive according to your preference indicated above.

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***Additional donations may be specified for a particular project or the general fund*

JOIN OR RENEW ONLINE at www.mtnativeplants.org

or mail application to:
Montana Native Plant Society
P.O. Box 8783
Missoula, MT 59807-8783

Membership Level	Dues with affiliation*	I am paying for _____ years	Donation**	Total amount enclosed
Individual	$20			
Family	$25			
Business/Organization	$40			
Living Lightly	$15			
Lifetime (one-time payment)	$300 per household	----------		

MNPS Chapters and 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. Alternatively, you may choose to be a member At-Large. 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.

Moving? Please notify us promptly of address changes at mtnativeplantmembership@gmail.com.

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

AT-LARGE AFFILIATION: EAL=Eastern At-Large; WAL=Western At-Large

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.

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!***

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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 emailed to: carokurtz@gmail.com or mailed to *Kelseya* Editor, 645 Beverly Avenue, Missoula, MT, 59801.

Changes of address and inquiries about membership 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 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
For Facebook posts, contact Clare Beelman at: clare.beelman@gmail.com

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