



The Legislative Journey of the State Grass Initiative

Text by Nancy Coombs, photos by Mollie Wold.

On the morning of March 24, 2010, House Bill 2649 was introduced on the floor of the Kansas State Senate. Without any discussion or debate, the Senators passed the bill by oral vote. Later the roll call vote confirmed Senate passage of the bill to make Little Bluestem the official Kansas State Grass. There is just one step left—the signature of the Governor.

After years of inhabiting every county in Kansas, Little Bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*), in the form of House Bill 2649, entered the state Capitol's historic Old Supreme Courtroom on February 24, 2010. Once again, the initiative to designate Little Bluestem the state grass was underway. Sponsored by Representatives Sharon Swartz and Kay Wolf, and in the company of students and teachers who have been active regarding the initiative since 2005, the **House Federal and State Affairs Committee** listened with rapt attention to the youngsters and others who urged passage out of committee. This time HB2649 did pass the committee. A few days later, **the full House of Representatives passed HB2649 by a vote of 87 to 25.**



Back row: Representatives Kay Wolf, Elaine Bowers, and Sharon Swartz
Front Row: Students Cael Budke, Joseph Stout, and SammyJo Peterson.

The **testimony** given by each presenter at the **House Federal and State Affairs Committee** session was instructive about the importance of Little Bluestem to our state, as well as to the point of passing HB2649 out of committee. Following testimony by KNPS Board Members, Valerie Wright and Nancy Goulden, high school

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The Kansas Native Plant Society Newsletter is printed four times a year: Winter (January), Spring (April), Summer (July), Fall (October). Readers tell us how much they enjoy the newsletter in color and in the paper format. Contributions help us continue to produce a publication of this length in this form. You may send your gift to KNPS at Kansas Native Plant Society, R.L. McGregor Herbarium, 2045 Constant Avenue, Lawrence, KS 66047-3729.



The mission of the Kansas Native Plant Society is to encourage awareness and appreciation of the native plants of Kansas in their habitats and in our landscapes by promoting education, stewardship, and scientific knowledge.



KNPS President's Message by Craig Freeman

With signs of spring appearing all around, I am reminded of work I did this winter with the conservation organization NatureServe. A panel of more than a dozen botanists from across the United States collaborated to compile a list of 200 plants species that will be considered for monitoring through the National Plant Phenology Program, a program of the USA National Phenology Program. These plant species potentially could be monitored by citizens to help scientists better understand environmental changes, complementing observations already being made for other groups of organisms.

Phenology is the study of recurring plant and animal life cycle stages; the ripening of wheat, the dropping of cottonwood leaves, and the migration of sandhill cranes are examples familiar to most Kansans. Think of phenology as nature's calendar. Phenology pervades nearly every aspect of the environment— influencing the abundance, diversity, and interaction of organisms, and affecting many ecological processes. Phenological events affect our daily lives, from health (when hay fever season begins) and agriculture (planting and harvesting of crops) to recreation (wildflower displays and fall foliage) and safety (deer breeding season).

Increasingly, scientists are using phenological observations to examine how plants and animals

are responding to changes in their environments. Many phenological events are highly sensitive to climate, such as the onset of flowering and bird migrations in temperate regions of the world. Other events show little or no response to environmental changes. Differential responses to environmental change, especially among interdependent species, can have a ripple effect on prairies, forests, and wetlands. For example, a shift in the emergence of leaves of a species of cherry can affect the appearance and abundance of caterpillars that consume cherry leaves for food, which in turn can affect the success of warblers that feed on the caterpillars.

The data sets available for phenological studies are limited in number, scope, and duration. Citizen scientists can help fill some of the knowledge gaps, and there will be increasing opportunities for members of the Kansas Native Plant Society to use their knowledge of plants, ecology, and local environments to assist. Information gathered through the National Plant Phenology Program ultimately will help scientists, land and resource managers, and decision-makers identify which species are being affected, how they are being affected, and how changes may affect our environments and us.

To learn more about the USA National Phenology Network and how you can contribute, visit their web site at <http://www.usanpn.org/>.



Landscaping with Native Plants: Lamb's Quarters, Edible Landscape text by Jeff Hansen, photo by Mike Haddock

Have you ever wanted to incorporate edible native plants into your garden? In my opinion, the tastiest, easiest to grow is lamb's quarters. Lamb's quarters is an annual that thrives in disturbed habitats such as gardens, roadsides, and livestock lots. It doesn't have showy flowers, and most would just call it a weed. But if you want to incorporate a native edible, I strongly recommend lamb's quarters.

Lamb's quarters is a member of the goosefoot family (*Chenopodiaceae*). Members of the goosefoot family are also known as "Chenopods." The Chenopods include my favorite vegetables: spinach and beets. The quinoa grain of South America is also a Chenopod. Lamb's quarters is known by two similar species *Chenopodium album* and *Chenopodium berlandieri*. Both species are found throughout Kansas. *C. album* has smooth seeds, while *C. berlandieri* has pitted seeds. Both plants can be used for greens or as a grain. There are other species of *Chenopodium* found in Kansas, but these two species are the most

recommended as edibles. The plants are upright, branching, and grow to about four feet tall. The stems are smooth and become reddish and woody when mature. The leaves are triangular to four-sided with wavy edges; resembling a goose's foot. The leaves have a mealy white substance on them, especially on the underside.



Lamb's quarters leaf

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To prepare the greens, I simply pick the tender tips of the branches when the plants are about a foot tall in spring. Use fresh growth, not the mature leaves. Just boil the greens in water until tender. I add salt, pepper, and a bit of vinegar to make a most delicious “greens.” Once you try it, I think you will be hooked on it. I think it's better tasting than spinach. You can also let the plants mature and harvest the seed to be used as a grain. I have

If you want to grow lamb's quarters on your own land, all you have to do is till some land and more than likely lamb's quarters will appear. The seeds seem to be found everywhere. I've never had to worry about planting the seeds as they reseed readily. If you need seed, contact me at

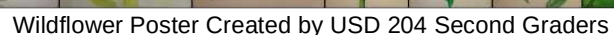
Two books with more information on lamb's quarters are Wild Seasons by Kay Young and Edible Wild Plants of the Prairie by Kelly Kindscher. Wild Seasons even has recipes for using wild plants.



If you aren't on Facebook, this is a great time to join. If you already have a Facebook account, check us out and join in on the fun. Tell your friends and family too!



The goal of this lesson is to help the children acquire increased awareness of Kansas history, ecology, cultural values, art and community learning. Through the exhibition of the student work, we also hope to spark the curiosity of other students and adults in plant life of our state and the importance of understanding native ecology.





Meet KNPS 2009 Scholarship Recipients

At the Annual Wildflower Weekend last fall, two graduate students were named to each receive \$1,000 Mary A. Bancroft Memorial Scholarships. The decision to name two winners, instead of the usual one, was based on the unusually high quality of the applications and research projects of Kristen Polacik from Fort Hays State University and Steven Roels from the University of Kansas. The double award was possible because our friends from Grassland Heritage Foundation agreed to help KNPS fund the awards.

Although both Kristen and Steven are students at Kansas universities, neither is originally from Kansas. Kristen's family lives in New Martinsville, West Virginia, where she grew up. She did her undergraduate work at Marshall University in Huntington, WV. She acknowledges she likes living in Kansas, but says, "I do miss the trees and hills that I grew up around." Steven's hometown is Grand Rapids, Michigan. He earned his bachelor's degree from Calvin College, also in Grand Rapids. Steven is married, and the couple's pet dog is named "Flora."

Kristen is conducting research on the highly invasive saltcedar (*Tamarix*). She stated, "I choose



Kristen Polacik

to work with saltcedar because there is a real need to understand its impacts on the environment and a need to find alternative ways of eradication in infested areas." She has been investigating the impact of flooding as a potential means to lower the plant's photosynthesis activity and consequently its growth. She took weekly

measurements of photosynthesis of flooded saltcedar, using an infrared gas analyzer system. She also collected root and leaf samples to obtain further information about the effect of reduced oxygen due to the flooding. In addition, Kristen has examined how different soil types can affect flooding responses.

Steven's chosen plant for his research is Mead's Milkweed (*Asclepias meadii*). He explains



Steven Roels with red-eyed vireo

this is "a federally threatened species, that is only found on native tallgrass prairies. Kansas is considered the plant's stronghold; there are more populations here than in any other state, and Kansas plants can provide seeds for restoration efforts across the tallgrass prairie region." Not only is Mead's Milkweed threatened by its own slow reproduction, land management changes, and inbreeding, there is also a villainous weevil (*Rhyssomatus lineaticollis*) that damages both stems and seed pods. Learning more about this weevil is extremely important since as Steven reports, "One difficult part of my research has been dealing with the ambiguities and contradictions in the scientific literature regarding the life history of the weevil, . . . making it difficult for me to interpret what I see in my own work."

Both of these student scientists are looking ahead to a future in biology. At the moment Kristen is uncertain whether to continue her education or "go into the work force doing vegetation-based field work for federal or private agencies." Steven plans to pursue a Ph.D. to prepare for a "career in conservation biology, possibly with a non-profit or government agency."

Now, do you see why we HAD to give two awards?



"Remnant Prairies" Website: Help for Monitoring Prairie Health by Stan Kaufman

Many KNPS members have transitioned from "wildflower fan" to "native plant student" as they've become involved with management of prairie on family or public lands. For them, simple plant identification is only the first step to understanding what is growing at a given site. To measure and track the biological health of a prairie requires use of some techniques that professional ecologists employ. A new web site I've built called "Remnant Prairies" (<http://remnantprairies.org/>) provides online systems that make this easy to do.

Remnant Prairies takes lists of species identified in the field and performs "Floristic Quality Assessments (FQAs)," a technique of measuring the ecological significance of a land parcel simply from the species found there. FQAs are calculated using "Coefficients of Conservatism (CoCs)" assigned by experienced botanists to each species to define, in essence, how "good" each plant is. FQAs for a given site can then be compared over time, while the FQAs for different sites can be compared at a given time.

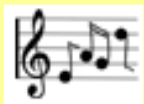
The hard parts of doing Floristic Quality Assessments are a) managing the underlying plant database with its CoC values for each species, b) doing the calculations, and c) saving the results so that they can be studied over time. These are the functions that Remnant Prairies does for you. At the heart of Remnant Prairies is the USDA NRCS plant database, which includes over 10,000 species, augmented with CoC values for Kansas and several other locales. Remnant Prairies provides nifty Geographical Information System (GIS) tools based on Google Maps for setting up the parcel to study. Submitting a list of identified plants is easily done by searching for specific plants or by uploading a list of scientific names, if you've already typed them. Remnant Prairies then

automatically calculates and displays the FQAs over time.

I initially created Remnant Prairies to facilitate management of my family's 160 acres in Osage county. My mother, longtime KNPS member, Lorraine Kaufman, has for years been monitoring on paper the species in our 75 acres of virgin prairie, while my father Willard started reconstructing prairie on 15 acres of cultivated land a few decades ago. We're in the process of restoring another 56 acres, and family members are by now located all over the US; so a web site was the obvious way to let us collaborate at a distance. The features of the site have been so useful to us that it seemed worthwhile to open them to others. If there is sufficient interest, Remnant Prairies might evolve into a non-profit prairie advocacy organization or even possibly a commercial effort.

Remnant Prairies has been built with lots of input from KNPS luminaries such as Jeff Hansen, Craig Freeman, and Iralee Barnard. Craig is the source of the Kansas CoC values and has been the main force behind using FQA analyses in Kansas. Remnant Prairies is a web outgrowth of an earlier spreadsheet "FQA Calculator" I worked on with him. Jeff and Iralee have provided lots of great input regarding the site's focus and design.

Remnant Prairies can't tell you what you're looking at in the field, but if you already know that and want to ask the next questions such as "How good is this prairie?" and "Is it getting better or worse?" then Remnant Prairies can help. The web site provides lots of additional details about how all this works as well as a demo location that shows the process in action. Remnant Prairies also has a number of other features that are useful to groups collaborating on prairie restoration projects. Check it out!



News Notes

Topeka Lawn and Garden Show: Thousands of winter-weary souls flocked to the warmth of the Kansas Expocentre on February 19th, 20th and 21st for the Topeka Lawn and Garden Show. Among the exhibits was the KNPS booth, staffed by friendly and dedicated volunteers. This was a great opportunity to get our name out there and maybe gain a few new members along the way. Many people inquired about where they could buy native plants locally, and we had several people ask about prairie restoration. The KNPS Wildflowers poster was a big hit with kids and adults alike. The winner of our Plant ID contest

was Janice Alfrey of Wakarusa, Kansas, who gets a free 1-year membership in the organization. Thank you to our volunteers: Kay Coward, Fred and Nancy Coombs, Steve Grieb, Sandy Long, Paul Willis, Allen Casey, Carrie Riordan, Becky Drager, Jeff Hansen and Mickey Delfelder.

June is Kansas Native Plant Appreciation Month! Each year Kansas Native Plant Society contacts the Kansas Governor to request that June be proclaimed as Kansas Native Plant Appreciation Month. This is a great opportunity to promote greater appreciation for the diversity, value, and beauty of Kansas native plants and their habitats. Plan outings and other events to celebrate our native plants.

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News Notes

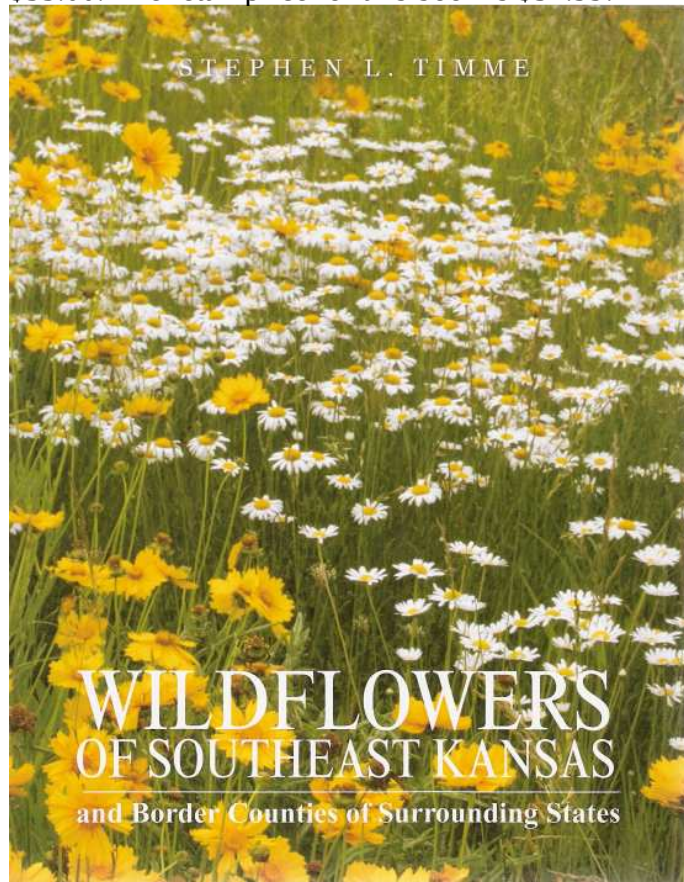
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Steve Timme generously donated some of these books to KNPS as a fund raiser. The books are quite popular, and we only have 28 of them left.



Milkweed and Fleabane in June
A celebration of Kansas wildflower month
Photo by Nancy Goulden

Online Store: KNPS implemented an online store where you can purchase KNPS merchandise as well as Dr. Steve Timme's new book Wildflowers of Southeastern Kansas at a reduced price of \$33.00. The retail price for this book is \$54.99.



Wildflowers of Southeastern Kansas



You can order a KNPS t-shirt online.
Photo by Jeff Hansen

Other merchandise being offered is our KNPS logo embroidered T-shirts and baseball caps; as well as the KNPS original poster "Kansas Wildflowers: Gems of the Plains" and the KNPS original sketch coloring book: Kansas Wildflowers by Margaret Tillotson Ragsdale. To place your order, go to ksnps.org and click on "Store." If there is any other merchandise you would like to see added to the store, contact us at email@ksnps.org.

Online Membership Payments: Do you want an easy way to renew your membership with KNPS? You can now renew online at ksnps.org. When you renew or join you not only select your membership level, but you also can make contributions to the general fund and legacy fund. Furthermore, you can choose to have your free KNPS poster shipped to you (poster is free, but you pay shipping).

To join or renew online, go to "Membership," then "Online Membership Form." All transactions are handled securely with a Paypal Shopping Cart. You can pay using a Paypal account, an electronic check, or a credit/debit card. Check the expiration date of the mailing label of this newsletter. If your membership expired in 12/31/2009, you need to renew.

Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve 2010 Wildflower Weekend: Here is your opportunity to be a part of the "second half" of the pair of premier native plant celebrations during the Kansas blooming season. The first is the Symphony in the Flint Hills in June, where KNPS volunteers get to share their knowledge of the early summer flowers. September 11 and 12, at the peak of the fall blooms, KNPS plant lovers will guide visitors

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2010 Kansas Area Native Plant and Wildflower Events

Information provided by Kansas Native Plant Society, see more events on our website: www.kansasnativeplantsociety.org Please share this information and contact us about additional events to note. Thank you! [email@KSNPS.org]
Sturdy shoes, long pants, a hat, insect repellent, sunscreen, and water are recommended for outdoor events.

Mark your calendar now and plan to attend some fabulous happenings!

 **April 17:** Kansas Native Plant Society Spring Board Meeting and Outing in Hesston, KS. The Board meeting will be held at the Dyck Arboretum Visitor's Center, 11am-2pm. Non-Board Members may want to bring their own lunch to eat during the Board Meeting. Activities following the meeting will depend on the weather. We may botanize a prairie in the area, or view a presentation on prairie restoration. If conditions permit, we may conduct a prairie burn. Caution: Helping conduct a burn can be strenuous exercise for anybody (e.g.: hauling water) --everyone should decide carefully how they want to participate. Some folks may decide to just watch or take photos. Be sure to wear sturdy shoes, long sleeves, a hat, and a bandana. Please contact KNPS for more information. [email@KSNPS.org] (785) 864-3453

 **April 17:** Volunteers are needed for prairie maintenance and preservation projects. The Grassland Heritage Foundation Groundhogs meet on the third Saturday of every month except December. [www.grasslandheritage.org]. Wear appropriate clothing. No special skills or tools needed. For details, please contact Frank Norman, Kansas Native Plant Society Board Member [fjnorman@sunflower.com] (785) 887-6775 (home) or (785) 691-9748 (cell).

 **April 24:** FloraKansas Early Bird Plant Sale, noon to 7pm, at Dyck Arboretum of the Plains, Hesston, KS. See May 7-10 info. Kansas Native Plant Society co-sponsors Dyck Arboretum events. 10% members discount on all days. Admission charge is by donation. [arboretum@Hesston.edu] (620) 327-8127

April 25: Gardening for Kids: Attracting Butterflies and Little Pollinators Class at Prairie Park Nature Center in Lawrence, KS, 2-3pm. Kids can enjoy getting their hands in the dirt and creating a wildlife garden. Class includes instruction on preparing the soil, garden plans and an assortment of seeds and live plants to start a butterfly garden. Class is open to ages: 7 to 14, fee: \$10. Registration is limited to 25 attendees. (785) 832-7980

 **May 8:** Barber County Wildflower Tour. Meet at the Medicine Lodge High School, 8:30am. Enjoy continental breakfast and slides of flowers we expect to see. Buses will provide transportation. Morning participants will return to the school at noon. Full-day participants will enjoy a delicious lunch and entertainment at a tree-shaded country park. Ride through the beautiful gyp hills to a second site. Refreshments will be served before we return to the school around 3:30pm. Barber Co. Conservation District and Kansas Native Plant Society are co-sponsors. Pre-paid reservations should be sent before May 4th, \$8 half-day, \$15 full-day. Barber Co Conservation, 800 W. 3rd Ave. Medicine Lodge, KS 67104-8002, phone (620) 886-3721, ext. 3.

 **May 7-10:** FloraKansas: Great Plains Plant Bazaar at Dyck Arboretum of the Plains, Hesston, KS. This plant sale features hard-to-find native perennials plus classes and tours. Kansas Native Plant Society co-sponsors Dyck Arboretum events. Ask about member's only sale dates; 10% members discount on all days. Admission charge is by donation. [arboretum@Hesston.edu] (620) 327-8127

May 8: Plant the prairie!!! Kansas City Wildlands Ecological Restoration Workday, 9am-noon. Come help us plant wildflower seedlings grown from locally harvested seeds on three of Kansas City's beautiful remnant natural communities. If there's time, we will remove invasive plants from these areas, too, to give the seedlings plenty of space to grow. To register or for more information contact Linda Lehrbaum (816) 561-1061, ext. 116

 **May 15:** Grassland Heritage Foundation Groundhogs prairie maintenance and preservation projects. See Apr. 17 info.

May 15: Native Gardening Class, 10am-noon. Join K-State Master Gardeners to learn the basics of setting up and maintaining a native garden as well as the advantages of native gardening, such as water conservation and attracting wildlife. They will also take participants on a walk through the library's native Lewis and Clark Garden to see examples of native wildflowers. Native plants and seeds will be available for purchase. The Mr. & Mrs. F.L. Schlagle Library Branch of the Kansas City Kansas Public Library is an environmental learning center in Wyandotte County Lake Park, 4051 West Drive, Kansas City, KS. [www.kckpl.lib.ks.us/schlagle] Seating limited so call today to reserve your spot. (913) 299-2384.

Kansas Area Native Plant Wildflower Events - Continued

May 16: Wildflower Plant & Seed Sale at Prairie Park Nature Center, Lawrence, KS from 1-4pm. (785) 832-7980

 **May 22:** Explore Native Tallgrass Prairie at Tuttle Creek Lake, 1:30-3pm. Kansas Native Plant Society volunteers will lead the walk near the Visitor Center at the lake. Rain date is May 23. Pre-registration is required, contact Park Ranger Paul Weidhaas [Paul.K.Weidhaas@usace.army.mil] (785) 539-8511.

 **May 29:** Annual Grant County Spring Wildflower Tour in southwest, KS. Join us to look for and examine the wildflowers found in the Grant County area. Meet inside the Fuel Barn convenience store 1-mile west of Ulysses, on Hwy 160 by 9am. We'll carpool and go to the areas together. Some transportation will be provided. No fee or reservation needed. Kansas Native Plant Society sponsors this outing. Contact: Marion McGlohon (620) 350-2205 or Sam Guy (620) 356-3548.

June 5: Spring Wildflower Tour at Maxwell Wildlife Refuge, McPherson County, KS. Board the tram for a tour of the prairie with wildflowers and buffalo, 10am. There is also a self-guided walking tour with flowers flagged. The Refuge is located 6 miles north of Canton, KS. [http://www.cyberkraft.com/maxwell/] (620)-628-4455

 **June 6:** Friends of Konza Prairie Annual Wildflower Walk, 6:30pm - sunset. Join us for a 2-mile guided hike of Butterfly Hill Trail, generally not open to the public. At the peak of wildflower season, visitors often view more than 50 species of native tallgrass prairie plants blooming along the trail. The walk will be co-led by Dr. Valerie Wright, Kansas Native Plant Society Board Member, and Konza Docents. Free to Friends of Konza Prairie members, \$7 for others. [http://keep.konza.ksu.edu/visit/events.htm] RSVP required; telephone reservations will be taken beginning May 1, (785) 587-0441.

 **June 12:** 5th Annual Symphony in the Flint Hills will be held in Bazaar, KS. Get ready for one of the most beautiful sites on the planet and the adventure of getting there. Enjoy this unique pairing of music and prairie! The vision of this concert is to heighten appreciation and knowledge of the Flint Hills as the last major intact tallgrass prairie on the North American continent and will help focus attention on the Flint Hills of Kansas as a national treasure belonging to all Kansans and as a destination for people beyond our borders. Wildflower tours will be lead by Kansas Native Plant Society volunteers. Featured is an outdoor concert performed by the Kansas City Symphony. [www.symphonynintheflinthills.org] (620) 273-8955

 **June 19:** Grassland Heritage Foundation Groundhogs prairie maintenance and preservation projects. See Apr. 17 info.

June 19: Birds, Butterflies and Breakfast at Chaplin Nature Center. We'll enjoy breakfast on the porch followed by sightings of birds, butterflies, and wildflowers. Reservations needed by June 17. Chaplin Nature Center is located in Arkansas City, KS. [www.wichitaudubon.org/cnc.html] [ac-cvb@arkcitychamber.org] Phone: (620) 442-4133

 **June 20:** Join the 4th Biennial Coblentz Prairie Foray, 1pm. Celebrate the eve of the summer solstice and Father's Day too! This glaciated tallgrass prairie offers diverse native plants. Among the 270 recorded plant species, we may see the federally protected Mead's milkweed, Adder's Tongue Fern — one of few prairie ferns and Cluster fescue, *Festuca paradoxa* — a fescue rarely found in Kansas. Kansas Native Plant Society and Grassland Heritage Foundation co-sponsor this event. Co-leaders: Ken Lassman, author of Wild Douglas County, Jeff Hansen, KNPS and GHF Board and Shirley Braunlich, KNPS Board Member. This prairie is in the Clinton Wildlife area 40-minutes west of Lawrence in west-central Douglas Co at the intersection of E 100 Rd and N 1150th Rd. Park on the access road one-mile west of the intersection, E 1 Rd. [email@KSNPS.org] (785) 864-3453

 **June 24:** 8th Annual Grant-Bradbury Prairie Tour, 6:30pm. Join the Kansas Native Plant Society (KNPS) and enjoy an evening on Topeka's premiere prairie park. This 80-acre pristine tallgrass prairie contains over 300 plant species. On this tour, you will learn and see the plants and animals of the prairie. Bring a camera because the spring wildflowers will be at their peak. Children are encouraged to come. Jeff Hansen, wildflower expert, will lead the tour. Directions: Take Topeka Blvd south to University Blvd, turn right. Take University west about half a mile. When the road curves south, you are at the driveway to the park gate. Contact Jeff if you plant to attend. [email@KSNPS.org] (785) 806-6917

Go to KNPS Website for additional listings: KNPS Summer Board meeting in Lawrence, July 10; Wilson County Wildflower Tour, Sept. 11; Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve Wildflower Weekend, Sept. 11-12; KNPS 32nd Wildflower Weekend in Great Bend, Sept. 17-19 AND MUCH MORE.

GROWING PLANTS FROM SEED:

Hardy Native Lead Plants

text and photos by Ken O'Dell

If you are looking for some wonderful hardy native shrubs with noticeable, but not overwhelming, purple to burgundy-purple flowers in early summer, you should look at our native Lead Plant, also called Indigo Bush or False Indigo. You will find an unusual combination of colors in the flowers of these Kansas natives. These plants were given the name "Lead Plant" because when they were first discovered, it was thought they needed to be growing near soil that, to some extent, had lead in it. Wrong! Not even close. Our native Lead Plant will grow in the many soils we have in Kansas.

Dwarf Lead Plant, also called Fragrant Dwarf Indigo, is the smallest of the native Lead Plants growing to 18 inches tall in regular garden soil to dry prairie soil. It is known by the botanical name of *Amorpha nana* ("Amorpha" meaning "deformed" because the flowers only have one petal). The plant has tiny grey to grey-green foliage, with each leaf about one-half inch long, and nearly as wide. It is found growing in full sun or dappled shade and forms a nice shrub, with colorful reddish-purplish flowers in May, June and July. The foliage alone is reason enough to grow this beautiful plant. *Amorpha nana* has more red coloring than the other *Amorpha*. The flowers are not overwhelming but of a very pleasant nature. This is a wonderful choice to replace the over-planted dwarf spiraea and dwarf crimson pygmy barberry since this small Lead Plant gives much more interest to the landscape.



Amorpha nana

Another native lead plant *Amorpha canescens*, usually called just "Lead Plant" grows slightly taller than *A. nana* and has purplish colors to the

flowers that bloom a couple of weeks later than *A. nana*, in June, July and August. The shrub grows 24 inches to 30 inches tall, preferring full sun to dappled shade in regular garden soil to dry, well drained soils. It does not seem to matter whether it lives in rich soil or poor soil. I have a small group of these planted on a



Amorpha canescens

slight slope with west and north-west exposure in full sun all day, and they have not required any additional watering or fertilizer since I planted them several years ago, plus the soil they are growing in is not that rich. This *Amorpha* grows wild and naturally in all of the prairies on our farm in Miami County, Kansas. *Amorpha canescens* is also the Kansas Wildflower of the Year for 2011. You will love this native plant.

Amorpha fruticosa is the tallest growing of the three Lead Plants and is usually called "False Indigo."



Amorpha fruticosa

The dark purplish flowers, with tiny yellow stamens, bloom in June and July on the end of 4 feet or 5 feet upright branches, which have thin,

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delicate appearing, grey to grey-green leaves that are very attractive. *A. fruticosa* will grow in the wet soil but does not like to have its feet in the water all year. We have these growing naturally on our farm, and most of them are surrounding the three small lakes on our property.

I grow all three of these from seed gathered in early autumn to mid-winter. Strip off a seed head or two and store in the fridge until April. Clean the seed as best you can by shaking or rubbing. I usually get some Alfalfa inoculant at the farm store, put some of my clean seed in a small jar, then put a teaspoon full of this black powdery-looking inoculant in the jar and shake the seed for a moment. Next I plant the seed in a tray or 4 inch pot and sprinkle any of the inoculant that did not stick to the seed on top of the soil. Then I move the

pot or tray outside in morning sun and afternoon shade until the seedlings get 4 inches tall. At this point, you can transplant the plants, without dividing, directly where you want them to grow. It is good if you have 15 seedlings coming up in each pot. If you have only one seedling per pot, it will take forever for the plant to look good. Plant the seedlings in full sun.

If you are looking for native shrubs to make your garden very attractive, but not formal, you should consider the native *Amorpha*. You will find some of these at local nurseries and, for sure, many of the native plant sales will offer these varieties of *Amorpha*. We have them each year at the spring plant sale at The Overland Park Arboretum, and Powell Gardens will have some at their spring plant sale. Dyck Arboretum and Jeff Hansen should also have these in the spring. They are usually available in 3 inch or 6 inch pots.



Available Soon:

A Pocket Guide to Kansas Flint Hills Wildflowers and Grasses

by Edwin J. Miller, Kansas Dept. Of Wildlife and Parks

In 2009, the Tallgrass Legacy Alliance (TLA), Westar Energy, and Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks Chickadee Checkoff program agreed to co-fund A Pocket Guide to Kansas Flint Hills Wildflowers and Grasses by Iralee Barnard. If all goes as planned, the final product will be back from the printer by late April. This will be just in time to coincide with most of the 2010 blooming season. Unlike most plant guides that cost several dollars, this one can be given to ranchers, landowners, prairie enthusiasts, budding botanists, or students at no charge.

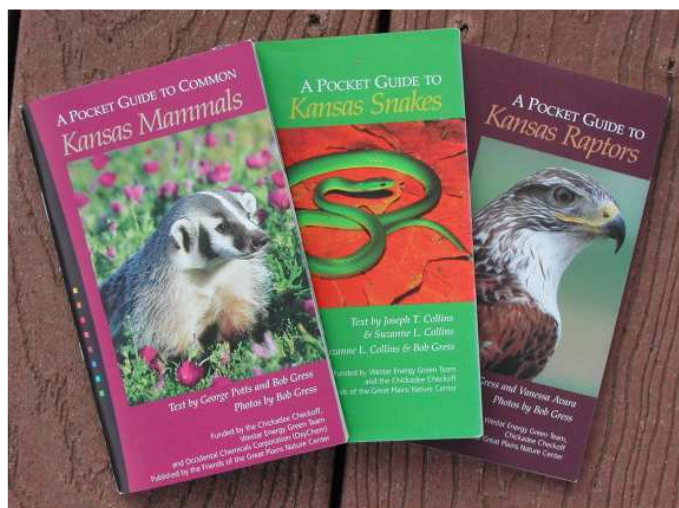
I would like to thank Iralee Barnard for taking this task to heart. She is a Kansas Native Plant Society (KNPS) member and TLA liaison. The TLA's mission is to conserve and enhance the biological, economic, and cultural well-being of the tallgrass prairie through a coalition of ranchers, agricultural and environmental organizations and public agencies.

The objective of this pocket guide is to simply pique an interest. In so doing, it is hoped that the reader will gain greater appreciation for prairie diversity and will follow-up by investigating plants in the field. Due to its size, it cannot contain all the prairie plants, but we hope the reader will search out more complete sources of information. We hope it can open a door for tallgrass prairie appreciation or reinforce the value of a diverse tallgrass prairie ecosystem.

Iralee added interesting comments on grazing, wildlife utilization, pollination, and plant lore that

make this guide's text useful for the rancher, wildlifer, or botany student. Many of the sharp photo images were collected from KNPS members. Well-known nature photographer, Bob Gress, selected photos that best showed the plants' characteristics.

This guide will cover 60 prairie plants found in the Flint Hills. It is the first plant pocket guide in the Kansas Pocket Guide series, as the previous seven covered various groups of wildlife. All of these guides are edited by Bob Gress and published by Friends of the Great Plains Nature Center. There is enough funding to print 20,000 copies.



Examples of other guides in the series

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Pocket Guide

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I will surely carry some copies of the guide in my pick-up to hand out to anyone who has an interest or needs some education regarding the tallgrass prairie. In my encounters with landowners and ranchers, I am often delighted to hear their appreciation of the prairie. However, sometimes I am chagrined to learn that a hay meadow I have

admired over the years will be plowed under this year; or dismayed by the ranch manager who leaned over, plucked a plant, and said no matter how much he aerial sprayed, some sericea lespedeza managed to escape. The plant he picked was a senesced head of purple prairie clover. In my encounters with students, few realize the tallgrass prairie is the mainstay of the natural heritage of the Midwest.



State Grass Initiative

Continued from Page 1

students Leah Heathcote and Elizabeth Willer from Jan Alderson's biology class at Shawnee Mission South High School spoke with poise and urgency. Several younger students of teacher Mollie Wold from Chase County also won the hearts of committee members and audience alike when they spoke of riding their horses out to check on the cattle with their dads, who were teaching them about prairie and ranching in Kansas.

Joseph Stout, a fourth-grade Chase County Elementary School student, who hopes to become a fifth-generation-rancher, told the committee members that he first learned about the four major prairie grasses when he was eight. He went on to add that *"little bluestem is a nutritious forage for cattle . . . also good winter feed . . . can be found in pastures with rocky soil or dry hills . . . is a native perennial that is drought resistant. All of these make it important to a rancher."*

Both Joseph and Cael Budke, a younger student from Chase County, shared a wish that if *"kids learn about little bluestem, they will learn to appreciate the prairie . . ."* Second grader Cael included a description of Little Bluestem that mirrored the "bouquet" Representative Wolf brought to the committee session: *"Little bluestem is easy to find in the winter because it is a copper colored bunch of grass. When you see it you know what it is. In the fall it looks like it has fuzzy white seeds on the ends of the stems. In the summer time it is green and the cows like to eat it."*

Chase County Middle School student SammyJo Peterson closed the student portion of the house committee meeting with the following statement: *"My mom is a librarian and it is important to her that I know how to read books. When my mom and I go walking the trail at the Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve, my mom tries to name the grasses. I always need to help her. Like reading books, when kids learn about little bluestem, they can begin to read the grasses of the prairie."*

The Senate Federal and State Affairs

Committee hastily called members to meet on Tuesday, March 9 at 10:30AM where, once again HB2649 faced scrutiny and yet another committee vote whether to take it to the full Senate.



Kansas House of Representatives. Note the bouquet of Little Bluestem left of center.

Representative Kay Wolf once again had her big bouquet of Little Bluestem on display while she spoke. Representative Sharon Swartz noted that ranchers and cattlemen have been stewards of the prairie for years; it is time to recognize their efforts in prairie conservation. Valerie Wright and Nancy Goulden also spoke to the importance of place-based education about the prairie ecosystem for Kansas children and that for five years KNPS has been supporting students in their efforts to name Little Bluestem the state grass.

During the testimony, some of the senators had questions or made comments. Senator Faust-Goudeau noted that her teenage daughter in Wichita was talking about Little Bluestem. Senator Reitz stated that people are becoming aware of the fact that native grass is important; he moved to advance HB2649 to the full senate. The bill passed unanimously in the senate committee hearing.

HB2649 was then placed on the Senate docket. In the meantime, Jan Alderson was hearing from students who were in her 2005 class, where the Little Bluestem issue originated.

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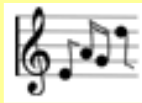
State Grass Initiative

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One student, now at K-State, had heard from another former classmate about impending legislative action.

He contacted Ms Alderson to get details, adding, "It would be nice to know if we made a difference!"

At this writing, 2649SS HB2649 awaits senate action in the Kansas legislature, and the governor's signature.



News Notes

Continued from Page 6

(often from out of state) on the trails at Tallgrass Prairie. There are new 4-mile and 15-mile trails, plus the shorter one near the ranch house and one-room school house.

We especially need help with these educational activities that are located in the shade and cool breezes of the barn. Those of you who wish to be a part of this fun event, contact Nancy Goulden at nag@ksu.edu, and let her know your preferred day and events. We also encourage those of you who would prefer to be participants to mark the dates on your calendars now and plan to visit Tallgrass in Chase County for the Wildflower Weekend.

REMINDER: HELP CHOOSE

WILDFLOWER OF THE YEAR: Throughout 2010, KNPS is soliciting recommendations for future "Wildflowers of the Year" beginning in 2013. This is your opportunity to put forward your favorites. Several nominees were received in response to the notice in the January issue of the newsletter. However, we would like this to be a membership-wide selection, representing all areas of the state.



Iralee Barnard demonstrates native dyed yarn samples at the 2009 Tallgrass Prairie Wildflower Weekend
Photo by Ken Barnard

This year, we will also have KNPS guides on the bus trips out on the prairie. In addition, KNPS members will lead workshops and introduce visitors to the interactive displays such as smelling the variety of odors and scents from the "fragrant" plants, learning about edible plants, and plant identification.



2010 Wildflower of the Year
Catclaw Sensitive Briar
Schrankia nuttallii
Photo by Nancy Goulden

Go to the knps website (www.knps.org/woty.htm) to see the list of plants that have been our WOY in the past and retired. This may give you some ideas, plus avoid duplication. Send your suggestion to: ken@springvalleynursery.com or by U.S. mail to Ken O'Dell, 11485 W. 303rd. St., Paola, Kansas 66071 or fax your suggestion to (913) 837-5111.



Featured Plant- Downy gentian (*Gentiana puberulenta*)

Text by Lorraine J. Kaufman, photo by Stan Kaufman

Sapphire— a brilliant, deep blue, rare gem that is exquisitely beautiful, highly prized and carefully guarded. This description seems appropriate also for a “jewel” I found on our prairie, the lovely Downy gentian, *Gentiana puberulenta*.

Just two days earlier we had searched for them in vain. But the late summer rains had worked their magic, and now here at my feet we found them—almost hidden and yet protected by the tall surrounding Big bluestem and Indian grass. A cluster of 1.5 inch, funnel shaped, vividly deep-purplish-blue flowers looked straight up past me into the face of God. It was a breathtaking moment, one that is etched in my memory and tucked away as a treasure, a lovely reminder of a warm September day on the prairies.

Unlike most other prairie wildflowers whose growth keeps pace with the surrounding grasses, the 10 to 12 inch downy gentian nestles at the feet of the tall grasses of late summer. It is one of the last wildflowers to begin blooming and often continues to mid-October or until the first hard frost. The flowers themselves open at mid-morning and close by late afternoon or may not open at all on cloudy days. They are found on tallgrass prairies in the eastern one-fourth of Kansas, where their presence is an indicator of native or high quality grasslands.

The gentian has been used in the practice of medicine for millennia. Discordies and Pliny recommended the yellow gentian for treatment of poisonous bites and stings. Hieronymus Bock recognized the yellow gentian’s virtues in 1551: “The common man knows no better stomach medicine than the Gentian.” Our blue prairie gentian contains the same active principle, a bitter glucoside. The Winnebago called it “blue-blossom medicine” and the Dakotas knew it as “yellow medicine” because of the color of its roots.

This delightful wildflower does not transplant well; so the seed, when ripe, should be planted



Downy Gentian
Gentiana puberulenta

where it is expected to grow. When collecting seed, I would suggest that you mark a blooming gentian so you can find it again. The foliage dries as it ages, and it is often difficult to locate among the prairie grasses. Once the flowers are dry (and hopefully pollinated) slip a portion of nylon stocking over them, fastening it at the top and also around the stem. This will keep insects or predators from the seed while it matures so you can harvest it later. It may take several visits to check on the progress of this process— but then, who minds a little extra time on the prairie during the warm and mellow days of autumn?

Membership News

NEW MEMBERS 1/1/2010 TO 3/6/2010

Molly Bernstein - Manhattan
Donna Callaghan - Lawrence
Edward Callaghan - Iowa City, IA
Patrick Allen Casey - Topeka
Evelyn Davis - Wakarusa
Beverly & Deanna Delladio - Kansas City
Gail Dobber - Topeka
Dan Haines - Waverly

Dr. Lauren Hill - Tonganoxie
Karen Hiller - Topeka
Richard Jennotte - Manhattan
Laura Kemp - Wamego
Joe & Cille King - Lawrence
Dr. Christopher R. Little - Manhattan
Mt. Mitchell Prairie Guards
Ann Palmer - Topeka

JoAnn Pappas - Wichita
Kenneth Ratzlaff - Lawrence
Andrea Repinsky - Lawrence
Doreen Towne - Manhattan
Kalvin Simon - Wichita
Sonie S. Simon - Wichita
Cheryl Weber - Topeka
Teresa Wickersham-Shawnee

Kansas Native Plant Society
R. L. McGregor Herbarium
University of Kansas
2045 Constant Ave.
Lawrence, KS 66047-3729



Address Service Requested

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LEARN MORE ABOUT KNPS

Check us out online at www.ksnps.org
Contact us by email at email@ksnps.org
Contact us by phone at 785-864-3453



MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION AND RENEWAL GUIDELINES

Annual dues are for a 12-month period from January 1 through December 31. Dues paid after December 1 are applied to the next year. Note to new members: the first year of annual membership is effective from the date of joining through December 31 of the following calendar year.

Please complete this form or a photocopy. Send the completed form and a check payable to the Kansas Native Plant Society to:

Kansas Native Plant Society
R. L. McGregor Herbarium
2045 Constant Avenue
Lawrence KS 66047-3729

A membership in the Kansas Native Plant Society makes a great gift for friends and family members. Recipients of gift memberships will receive notification of your gift membership within two weeks of receipt of your check. The Kansas Native Plant Society is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. Gifts to KNPS are tax deductible to the extent provided by law.

Membership application/renewal form

Member Information:

Name:	
Address	
City/State:	
Zipcode:	
Phone:	
Email:	
County (if Kansas):	

Membership Category:

☐	Student	\$10.00
☐	Individual	\$20.00
☐	Family	\$30.00
☐	Organization	\$35.00
☐	Contributing	\$100.00
☐	Lifetime	\$500.00