



KANSAS NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

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NEWSLETTER OF THE KANSAS NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

JULY 2021

TOMMY NOE



SOUTHEAST KANSAS NATURE CENTER

Environmental Education in the Kansas Ozarks

— JENNIFER RADER, SEK NATURE CENTER DIRECTOR, KDWP WILDLIFE EDUCATION SERVICES

Sitting atop a hill in Schermerhorn Park, the Southeast Kansas (SEK) Nature Center overlooks a beautiful forested Ozark landscape with Shoal Creek streaming through. Nothing like what most people think of when Kansas comes to mind. Schermerhorn Park and the southeast region of Cherokee County in southeast Kansas are the only portion of Ozark Plateau in the state; just fifty-five square miles.

In the early 1920's, Edgar B. Schermerhorn donated the property that would become the park to the city of Galena. Sometime in the mid-1920's a scout cabin was built using local Mississippian limestone. Many a scout meeting and family reunion was held in this building until it fell into disrepair in the 1980's and 90's. In 1999, a small group started gathering donations to fund the restoration of the old scout cabin into a nature center. The Southeast Kansas Nature Center was opened by Linda Phipps, a local teacher, and a group of her wonderful volunteers in March of 2004.

When Ms. Phipps decided to retire, she worked with the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks to transfer operation of the center to the agency's Wildlife Education Services Section. In June of 2013, the transfer was made official.

The SEK Nature Center is full of exploration drawers and hands-on activities for children and the young-at-heart. The center features displays and facts on mostly native flora and fauna that can be found in the region. Visitors can see several live reptiles, amphibians, fishes and invertebrates, as well as different taxidermied mammals and birds inside the building. They can also watch local wildlife through the bird-watching window (a one-way window), view an extensive Native American artifact collection, a rock/mineral/fossil collection, put together puzzles, play nature-themed games, and observe the live honeybee hive located in the Big Room of the center.

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OUR MISSION

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.

The Kansas Native Plant Society Newsletter is published quarterly: Winter (January), Spring (April), Summer (July), Fall (October). Readers tell us how much they enjoy the newsletter in paper format. Contributions help us continue to produce a publication of this length in this form.

You may send your gift to KNPS at:

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

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Contact us by email at email@ksnps.org
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2021 MINI-AWW
Botanizing in southwest
Kansas Sandsage Prairie

— ANTHONY ZUKOFF

Ample precipitation leading up to the June 5th Mini AWW in Garden City made for a colorful outing. Members visited the Sandsage Bison Range and Wildlife Area for a day of botanizing in one of the few remaining publicly accessible examples of sandsage prairie left in Kansas. Sand verbena, spotted bee balm, purple poppy mallow and prickly pear blooms were particularly abundant. The presence of several tallgrass species and sand sagebrush makes this southern high plains prairie truly unique.

The Bison Range was established in 1916 when President Woodrow Wilson granted 3,021 acres of the Kansas National Forest holdings to the State of Kansas for use as a game preserve. Another 649 acres has been added to the original land grant bringing the property to its current size of 3,760 acres. Prior to state ownership, the bison range was included in the federally owned Kansas National Forest. The Kansas National Forest project began in 1905 as a 30,000 acre public reservation called the Garden City Forest Reserve. The reserve was established on a five-year trial basis with the purpose of providing a place for experimental tree planting to determine which species of trees were most suitable for propagation in the Great Plains.

In 1908, another 272,387 acres of sandsage prairie located south of the Arkansas River and west to the Kansas-Colorado border were added to the reserve. By 1915, more than 800,000 seedlings had been planted on approximately 1,000 acres of the National Forest property. Ultimately the project was a failure, but a small portion of the original “forest” can still be seen in the northwest corner of the Bison Range’s middle pasture. At this location, a few surviving trees planted by the work crews of the early 1900’s remain as a reminder of the Kansas National Forest. If you are in southwest Kansas, be sure to put this unique prairie habitat on your list of places to explore.



TOP Sweet sand verbena (*Abronia fragrans*)
ABOVE Botanizing on the sandsage prairie.

PHYLLIS SCHERICH

President’s Message

KRISTA DAHLINGER

Kansas had a glorious, rainy spring that led to an abundance of blooming native plants, many growing taller than usual. The KNPS Facebook “Plant Identification Group” has been very busy receiving and identifying images from across the state as different plants come into bloom. The KNPS Events Calendar is once again receiving notices of events planned by KNPS and by other nature-based groups for wildflower walks. I hope everyone has been able to get out to hike and explore in parks and along nature trails this spring.

KNPS members and friends were able to gather for the mini-AWW in Garden City on June 5th to explore the Sandsage Bison Range, around the edges of a nearby sand pit pond, and also check the vegetation growing in the dry riverbed of the Arkansas River. The sandsage prairie is composed of dunes formed by windblown sand from the Arkansas River basin and covered in short grass vegetation. On June 5, the predominant vegetation included abundant sagebrush, sweet sand verbena, yucca, and plenty of prickly pear cactus plants. The bright orange Gaillardia blanket flower was just beginning to bloom during our visit.

The Sandsage Bison Range protects 3,760 acres of this unique habitat located just south of Garden City, and it is managed by the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks. The Friends of the Sandsage Bison Range organize tours so that the public can experience this unique habitat. After our tour stops, everyone headed out in different directions, some to explore the Cimarron Grasslands to the southwest, or north to the Little Jerusalem Badlands State Park or east to Clark State Fishing Lake and St. Jacob’s well. Garden City has plenty of lodging available, and the large 110 acre Finnup Park holds the recently rebuilt “Big Pool” public swimming pool, the Lee Richardson Zoo, Finney County Historical Museum, as well as numerous shady places to picnic.

Mark your calendars for the 2021 AWW in Southeast Kansas during the weekend of September 17, 18, and 19. More information about this weekend will be postal-mailed to KNPS members in August, so final lodging and travel plans can be made at that time. Make it a day trip, or come for the whole weekend; there will be outdoor native plant walks as well as indoor member meetings, a silent auction, and other fun activities that have been on hold for over a year. All events will be planned with public safety and social distancing measures in mind.

If you have not done so yet, make sure you get outside and enjoy the many and various Kansas prairie vistas sometime this summer. You are sure to be delighted!

FROM TOP Landscape at Sandsage Bison Range; Prickly pear cactus; KNPS at Sandsage Bison Range.



KRISTA DAHLINGER PHOTOS

Fall Wildflowers of Southeast Kansas

— EMMITT SULLIVAN



LEFT, TOP TO BOTTOM Tickseed sunflower (*Bidens aristosa*), Sunflower family. They can be found in moist areas; when in a field, it's a solid mass of yellow.

Ebony spleenwort (*Asplenium platyneuron*). True fern family. These grow in a rocky, moist, shaded area at the Southeast Kansas Nature Center, Cherokee Co.

Spreading aster (*Symphyotrichum patens*), Sunflower family. These can be found in September. Photo taken at Southeast Kansas Nature Center in the wooded area, Cherokee Co.

Yellow Bear's-Foot (*Smallanthus uvedalia*). This one may be still be in bloom in mid-September. The flower was in bloom and photographed 9-10-2019. The leaves are very large and hard to miss. It grows at the base of the rocky wooded hill next to Shoal Creek at Southeast Kansas Nature Center, Cherokee, Co.

ABOVE TOP Mist flower (*Conoclinium coelestinum*). Sunflower family. These should be blooming in September and can be found in the rocky wooded area at Southeast Kansas Nature Center, Cherokee Co.

ABOVE White Crownbeard (*Verbesina virginica*), Sunflower family. The common name is frostweed; when we get the first hard frost the stem will split and a ribbon of thin ice will form a frostflower.

EMMITT SULLIVAN PHOTOS

Deams Copperleaf | (*Acalypha deamii*)

— JEFF HANSON

Autumn is the season of the copperleaf genus (*Acalypha*) of plants as their leaves tend to turn copper colored and their fruit is maturing. *Acalypha* is in the Spurge family (*Euphorbiaceae*).

There are five members of the genus in Kansas. None possess showy flowers but they do acquire fall color. The first four are all relatively common. The fifth is rare, very rare, all across its range.

Rough copperleaf (*A. ostryifolia*) is common and grows in almost any disturbed soil.

Virginia copperleaf (*A. virginica*) is found almost anywhere. It is common in my yard in Topeka.

Rhombic copperleaf (*A. rhomboidea*) prefers moist soil. It's probably more commonly found in seeps in the prairie. It resembles Virginia copperleaf but can be differentiated by counting the lobes on the bracts surrounding the flowers.

Slender copperleaf (*A. monococca*) is found in dry upland sites. It has one chambered capsules containing a single seed.

Deam's copperleaf (*A. deamii*) is the rare member of the genus. Look for it in rich moist woodlands. It has two chambered capsules which differentiate it from other species.

Deam's Copperleaf

On Nov 4, 2018, a group of six cleared Amur honeysuckle along the Shunganunga Creek in Topeka. We first cleared this area back in 2011 and now are maintaining it. When we first cleared the woodland you could not see through the honeysuckle. The native plants had dwindled in number but still existed on the site. The number of non-native species growing in the woodland is rather large. Besides Amur honeysuckle, there is tree of heaven, white mulberry, mimosa, Rose of Sharon, winter creeper, Japanese honeysuckle, oriental bittersweet, trumpet vine, poison hemlock, Japanese hops, lady's thumb, ground ivy, and India mock strawberry.

It is a floodplain woodland and the soil is rich alluvial loam. The largest trees are black walnut. There is a nice population of Virginia waterleaf and many woodland sedges. The predominant grass is Virginia wildrye. There are a couple of wahoo shrubs and many chokecherry shrubs.

The day after our workday, I went back to take out the last of the larger honeysuckle. I also started pulling winter creeper. Below my feet I saw this nondescript plant that was about five inches tall. It appeared to be a copperleaf (*Acalypha*). My first impression was that I had found the very rare Deam's copperleaf. Its leaves were broadest toward the base and its capsules were two-parted. Upon further study, I determined that it really was Deam's copperleaf! But I only found ONE plant. Let me tell you, I had probably been to this site hundreds of times. I was never expecting to find any rare plants in this little woodland area.

I had been trying to find Deam's copperleaf (*A. deamii*) since Brett Budach posted pictures to the KNPS Facebook Group. He suggested people look for it in its habitat, floodplain forests. He has found a couple populations in Johnson County. It is known from only a few sites in Kansas (Shawnee, Chase, and now Johnson). And

based on records it is rare throughout its range. See the **Biota of North America Program (BONAP) map at <http://bonap.net/MapGallery/County/Acalypha%20deamii.png>**.

The plant's capsules have only two chambers unlike its more common cousins, Virginia and Rhombic copperleaf which have three chambered capsules. Its seeds are about twice as large as its cousin's seeds as well. Its leaves are widest toward the base, unlike Virginia (elliptical shaped) and Rhombic (rhombus shaped) copperleaf.

I believe the plant is not very common because it is an annual and it does not produce very many seeds. I only saw about six fruits on the one plant I found. That is only twelve seeds per plant. If birds or animals eat some of the seeds the result is even fewer plants.

I've gone back to the site a few times and have found a total of five plants. They are not easy to spot. With all the leaves falling, they are even harder to spot! And some plants I found had the leaves skeletonized by insects.

I am hoping to get a group back into the site to remove more of the invasive plants. And thanks to all who have helped in the past! We have provided better habitat for Deam's copperleaf.

Update: If anyone is interested in taking the volunteer lead to keep this area cleared of invasive plants, contact me at jeff.hansen.sd@gmail.com. I no longer live in Topeka and the site is in need of effort.



JEFF HANSON PHOTOS

Red Hills School Tour | PHYLLIS SCHERICH

On a warm and windy May 8, Brian Martin, Dee, and I had the privilege of accompanying a group of thirteen third and fourth-graders from the Wichita Adventist Christian Academy, along with several adult sponsors, and hosts David and Janna Chacko and Kent Remmers, at their Gyp Hills Cattle Ranch in Barber County. The goal of the trip was to introduce the students to the prairie, to ranching, and to the importance of resource conservation.

Upon arrival, students had the opportunity to interact with Kent's ranch horse, as well as a horned toad, and then they were seated onto straw bales on a wagon to observe the wide-open space enroute to the first stop at the crossing on Dead Man's Creek. The importance of water and grasses for a cattle operation were discussed. We talked about some of the wetland plants including the difference between grasses and sedges (sedges have edges!). They particularly enjoyed getting acquainted with scouring rush (*Equisetum hyemale*). Shortly, we stopped at a beaver dam and learned about the contribution beavers make in conserving water in the Red Hills.

The next stop was for lunch by a large pond, and after lunch they had free time to explore the area. We distributed *A Pocket Guide to Kansas Red Hills Wildflowers* to each student and took the opportunity to show them how to use the books: explaining about common, genus, and species names. It was fun to watch their excitement as (with assistance from Brian, Dee, and me) they found many of the native plants they were seeing in their books. To round out the afternoon by the pond, the children, accompanied by David Chacko on his guitar, sang several songs, followed by a short worship service.

After loading up, we briefly stopped to observe the buffalo wallows on the hilltops and explained their creation and function. We also pointed out the buffalo grass that was abundant in the area, while the cows and their calves watched in the background.

Finally, we stopped at a deep cut in the trail to get a closer look at some of the wildflowers the children had been observing as they were riding in the wagons. As they clamored over the area in small groups led by us, they were amazed at how many wildflowers they could observe in such a small area. The brightly-colored ones caught their attention first, and then they began to look more closely to discover some of the less-obvious ones like woolly locoweed, Norton's flax, Nuttall's evolvulus, and scarlet gaura. My favorite comment was, "Are there plants like these in Wichita?" I assured them Wichita may not have the same

LEFT Sleepy catchfly (*Silene antirrhina*)

PHYLLIS SCHERICH PHOTOS



TOP Scarlet globe mallow (*Sphaeralcea coccinea*) and Baby-white aster (*Chaetopappa ericoides*).
ABOVE The children enjoyed a hayrack ride across the prairie.

ones, but if they open their eyes they will find many wildflowers in unmowed areas in Wichita and especially referred them to the Great Plains Nature Center.

Brian, Dee, and I could not resist the opportunity to do a bit more botanizing after the children left the ranch to return to Wichita. The most unexpected find for me was the catchfly which we found in several different locations. I assumed it was sleepy catchfly (*Silene antirrhina*). The key in the big book identifies it as the only one in Kansas that has "dark, sticky bands" on the stem. It also has the right leaf arrangement, can be "white to pale pink or red," and indicates it has been found in the Red Hills. Also plentiful and colorful were citron paintbrush, baby-white asters, scarlet globemallow, prairie groundsel, Buckley's penstemon, silky sophora, and purple ground cherry, along with many members of the bean family. We cataloged about forty-five blooming species and thirty-five either not blooming yet or already in fruit, and we did not even try to catalog the grasses!

FEATURED NATIVE PLANT

Scarlet Globe Mallow | (*Sphaeralcea coccinea*)

— JIM MASON

Scarlet Globe Mallow (*Sphaeralcea coccinea*) is one of the few red wildflowers in the Kansas flora. It occurs primarily in the High Plains and at lower elevations in the Intermountain West. It may be found in the western half of Kansas, mainly in sandy to gravelly soils, sometimes even in seemingly inhospitable sites such as a crack in the asphalt at the edge of a highway. It begins to show out in late spring, but is primarily a summertime bloomer. It is a wildflower I look for when cruising the back roads in the Gyp Hills.

Like its cousin Purple Poppy Mallow, it has a sprawling growth habit, with several stems branching out in every direction from the root stock. Plants may form low mounds in favorable sites. Leaves are divided into three to five narrow lobes, which may have smooth edges or be slightly toothed. The stems and foliage of the plant are densely covered with stellate (star-shaped) hairs, giving the plant a grayish appearance. Those hairs can trap wind-blown sand grains from the surroundings, making for a prickly, crusty exterior that probably makes it less appetizing to grazing animals. The hairs may also help with water retention in the typically arid environments it is found in, by making a protected microclimate just above the plant surface.

The five petals vary in color from salmon orange to brick red. They are arranged in a cuplike corolla up to 3/4 inch in diameter, surrounding a central column of pistils and stamens. Pollination is accomplished by certain species of bees in the genus *Diadasia*, and successful seed production is highly dependent on outcrossing enabled by those pollinators.

Scarlet Globe Mallow (aka Cowboy's Delight!) would be a good candidate for a Kansas xeriscape. I found vendors for seeds online in



— LORNA HARDER ILLUSTRATION

Colorado and Minnesota. If there is not a Kansas vendor, someone locally should step up and fill that void!

SCOTT BEAN



TECH NOTES

— KRISTA DAHLINGER

A dedicated crew of KNPS volunteers has been busy laying out and populating the content of a new KNPS website. After all of the menus have been tested and links validated, the website will go live. The new look will have lots of terrific images and information you can use and will display on a smart phone, a tablet, or a desktop screen.



BRIAN L. MARTIN PHOTOS

FEATURED NATURAL AREA

Little Jerusalem Badlands State Park

— CYNTHIA RHODES

Brian Martin and I had the most fortunate opportunity to visit “Little J” (as it is affectionately called) not once, but twice this spring on expertly-guided wildflower walks. Our guide was park naturalist Sara Kay Carrell, State Ranger for both the Historic Lake Scott State Park and Little Jerusalem State Park. This park is found in Logan County in the northwestern part of the state, and the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism is partnering with The Nature Conservancy to develop and manage visitor access.

Little J is a 332-acre park which encompasses 220 acres of badlands of ruggedly spectacular geologic formations, and is adjacent to the 17,290-acre Smoky Valley Ranch. The park showcases a mile-long stretch of 100-foot-tall spires and cliffs of eroded Niobrara chalk, the largest expanse in the state. Niobrara chalk was formed by sediment that settled to the bottom of the Western Interior Seaway, an inland ocean which covered most of central North America millions of years ago. Little J is a unique, vital habitat for a variety of wildlife and plants. Great Plains wild buckwheat grows only in the chalk prairies of western Kansas with the single largest population of this endemic plant found at Little J.

Wildflowers observed on our first trip on May 22 included Fremont’s evening primrose (*Oenothera macrocarpa* ssp. *fremontii*), Nuttall’s violet (*Viola nuttallii*), Prince’s plume (*Stanleya pinnata*), White penstemon (*Penstemon albidus*), Oval-leaf bladderpod (*Physaria ovalifolia*), Downy paintbrush (*Castilleja sessiliflora*), Stemless hymenoxys (*Tetraneuris acaulis*), and Scarlet guara (*Gaura coccinea*).

Our second tour on June 6 included wildflower sightings of Berlandier’s flax (*Linum berlandieri*), Prince’s plume still regally

guarding the washes between peaks, Fragile prickly pear (*Opuntia fragilis*), and Fremont’s evening primrose continuing its fragile and blazingly yellow blossoms.

A bonus for this tour was to quietly observe from afar a ferruginous hawk chick sitting in its nest with a parent hawk looking on from a nearby perch.

Little Jerusalem Badlands State Park is a day-use park only, open from sunrise to sunset daily, all year round. A daily vehicle permit or annual state park vehicle permit will apply. There are well-marked trails, walkways, and overlooks with benches at strategic points. The park is a fragile landscape as the chalk formations are soft and easily damaged. Stay on the marked trails; only guided tours are allowed off-trail. Take nothing but photos. Rock climbing and camping are not allowed. Camping opportunities are available at Historic Lake Scott State Park nearby. Overnight hotel accommodations may be found at nearby cities such as Scott City and Oakley.

Up-to-date information about the state park may be found at this website: <https://ksoutdoors.com/State-Parks/Locations/Little-Jerusalem-Badlands> and guided tours into the interior are available and must be reserved in advance. To reserve a tour, click on the calendar icon at this website.

This is an amazing and beautiful space for the public to view and enjoy. When your opportunity arises at any time of year, Go West to Little J! The Kansas badlands are waiting just for you.



TOP Prince's plume in a wash.
BOTTOM, L TO R Fremont's evening primrose,
White penstemon, and Nuttall's violet.

Guerillas in Our Midst: Part 1

— LORNA HARDER

noun: guerilla

a member of a small independent group taking part in irregular fighting, typically against larger regular forces. “this traditional landscape fell to the prairie guerillas”

Preparing for guerilla prairie gardening begins in late spring, and continues through summer and into fall. The much anticipated parade of wildflowers and grasses initiates the procession of seeds - seeds that float in Kansas breezes, seeds that snag a sock, that slingshot from capsules that drop from pods that shatter when touched or that sometimes simply remain in the seed head well into fall and winter. Guerilla prairie gardening requires frequent trips to prairies and gardens to claim some of those seeds, for it is those seeds that will prepare the way for new native plantings.

Seed Collection

Seed collection is part science and part art, and knowing when to collect means learning to know the source plants, their locations, and their natural history, too. It is also important to adhere to the ethics of seed collection. The suggested guidelines include the following:

- Collect up to 10% of seed from uncommon species, or if they are annuals or biennials; up to 25% for other species; and up to 50% for common or widespread species;

- Know the source of your seed if you are collecting from a restoration or a garden;

- Walk lightly to minimize the disturbance you cause;

- Recognize that you are disrupting interactions between plants and animals;

- State and federally listed species require a permit; and

- Avoid conservative species — leave seed collection and plant propagation to the experts.

The highest percentage of viability occurs when seed is collected at full maturity. Generally, seeds mature approximately one month after flowering, but this varies by species.

Watch for the two stages of seed development

- The soft dough stage: When squeezed between thumb and forefinger, the seed interior is ejected as a soft, doughy substance in the soft dough stage. Seeds at this stage are often green or light-colored, and they tend to be non-viable.

- The hard dough stage: Seeds in the hard dough stage are typically brown or dark-colored and shatter readily. A seed in the hard dough stage is often hard to bite. At this stage, the seed is mature and in all probability it has achieved dormancy. It is ready to harvest.

Harvest seeds and place in paper envelopes or paper bags. Label with the date and location of collection and the species name. Dry the seed in paper bags as quickly as possible under low humidity conditions. Larger seed should be stored in smaller quantities to increase the air circulation needed for drying. Fleshy fruits (berries) should have fleshy material removed before drying.

Seed Cleaning

When seed is dry, it is ready to be removed from pods or other protective coatings (threshing). This can be accomplished any number of creative ways:

- Rub seed against a coarse screen;
- Rub between gloved hands;
- Rub between ping pong paddles;
- Roll with a rolling pin on a wooden tray;
- Rub seeds in pods between two bricks; and/or
- Gently rub small podded seeds between two sheets of fine sandpaper.



To complete seed cleaning, remove the waste chaff from the seeds by sieving or blowing.

Seed Storage

Dry, clean seed is stored until planting time. Place seed in sealed, airtight containers and refrigerate (33-38°F); or store in the freezer; or store in open containers in a cool, dry place, indoors or out. To protect seed stored in open containers from predators, use cheesecloth or screening. Finally, do not forget the label — date and location of collection and species name. Dried, cleaned, stored seed is ready to be planted, guerilla-style, next winter.

Stay tuned for Guerillas in Our Midst, Part II!

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!

Before you travel, use the contact information to confirm an event is still happening and not cancelled or rescheduled.

JULY | 31 AUG | 01
THE IOWA PRAIRIE CONFERENCE
co-hosted by the Iowa Prairie Network and the Iowa Prairie Conference Planning Committee. Saturday afternoon: diverse presentations offered virtually; Sunday: choose a fieldtrip from one of seven distinct habitat regions. For details, visit: iowaprairienetwork.org

AUGUST | 7
19TH ANNUAL FALL RIVER STAR PARTY, 8:00PM, FALL RIVER STATE PARK - FREDONIA BAY AREA/CASNER CREEK CAMPGROUND. Enjoy the summer evening as the Kansas Astronomical Observers present an educational program about the wonders of the prairie sky! Lawn chairs and insect repellent are recommended. For details, contact Kimberly Jones, 620-637-2213

AUGUST | 14 & 28
GRASSLAND HERITAGE FOUNDATION SEED COLLECTING AT BLACK JACK BATTLEFIELD, 163 E 2000 Rd., Wellsville. www.grasslandheritage.org. For details, contact info@grasslandheritage.org

AUGUST | 28
BAKER WETLANDS PHOTOGRAPHY WALKS FOR ADULTS, 8:30-9:30 am, Parking Lot 2, 1365 N. 1250 Rd., Lawrence. Meet at the Discovery Center. Bring your camera and wear your walking shoes. Registration is required. Contact Morgan at mglade@bakeru.edu, 785-594-4703

SEPTEMBER | 10-12
DYCK ARBORETUM OF THE PLAINS FALL NATIVE PLANT SALE DAYS, Hesston. Members only event on Sept. 9. Details at dyckarboretum.org, 177 W. Hickory St., 620-327-8127

SEPT | 13 & 20
GRASSLAND HERITAGE FOUNDATION FALL NATIVE PLANT SALE, 4-6 pm, Cottins' Farmers Market, 1832 Massachusetts, Lawrence. For more information: grasslandheritage@gmail.com, 785-840-8104

SEPTEMBER | 14
NATURE BOOK CLUB HOSTED BY LAWRENCE PUBLIC LIBRARY in Lawrence. Join us to talk about fiction and nonfiction connected to the natural world. New book recommendations from co-leaders Jake Vail and Shirley Braunlich and other book club members. Meet 6:30-8 pm via Zoom. Contact Shirley to RSVP: sbraunlich@lpks.org, 785-843-3833

SEPTEMBER | 17-19
KANSAS NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY'S 42ND ANNUAL WILDFLOWER WEEKEND (AWW) IN GALENA. Enjoy a full weekend of outings, board meeting, membership meeting, programs, a silent auction, photo contest, lunch, and socializing—join us in southeast Kansas! Watch for updates by early August. Contact Krista Dahlinger at Krista.KNPS@gmail.com, 316-258-6341

SEPTEMBER | 22-24
PLAN IT NATIVE LANDSCAPES CONFERENCE PRESENTED BY DEEP ROOTS KC. All are welcome. Whatever your experience with native plants, you will find resources to grow your knowledge. For more information, visit: <https://planitnative.org/> or contact Sara Beier sarah@deeprootskc.org, 816-301-7545 x 701

SEPTEMBER | 23
VIRTUAL AWW FALL BOARD MEETING at 7:00 pm. This date will be used if we cannot meet in person in SE Kansas.

SEPTEMBER | 24-26
THE ANNUAL PRAIRIE FESTIVAL AT THE LAND INSTITUTE in Salina. The festival features speakers, art, music, dancing, guided prairie walks, bird watching, children's activities, and food. Live streaming access is available! Contact: www.landinstitute.org, 785-823-5376

JULY | 24-28, 2022
THE 2022 NORTH AMERICAN PRAIRIE CONFERENCE, Lincoln, Nebraska. Learn more: <http://www.northamericanprairie.org/>

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Darin Banks – Prairie Village
Tammy Beckwith – Topeka
Gary Boldt – Ulysses
Shannon Brown – Prairie Village
Sharon Cantrell – Wichita
Sabrina Charles – Overland Park
Kimberly Comstock – Lawrence
Amanda Stark Culbertson – Overland Park
Brenda Douglas – Edgerton
Stephanie Dunn – Lenexa

Tara Phelps Durr – Hays
Miriam Edelman – Manhattan
Hank Guarisco – Lawrence
Jay Jeffrey – Olsburg
John Kinsey – Kansas City, MO
Burton & Linda Mannell – Holton
Cindi McMurray – Wichita
Steve Mestl – Hutchinson
Heather Moore-Ortiz – Hutchinson
Jenny Tucker O'Konski – Wamego
Karin Pagel-Meiners – Lawrence
Barbara Reed – Rose Hill

Herbert Reid – Bunker Hill
Melissa Riches – Atchison
Brooke Leigh Robol – Leawood
Andrew & Maggie Shank – Lawrence
Megan Shepard – Topeka
Wendy Shoemaker – Lawrence
Jon Trembley – Arlington
Alicia Troike – Hepler
Cheryl White – Leawood
Kim Willse – Hutchinson
Edwin Woerner – Lyndon

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Nathaniel Barton – Wichita
Nick Bertram – Great Bend
Shirley Braunlich & Peggy Robinson – Lawrence
Kerry Chapman – Lawrence
Larry Davis – Merriam
Pete Ferrell – Beaumont
Craig & Jane Freeman – Lawrence
Dale Funk – Omaha, NE
Dale & Jackie Goetz – Overland Park
Edna Hamera – Mission Hills

Robert & Cathy Hansen – Kansas City, MO
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Lisa Stickler – Bucyrus
Ray Woods – Independence

2021 AWW is in the works!

— KRISTA DAHLINGER

Plans are being finalized for the 2021 Annual Wildflower Weekend to be held on September 17-18-19. We will gather in southeast Kansas to explore native places near Pittsburg and Galena. We will meet on the campus of Pittsburg State University for the Saturday Annual Meeting and much-awaited silent auction. Save these dates in your calendar and make plans to attend.

All current members will receive an invitation with registration information and the full weekend itinerary in early August. The Annual KNPS Photo Contest will be held online again in 2021, but the rest of the AWW will be in-person with necessary safety and social distancing procedures in place. Make plans to be there and have fun!

CHECK YOUR MAILING LABEL

Want to know the status of your KNPS membership? Check the mailing label on the back of each issue for your membership expiration date.



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Plant A Prairie Gardens Taking Root in Kansas

— PAUL SHOWALTER

The projected return of students to Kansas classrooms has prompted a surge in requests for the KNPS Plant A Prairie garden kit. Thirty-one garden kits were awarded this year for the upcoming fall semester, up from sixteen last year. Prairie gardens will be starting up in towns and cities located in nearly every geological region in the state. (See the sidebar for a full listing of 2021 projects).

The successful applicants also represented an interesting mix of ages, strategies, and goals for their prairie gardens.

“We hope to use this kit as a starting point to create more native plots on our school grounds,” wrote Abbie Herring-Erker, from Haysville West Middle School, near Wichita.

Biology teacher Sarah Tschander of Atchison High School wants to help her students study plant anatomy/physiology, learn a bit of landscaping and gardening, and hopefully use that knowledge in their own homes.”

Caroline Smith of Langston Hughes Elementary in Lawrence wrote: “Our school garden has been neglected for several years, and I would like to bring it back to life while teaching second graders about plant needs, pollination and the importance of native plants.”

These winning applicants were among the eleven high schools, four middle schools, and ten elementary schools enrolled in Plant A Prairie this year. Other kinds of youth programs enrolled included the county library in Johnson City, a nature-themed pre-school in Shawnee, a mental health center in Ottawa, the United Way-AmeriCorps collaboration in Eudora, and a unique community literacy program in Wichita.

Since KNPS started the program last year, Plant A Prairie has enrolled a total of forty-seven projects. The estimated number of children engaged in these activities exceeds 5,000. The garden kits for Kansas teachers and youth leaders contain thirty-two live native plants to fill an 8 x 10 foot garden space. Plants are hardy perennials shipped in mid-September from Taylor Creek Restoration Nurseries in Baldwin City. Plants are hand-selected to match local growing conditions. Each project also receives planting instructions, a wildflower ID poster, a garden sign, links to teaching resources, and expert advice via phone or email.

Full information on Plant A Prairie can be found at (www.kansasnativeplantsociety.org). Next year’s application will be available on the website about April 1, 2022. The enrollment period will close in mid-May; availability of garden kits is limited. Correspondence about the program may be sent to plantaprairie@gmail.com.

Plant A Prairie is underwritten by the Gary and June Kliesen Memorial Fund and other donations.



Comments from Plant A Prairie projects

From Hutchinson: “Graber Elementary has had an outdoor classroom for over 40 years! Each grade has a plot...they plant, water, weed, harvest, and winterize it... Our 'little prairie' is a favorite spot for all of our students.” – *Jessie Ediger, Graber Elementary*

From Salina: Plant A Prairie ... “will be used as a pollinator way-station and will give students an opportunity to create something beautiful to share with the community.” – *Susan Gaskill, Lakewood Middle School*

From Ogden: The project aims to ... “expose students to plants of the prairie, teach identification of those plants and teach basic gardening skills...” – *Davie Atchison, Ogden Elementary*

From Ottawa: “We are a community mental health center... (participants) will be able to correlate gardening with their self-esteem and will develop an understanding of how nature can boost their own mood, as well as help the environment.” – *Tiffany Engelbert, Elizabeth Layton Center*

From Westmoreland: “We have a space near our flag pole that is perfect for this project. This area will become a source of pride for all ages, and teachers, as well!” – *Scott Harshbarger, Westmoreland Elementary*

From Atchison: “As part of the Biology I class, the goal is to teach students about our native ecology in an easily accessible area (just outside the classroom) while creating an eco-friendly landscape to beautify school grounds.” – *Sarah Tschander, Atchison High School*

From Olathe: “Scouts and students will study the garden to see how plants grow and develop, ... and our role in conservation and preservation...” – *Katrina Carey, Cub Scout Pack 3250 and Heatherstone Elementary*

From Richmond: “We will take care of (the prairie garden) on a weekly basis with our hunter safety class. This will allow my hunter safety student to learn about habitat and how important it is...” – *Jason Brown, Central Heights*

2021 PLANT A PRAIRIE GARDEN ROSTER

City	Garden Kit Recipient
Andover	Cottonwood Elementary
Andover	Andover Central High School
Atchison	Atchison High School (2 projects)
Atwood	Rawlins USD 105
Eudora	United Way/Americorps
Fort Scott	Fort Scott High School
Garden City	Florence Wilson Elementary
Garden City	Buffalo Jones Elementary
Hayesville	Hayesville West Middle School
Holton	Jackson Heights High School
Hoyt	Royal Valley High School
Johnson City	Stanton County Library
Lawrence	Langston Hughes Elementary
Leavenworth	Leavenworth High School
Mound City	Jayhawk-Linn FFA
Olathe	Prairie Center Elementary
Olathe	Olathe East High School
Olathe	Olathe West High School
Ottawa	Elizabeth Layton Center
Overland Park	East Antioch Elementary
Overland Park	Shawnee Mission North High School
Richmond	Central Heights
Shawnee	Hocker Grove Middle School
Shawnee	Mill Creek Natureplay
Topeka	Topeka Lutheran School
Westmoreland	Westmoreland Elementary
Wichita	Wichita High School West
Wichita	Kansas School for Effective Learning

Trees for Our AWW

— KEN O'DELL

Many of us will be driving to Pittsburg in southeast Kansas for the 2021 Annual Wildflower Weekend to be held during the weekend of September 17, 18, and 19. The Kansas Forest Service (www.kansasforests.org) has a great list of the champion trees noted in Kansas, and many of these trees are in eastern Kansas. One of those great champions, the water oak (*Quercus nigra*), is on the 600-acre campus at Pittsburg State University. The water oak is not native to Kansas but is native in three adjoining states that meet to form the Ozark Plateau in the southeastern part of the state. The champion water oak at Pitt State is over twelve feet in circumference, fifty-two feet tall, and has a spread of eighty-one feet. Water oak is in the red oak group in the Fagaceae (beech) family. This is a beautiful, strong-growing tree with black acorns (hence the scientific name *nigra*). It has a medium growth rate if you want to plant one at home. I love this tree, and you will also.

If you are driving through Lawrence this summer, you can see the champion hackberry tree (*Celtis occidentalis*) at 725 Elm Street. This champion is sixteen feet in circumference and eighty-five feet tall with a spread of ninety-two feet. I live on a small farm in Miami County and we have a few naturally-forested acres with our house sitting at the edge of the forest. Just inside this area are several strong, towering hackberry trees with circumferences ranging from five to nine feet and their tops close to the sky. One of these giants has a root flare of at least five feet across. Many tiny hackberry seedlings try to grow under the forest tops, and a few of them succeed, but they grow slower than getting rid of a tick bite, and then most of them die. In the nearby prairie, if a hackberry seed germinates, the chance of it succeeding is about zero. There is a hackberry caterpillar that feeds on hackberry leaves on its way to becoming a beautiful butterfly. Sometimes this makes the evening news as these caterpillars eat so much of the foliage. However, the leaves will grow back, so no worry. If you want to hug a tree, this tree will give you permission in many unique ways.

When driving through Emporia, you may want to stop at 818 West 18th Avenue and see the champion Osage orange tree (*Maclura pomifera*). A few years ago, I read the book *Wood Eternal* (the story of Osage Orange, Bois d'Arc, etc) by Fred Tarpley. The fascinated reader will look at the Osage orange as the tree that fenced the prairie and did its fair share to help in the dust bowl days. There is an older, but smaller former champion Osage orange in Olathe in Johnson County.

While in the Olathe (Johnson County) area, you may want to see America’s National Champion and the Kansas Champion soapberry tree (*Sapindus saponaria* var. *drummondii*) located at Ridgeview and 106th Street. This special tree is situated forty feet behind the John Deere sign in front of the office complex. This well-landscaped office complex, located twelve blocks north of the Johnson County Extension Office, has many native plants and trees, and it is obvious that excellent care is given to this champion tree. America’s Champion soapberry is a fantastic tree that has withstood the dust bowl days, extreme droughts, disease, and civilization. Soapberry is also known as western soapberry and Chinaberry. The name *Sapindus* comes from *sapo indicus* or Indian soap. *Saponaria* also indicates soap. The variety *drummondii* is in honor of the botanist Thomas Drummond (1780-1835).

The Kansas Conservation Tree Planting Program offers at least fifteen species of deciduous tree seedlings sold in bundles of twenty-five (all twenty-five are of one species). If you want to plant some small seedlings for a wind break, shade, or to hide or screen an area, this bundle may be for you. It is important when you plant a tree that you talk to the tree, as even the tiny seedlings need to have human companionship. When you see the seedling grow with a burst of energy each year, it will do you much good, and you will love that tree even more. And when you multiply that by a bundle or two or three, you have got a lot of love!

KEN O'DELL PHOTOS



FROM TOP Giant Hackberry between two Giant Bur Oaks in Miami County, KS; National Champion Soapberry tree in Olathe, KS; Osage Orange hedge row in Louisburg, KS; Soapberry fruit in Lemon Park, Pratt, KS



Southeast Kansas Nature Center

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

The nature center staff, one full-time director and one part-time naturalist, host numerous field trips each year from area schools, church groups, assisted living facilities, scout groups, and more. Free programming and activities are offered in a wide range of environmental education topics to these groups and the general public of all ages throughout the year. While building space is limited, we make use of the wonderful Schermerhorn Park to accommodate larger groups through outdoor activities and hiking opportunities. The nature center is also capable of doing off-site programs when visiting the center and park is not an option.

A glimpse of the Ozarks in Schermerhorn Park

Schermerhorn Park is a day-use park (no camping) located just south of Galena and offers a spectacular view of the surrounding Ozark landscape. The city of Galena operates the main portion of the park, twenty-five acres, which includes the playground, pavilions, and picnic areas. The SEK Nature Center Foundation (Friend's Group) purchased ten acres on the east side of the park that feature a rock amphitheater, woodland walking trails, and a view from the bluffs overlooking Shoal Creek. The Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks Public Lands Division operates the Shoal Creek Wildlife Area, which includes most of the creek and gravel bar at the park as well as the riparian habitat just across the creek to the south.

Unlike most streams in Kansas that flow generally from west to east, Shoal Creek starts near Exeter, Missouri, following the Ozark contour west until it reaches the Spring River in Kansas where it heads south to Oklahoma. The creek's flow is aided by numerous seeps and springs, as well as an average rain fall of 40-45 inches to the region each year. Schermerhorn Cave and the surrounding bluffs and hills have Mississippian limestone and flint formed between 325-350 million years ago, the oldest surface rock found in the state. Visitors to the cave might see several fossils in the rocks, such as crinoids and bivalves. The cherty limestone of the region also contains the zinc and lead ores that were once mined in this area.

Biodiversity abounds in SEK

Take a walk on the grounds of Schermerhorn Park and you will find a mix of oak-hickory forest, pockets of tallgrass prairie, and some Ozarkian plant species that lead to an all-around unique experience for Kansas. The dominant tree in the park is the post oak with Shumard's oaks, bitternut hickories, American sycamores,

Blackjack oaks and black walnuts are prevalent in the park's forest. As you walk through the understory, you will find redbuds, white sassafras trees, flowering dogwoods and the occasional northern spicebush, downy serviceberry, and American bladdernut, just to name a few.

On parts of the Roosa Trail, you might see grape vine (several species), black raspberries, blackberries, hogpeanut vines and of course, plenty of eastern poison ivy. Many of the plants found in the park must do well in a rocky forest with thin soil. Some species are strictly Ozark species, and for Kansas, might only be found in the southeast corner of Cherokee County. Examples of these are Robin's plantain, four-leaf milkweed and Ozark trillium. The Grassland Trail features a different array of plants more typical of tallgrass prairies.

More than 2,200 vascular plants are known in Kansas and over half of that number can be found in Cherokee County alone. With diverse vegetation (and more annual precipitation) comes more wildlife diversity, as well. On a morning spring hike through Schermerhorn Park, you might come across eastern chipmunks, little brown skinks, southern leopard frogs, and rough greensnakes, hear the calls of spring peepers or the songs of yellow-throated warblers, and see many different insect species that feed on the local flora and fauna. The park is critical habitat for three species of salamanders that need the cave habitat for survival: cave salamander, long-tailed salamander and grotto salamander. Shoal Creek has more than eighty species of fishes, and seventy-nine species of reptiles and amphibians can be found in Cherokee County. The region is home to at least one-third of the state's threatened, endangered, and species in need of conservation (SINC) species.

Whatever your interest in nature, the Southeast Kansas Nature Center and Schermerhorn Park are sure to please. Groups larger than ten people wanting to visit the nature center are encouraged to call and schedule a time to visit. The staff is happy to schedule a guided nature or wildflower hike, too. Stop by and say HI when you are in the neighborhood. We hope to see you soon!

Southeast Kansas Nature Center hours are Tuesdays-Saturdays 10am-4pm and Sundays 1pm-4pm, or by appointment. The center is closed on Mondays and holidays. **Telephone: (620) 783-5207** **<https://ksoutdoors.com/Southeast-Kansas-Nature-Center>**, **Facebook @SEKNatureCenter**

OPPOSITE PAGE, L TO R Flowering dogwood (*Cornus florida*); Fourleaf milkweed (*Asclepias quadrifolia*), an Ozark specific species, and the first milkweed of the Ozarks to bloom in the spring.

ABOVE, L TO R Robin's Plantain (*Erigeron pulchellus*), another Ozark specific species; the nature center's front room; White Sassafras (*Sassafras albidum*).



ABOVE LEFT Cave salamander (*Eurycea lucifuga*), a Kansas endangered species
ABOVE Schermerhorn Cave
LEFT Ozark trillium (*Trillium viridescens*)



ABOVE Group of kindergarten students examining a pillbug and beetle they saved from being stepped on, on the trail to the cave
LEFT Post oak savanna habitat on a hilltop in the park

JENNIFER RADER PHOTOS

KANSAS NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

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Please complete this form or a photocopy.
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to the Kansas Native Plant Society:

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

A membership to 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.

Kansas Native Plant Society welcomes everyone to join our membership. Read our full Statement of Diversity, Inclusion, and Non-Discrimination Policy on the website, ksnps.org.

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION/RENEWAL FORM

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