



The Green Connection

text by Linda Johnson, photos by Nancy Goulden

I have always been interested in time travel. No one has yet designed a vehicle for such adventure, so I found my own passage to the past through historical research. In keeping with the current trend, I decided to focus on “green” in my journey back to the Kansas Territory to the years 1855-1861.

Through research I found that many of the letters and journals of the emigrants contained vivid descriptions of the natural environment, especially wildflowers and trees. Even territorial newspapers included colorful features on prairie flora. These writings show us the importance of plants to the pioneers. Plants helped make connections between old home and new home.

Familiar plants must have been a welcome sight, providing the new Kansans with reminders of home. In a place where both the natural and political environment were at times harsh, the beauty of flowers and trees gave them pleasure in day-to-day life. Writing about the plants gave them something tangible and recognizable to describe in letters to family.

Miriam Colt settled along the Neosho River in 1856 with her husband and children. In the pocket of her apron, she kept her



Spiderwort
genus *Tradescantia*

treasured diary where she recorded not only notes about the working part of her day, but also about the wildflowers she found near her new home. On May 28, 1856, Miriam described acres of blue Spiderwort [genus *Tradescantia*] and “the sensitive plant,

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Have you renewed your membership in KNPS? Check the first line in your address for your membership expiration date. If the date is past, your membership has expired. To continue receiving the newsletter, please renew now.

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.



Kansas
Native
Plant
Society

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

Plant enthusiasts are always looking for new sources of information about native and naturalized plants. A wealth of books and on-line resources are available to answer even the most obscure botanical questions. One of the most widely accessed on-line resources in North America, with nearly 2 million users per month, is the U.S. Department of Agriculture's PLANTS database (<http://plants.usda.gov/java/>). Developed initially to promote land conservation by providing standardized information about vascular plants, mosses, liverworts, hornworts, and lichens of the U.S. and its territories, PLANTS has expanded to support a wide variety of educational and academic activities. PLANTS includes names, checklists, distributional data, species abstracts, characteristics, images, crop information, automated tools, web links, and references. The database is a collaborative effort of the USDA NRCS National Plant Data Center, two NRCS Information Technology Centers, and hundreds of partners and data contributors—all helping to manage and improve this unique information system.

Several years ago, each of the three botanists on the staff managing PLANTS retired or moved to other positions, and their base of operation was moved from Louisiana to North Carolina. Updates to PLANTS ceased, and shrinking budgets caused

concern that upkeep of the database could be reduced further or abandoned entirely. Fortunately, at a recent meeting, I received very good news about the project. Newly hired Team Leader, Dr. Gerry Moore, reported that PLANTS is once again operational. The three original botanist positions have been filled, and the program has authorization to hire two additional botanists. The staff at PLANTS already is working hard to prioritize their efforts, including the integration of large data sets that have been in their processing queue for years. Among those data are nomenclature and distribution updates for many families of flowering plants, ecological data (photosynthetic pathways and ecotoxicological attributes), and data for interactive keys. PLANTS botanists also will be exploring improvements to the database, such as new distribution maps to better represent native/non-native status, more efficient methods of data exchange with organizations and agencies, and improvements to web site access and functionality.

As a contributor to and user of PLANTS, I look forward to the updates and improvements that are planned. PLANTS is a tremendous resource for members of the public, land managers, conservationists, and scientists. If you aren't already familiar with it, I encourage you to visit the PLANTS web site to explore the wealth of information available there. If you already use PLANTS, you'll definitely want to watch for updates in the coming months.



Landscaping with American Bellflower text and photo by Jeff Hansen

People often ask me "What native plants can I grow in shade?" There aren't a lot to choose from, and most are perennial. But there is one that is an annual, and it's quite showy. It's the American bellflower also known by its scientific name: *Campanulastrum americana*. Previously it was named *Campanula americana*, but was renamed due to its unique flower structure.

It has a columnar inflorescence covered in blue flowers, each with five petals. The plant grows upright, usually with no branching of the stem. It flowers from summer to autumn and is variable with its blooming season. The leaves are simple, and the plants have a milky sap. You'll find it growing naturally in moist rich woodlands and on the edges of woods. Its natural range is within the



American bellflower
Campanulastrum americana

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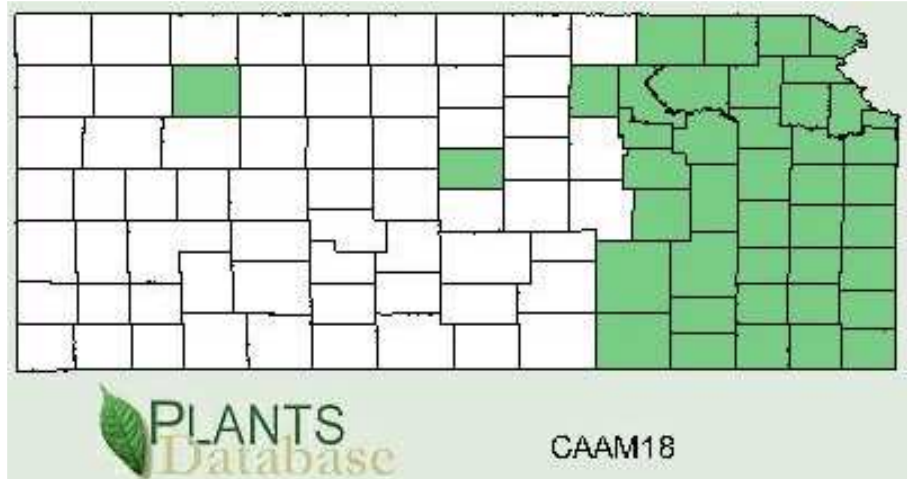


Landscaping - Continued from page 2

eastern third of Kansas (see map) but would grow outside this range given sufficient moisture.

Mine grows readily on the north side of my house as well as in the shade of my redbud and crabapple trees. It doesn't like dry conditions, but average soil moisture is sufficient for growth. The more moisture it receives, the taller the plants will be and the more flowers they will produce.

The principal pollinators are bees. When it is in bloom, there are always numerous bees visiting the flowers. Many people are concerned for the welfare of our pollinators, and this is an excellent choice to encourage their well-being. One plant produces thousands of seeds; so it reseeds readily. I offer the seeds for purchase through my web site: KansasNativePlants.com.



American Bellflower Growing range in Kansas



Virginia Native Plant Society to Return to Kansas

by Linda Wilcox (VNPS) and Nancy Goulden (KNPS); photos by Larry Wilcox

In 2008, a group of plant enthusiasts from the Virginia Native Plant Society decided to make a trip to Kansas to experience the native plants found on the Kansas prairies. VNPS member, Linda Wilcox, explains how the trip came about. "The 2008 trip to Kansas was inspired by one member's interest to visit Kansas because of how different it seemed to be from Virginia. In 2007, after my husband and I made a short visit to the Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve and shared some of our photos,

I was asked by Sally Anderson, the VNPS President, to help plan a trip to Kansas for VNPS members."

Linda continues to share impressions of the 2008 trip, "I can't speak for everyone, but we did see many things that surprised and delighted us all. One of the most interesting contrasts in plants for some of us was the Cobea Penstemon—*Penstemon cobaea*. The flowers of the penstemons we see here in Virginia are much smaller in comparison. Also, seeing the Missouri Evening Primrose—*Oenothera macrocarpa*, opening on the prairie at night was enjoyed by all."

"Kansas and Virginia do share similar genera, but different species. Some species are shared by both, but then the same plants can look different. One that comes to mind is Butterfly Weed—*Asclepias tuberosa*. We have the same plant

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Virginia Native Plant Society at Tallgrass National Preserve



here, but it looks different in color and in form from what we saw in Kansas.”

“I think a lot of the members who participate in a trip like this have a greater interest in keying out plants. It is always a great experience sharing the identification process with a group, and it is a great way to learn.”

Linda also provides some information about the plans for the 2011 trip to Kansas. “VNPS members are looking forward to visiting Kansas this June. We plan on returning to some of the favorite spots from the last trip, plus exploring

some new locations and we look forward to being joined by KNPS members along the way.”

The Virginia group of around 15 members will start off in northeast Kansas in DeSoto; then have approximately eight stops in the Flint Hills and central Kansas. On the visit in 2008, a number of KNPS members joined our Virginia friends for some of their outings. We were very impressed with how knowledgeable they were about the prairie plants and thrilled to find they are just as passionate as we are about native plants and their environments. The VNPS has kindly invited KNPS members to join them for several stops again this year. Below you will find the “Itinerary for Kansas Trip.” Notice that the events that have asterisks are open to KNPS members to join. If you find there are outings in your area, this is a wonderful opportunity that should not be missed.

Virginia Native Plant Society Itinerary for Kansas Trip June 11-18, 2011

Saturday, June 11:

Arrive in Kansas, group to meet at hotel in DeSoto in the afternoon

Evening: 7:00 pm - Group to tour Kill Creek Park *

Sunday, June 12:

9:00 Atkins Prairie Remnant (still looking for a guide for this) *

(We do have some extra time between the Atkins Prairie and Council Grove if anyone could suggest a site) *

3:00 Group to arrive in Council Grove

Evening: Program Planned with speakers

Monday, June 13:

9:00 Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve * (no guide planned), followed by Lunch

1:00 Bus Tour by TPNP guide

Tuesday, June 14:

8:30 Konza Prairie walking tour (guide provided), followed by Lunch

1:30 Konza Prairie riding tour (guide provided)

Wednesday, June 15:

9:00 Meet with Mike Holder and rancher

Lunch possibly at Grand Hotel in Cottonwood Falls

Possible stopover at National Preserve *

Afternoon: Tour Kaw Heritage Trail (no guide planned) *

Thursday, June 16:

9:00 Maxwell Wildlife Preserve Tour, followed by Lunch

2:00 Tour Kanopolis State Park - Horsethief Canyon Trail (guide provided)

Dinner in Lindsborg *

Possibly stop by Coronado Heights on return trip *

Friday, June 17:

Free Day (free day to return to a site or see something new) *

Evening: Pow Wow in Council Grove

Saturday, June 18:

Departure

* Trips open to KNPS members' participation. KNPS members notify Linda at w8n2cwildflowers@cox.net if they would like to join us.

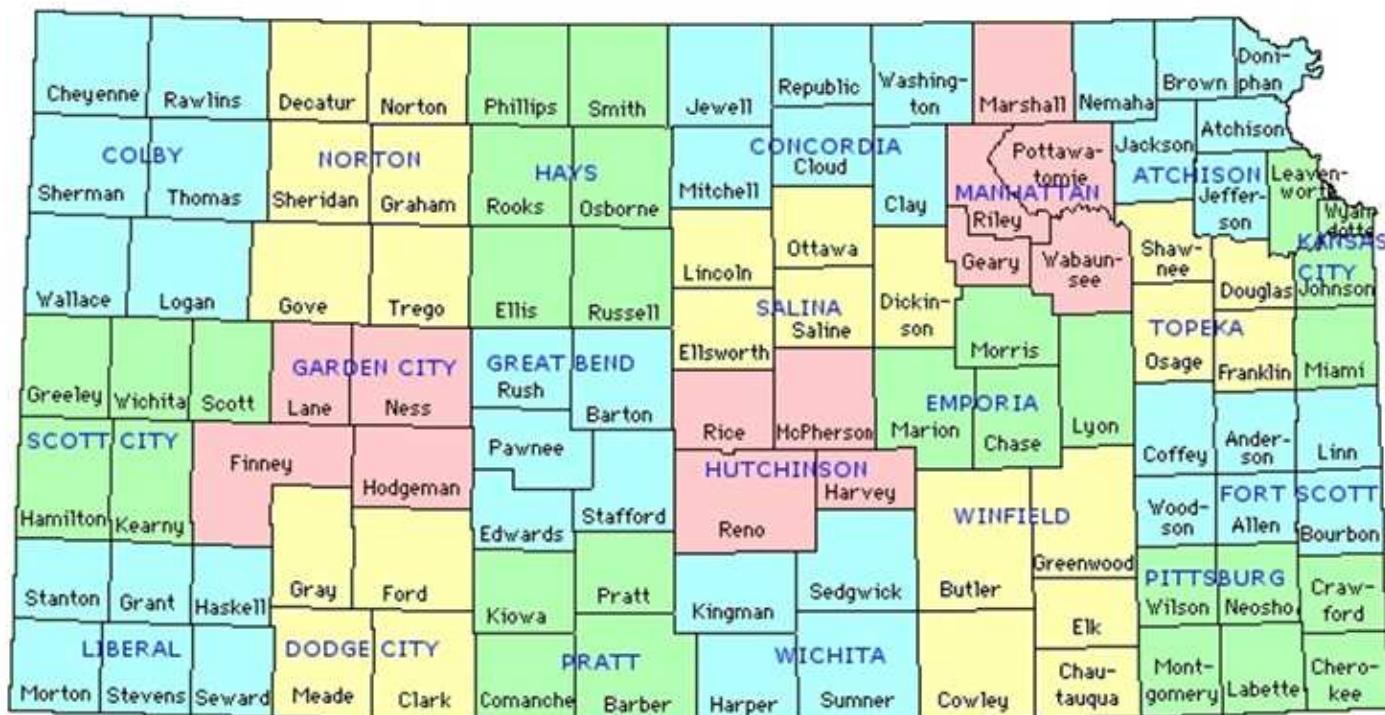


KNPS Membership Regions by Jeff Hansen

Kansas is a large state with 105 counties. As a statewide organization, it's difficult to develop events and membership in all parts of the state. Distance separates many of us. To foster more local events and local involvement, KNPS is developing membership regions. The members in these regions will be guided by KNPS. Each membership region will have a voluntary regional leader, who organizes events and membership in their region.

The main goals of each region are to develop local events, recruit local members, and create a local community of members. We want you, the member, to have local involvement.

Region boundaries were drawn based on population and proximity. Regions were named after the largest city in the region. Each region has a relatively small area to allow local participation in activities.



Kansas Native Plant Society Membership Region Map

We currently have regional leaders representing nine regions. Some of the things a regional leader may choose to do are to organize a planning meeting, a presentation, or a wildflower walk and encourage membership in the organization.

Kansas Native Plant Society Membership Region Leaders

Region	Leader
Hutchinson	Brad Guhr
Hays	Chelsea Juricek
Atchison	Fred and Nancy Coombs
Emporia	Glenn Fell
Kansas City	Ken O'Dell
Wichita	Krista Dahlinger
Salina	Mark Neubrand
Topeka	Patrick Allen Casey
Pittsburg	Steven L. Timme

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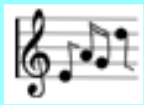


KNPS Membership Regions

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To learn more about the regions visit our website (see link on home page). Visit each individual region page to see past and upcoming events in that region. If you have questions, comments, ideas about these regions; or are interesting in helping in a region, contact Jeff at email@ksnps.org

Ken O'Dell had the first regional meeting with a slide show. He invited master gardeners and others from the Kansas City area. My favorite part of this meeting was when those in attendance made introductions. What an energetic and interesting group of people. I'm so proud to be part of the KNPS.



News Notes

KNPS Memberships at a New High. On March 20th, 2011, KNPS surpassed the 600 paid-memberships milestone. In recent years, we have hovered around 300 paid-members. In addition, we have 74 gratis members. There has been a steady climb in the numbers in the last couple of years. This latest surge is at least partly a response to the formation of the new Membership Regions. For example, Ken O'Dell, leader of the Kansas City Region, through the first regional meeting and promotions brought in a significant number of new members. Another stimulus for membership is the "e-mail group" of 500 members. Not all in that group are also KNPS members, but this is another effective way to reach more people interested in native plants. Yea KNPS!!!

Changes in the KNPS E-mail List. The hosting company of the original KNPS website has disallowed sending more than 100 e-mails at a time because of spam. This has an effect on our "discussion" e-mail list. The earlier list has recently been replaced by a Google group that serves as an e-mail list as well as a repository for all messages sent through the list. This list will now be used by KNPS managers to notify members of events and news. If you have something you want posted, you can contact us at

email@ksnps.org. Become a member of the list so you can receive our weekly event listing (not all events are included in the newsletter, and new ones are added weekly). Visit our website to join (click on "Email list"). All members of the KNPS discussion list have been "migrated" to the KNPS Google group.

June is Kansas Native Plant Appreciation Month! Each year Kansas Native Plant Society makes a formal appeal to the Governor for June to be proclaimed as Kansas Native Plant Appreciation Month. This opportunity promotes greater appreciation for the diversity, value, and beauty of Kansas native plants and their habitats. [www.kansasnativeplantsociety.org]

Update on KNPS and Symphony in the Flint Hills. After five years of KNPS members leading nature hikes at the annual Symphony in the Flint Hills, the two organizations have reached a mutual agreement that KNPS will not participate this year. Our volunteers have enjoyed very much sharing our knowledge and enthusiasm about prairie plants with the symphony visitors and will miss this special occasion. Fortunately there are many other KNPS related-outings, especially in the summer months, where help from KNPS volunteers would be welcome. Take a look at our events list to find hikes and walks in your part of the state and contact those in charge. We are sure you will have a great time.



KNPS TECH CORNER-

Where We Keep You Informed About KNPS Technology Happenings
by Mickey Delfelder

The KNPS website is a great resource if you want to learn more about a wide range of topics dealing with native vegetation. Our "Resources" page, available in the left menu on the front page of our website, has scores of informative articles on "Plant Identification," "Landscaping with Native Plants," "Restoration & Management," "Rangeland Management," "Insects" and "Educational Materials." We even included several booklists on various topics, so get out there and learn. You can access the KNPS website at www.ksnps.org or www.kansasnativeplantsociety.org.

2011 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 16, May 21, June 18:** 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 16:** Shunga Park Bioblitz in Topeka, KS. Volunteer to identify and record all the species of living organisms in the park. This will include plants, fungus, insects, spiders, amphibians, reptiles, fish, birds, and mammals. You may participate in this event for any amount of time from 6am-11pm. This event is co-sponsored by Topeka Audubon Society and Kansas Native Plant Society. Meet at the Felker Park parking lot, 2540 SW Gage Blvd. For more information, see: [www.topekaaudubonsociety.org/activities/shunga-bioblitz] or call Jeff Hansen (785) 806-6917.

April 16: Woodland Wildflower Walk at Wyandotte County Lake Park, Kansas City, KS. Bring your hiking shoes and hit the trail as we take a walk in the woods of Wyandotte County Lake Park in search of spring wildflowers. Meet at Mr. & Mrs. F.L. Schlagle Library to begin our search for Dutchman's breeches, spring beauty and other seasonal wonders, 10am-noon. This program is sponsored by the Kansas City Kansas Public Library, 4051 West Dr. Please call to reserve a spot for this program. Contact: Craig Hensley [chensley@kckpl.org] or (913) 299-2384.

April 22: Celebrate Earth Day Outside With Your Family! Contact us about special events so we may share them on our website, [www.kansasnativeplantsociety.org].

 **April 23:** Kansas Native Plant Society Spring Board Meeting and Outing. The location and time have not been finalized. Please contact KNPS for more information. [email@KSNPS.org] (785) 864-3453

April 23rd & 30th: Missouri Prairie Foundation Spring Plant Sales 7am - noon. Location: City Market, 5th & Walnut, Kansas City, MO. [<http://www.moprairie.org>] (888) 843-6739.

 **May 4:** Woodland Wildflower Walk along Shunga Creek in Topeka, KS at 6pm. A small group of Kansas Native Plant Society members cleared honeysuckle in March. Now we will revisit the site and look for wildflowers. Help explore the area and see the spring wildflowers that we saved from the onslaught of honeysuckle. Your guide will be Jeff Hansen, KNPS Board Member. Meet at the Felker Park (2540 SW Gage Blvd) parking lot at the Tennis Courts off of Gage Blvd. Contact Jeff Hansen [hanjd@cox.net] (785) 806 6917.

 **May 7:** 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: Blackbob Cave Woodland Hike on Private Land, 10-11:30am. Join Kansas Native Plant Society for this unique opportunity to visit a historically significant limestone cave and a large natural spring. The site was important to the Blackbob band of the Shawnee Indians during their time in Kansas. We will see some spring ephemerals among the maturing oak-hickory woodlot. We will carpool from the Overland Park Arboretum (8909 W. 179th St., Overland Park, KS) parking lot. Meet at the northwest corner of the parking lot at 9:30am. Contact information: [email@ksnps.org] (785) 864-3453

 **May 13-16:** 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.

Kansas Area Native Plant Wildflower Events - Continued

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May 14: Woodland Wildflower Walk at Wyandotte County Lake Park, Kansas City, KS. Bring your hiking shoes and hit the trail as we take a walk in the woods of Wyandotte County Lake Park in search of spring wildflowers. Meet at Mr. & Mrs. F.L. Schlagle Library to begin our search for Dutchman's breeches, spring beauty and other seasonal wonders, 2-4pm. This program is sponsored by the Kansas City Kansas Public Library, 4051 West Dr. Please call to reserve a spot for this program. Contact: Craig Hensley [chensley@kckpl.org] or (913) 299-2384.

May 15: Wildflower Plant & Seed Sale at Prairie Park Nature Center, Lawrence, KS, 1-4pm. (785) 832-7980.

 **May 21:** Rock Springs Wildflower Tour. Come and explore the spring wildflowers of the Flint Hills with KNPS guides at Rock Springs 4-H Center near Junction City, Kansas, in Geary County. The fee for the Wildflower tour is \$15 dollars per person, which covers breakfast, refreshments and a hot lunch in the Rock Springs dining hall. Wildflower treasure-hunting will conclude at 2:00. Contact Chelsea Shrack at (785) 257-3551, cshrack@rocksprings.net. [www.rocksprings.net]

May 21: Tree ID Workshop at the Schlagle Environmental Library, Kansas City, KS. Join Lead Education Specialist Craig Hensley for a look at the identification of trees, shrubs and vines of Wyandotte County Lake Park. Meet at the library and plan on spending the majority of the program on the trail as we compare and contrast the various woody plants of the area, 2-4:30pm. This program is sponsored by the Kansas City Kansas Public Library, 4051 West Dr. Please call to reserve a spot for this program. Contact: Craig Hensley [chensley@kckpl.org] or (913) 299-2384.

 **May 22:** Wildflower Walk -- Search for Mead's Milkweed near Pomona, KS. Join Kansas Native Plant Society in exploring this private 12 acre prairie hay meadow. We will help the owner, a KNPS member, see if she has Mead's Milkweed on her property, 1-3pm. We will also see what woodland wildflowers are growing in the adjoining woods. Meet at the corner of K-68 & Main Street in Pomona at 1pm to caravan to the property. This walk will last approximately 2 hours. Contact: Jeff Hansen [email@ksnps.org] or (785) 806-6917.

 **May 28:** 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 car pool 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 4: Spring Wildflower Tour at Maxwell Wildlife Refuge, McPherson County, KS. Board the tram for a tour of the prairie with wildflowers and bison, 10am, or 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 6-10:** Earth Partnership for Schools Summer Institute at Dyck Arboretum of the Plains in Hesston, KS. This 40-hour institute for school teachers and staff will train you in the award-winning Earth Partnership for Schools (EPS) Program that you can share with your students and colleagues for years to come. Learn to engage your students in the process of prairie gardening on school grounds, earn three hours of graduate credit, take home an extensive curriculum, eat good food for a week, and have a fun and meaningful experience at the Dyck Arboretum! Contact Brad Guhr for more information: [bradg@hesston.edu] or (620) 327-8127.

 **June 23:** 8th Annual Grant-Bradbury Prairie Jaunt in Topeka, KS at 6:30pm-dark. Join Kansas Native Plant Society 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. Wear long pants and sturdy shoes. Children are encouraged to come. Jeff Hansen, wildflower expert, will lead the tour. Directions: Take Topeka Blvd south to the University Blvd intersection (stoplight), take a right. Take University west about half a mile-- when the road curves south, you are at the driveway to the park gate. There is a small building at the driveway. Contact Jeff if you plan to attend: [hanjd@cox.net] (785) 806 6917.

 **July 16:** Kansas Native Plant Society Summer Board Meeting and Outing. The location and time have not been finalized. Please contact KNPS for more information. [email@KSNPS.org] (785) 864-3453.

 **September 16-18:** Kansas Native Plant Society's 33rd Annual Wildflower Weekend will be in Lawrence, KS. We will visit natural areas in and around Douglas County. Come enjoy native plants with us in northeast Kansas! The weekend is filled with outings, programs, a silent auction, photo contest, dinner, and socializing. Please contact KNPS for more information. [email@KSNPS.org] (785) 864-3453.



The Green Connection

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[*Schrankia nuttallii*] with its slightly briery running stalk, covered all over with flowers of pink balls dotted with yellow, and its tiny leaves that shrink from the least touch . . .” In June of 1856, Miriam



Cat's Claw Sensitive Brier
Schrankia nuttallii

and her family traveled out onto the prairie in their covered wagon. She wrote, “the prickly pear [*Opuntia macrorhiza*] was growing in luxuriant clumps, ornamented with large yellow flowers dotted with black, which on touching would give sharp intimations of their nature.”



Prickly Pear Cactus
Opuntia macrorhiza

Fifty miles northeast in Osawatimie in the spring of 1856, Sarah Everett wrote home to her sister Jennie, describing the many flowers she had seen. She referred to Spring beauty [*Claytonia virginica*] and wild Sweet William

[*Phlox divaricata*] as “old familiar friends” and included in her list “Indian paint” [*Castilleja coccinea*], a small plant with deep yellow flowers and “a bright red juice in the roots that Indians used to paint their faces.”



Sweet William
Phlox divaricata

Back home in New England, family members and prospective emigrants learned about the physical environment of Kansas from those who had visited or settled there. In 1855, George Walter, an agent for the New York Kansas [sic] League, published an informational pamphlet for people considering a move to the Territory. He wrote about the trees, grasses, and wild fruit he had observed. He listed several tree species, including beech, maple, birch, sassafras, butternut, cottonwood, and coffee bean. For those interested in raising grazing animals, Walter listed Grama [genus *Bouteloua*] (“a nutritive bunch grass”) and Buffalo grass [*Buchloe dactyloides*] (“a fine, rich grass”). He described Kansas as a country abounding with fruit, including pawpaw, persimmon, plums, and grapes. Thomas Wells of Juniata, in letters home to his family in Rhode Island, mentions going “plumming” with neighbors in the summer of 1855. He wrote: “They grow on bushes not much larger than our current [currant?] bushes. They would grow larger, but the prairie fires keep them down.” Gathering fruit proved to be not only a way to supplement the diet, but a social occasion as well.

The writings of Miriam Colt, Thomas Wells, and others give us important insight into the social and political life of the Kansas Territory. These documents also provide a botanical perspective on history with information on plant species that grew 150 years ago in the region and the opportunity to compare those with species present now.

I like to think of it as a “green time line” that connects us through the world of native plants.

Growing Plants from Seed: The Challenging Penstemons

text and photos by Ken O'Dell

Hundreds of species of *Penstemon* cover the United States, and we have our share in Kansas. Mike Haddock's website (www.kswildflower.org) shows six very nice species with wonderful pictures. I have worked with dozens of species of *Penstemon* over the years, and they are not the easiest group of plants to grow from seed. But don't be discouraged because if Mother Nature can germinate them, so can we.

Penstemon has a few common names, and the most frequently used is "Beardtongue." "Penstemon" is also used as a common name. *Penstemon* flowers come in many colors including white, lavender, yellow, blues and reds. There are also many different shades of these colors. Identification is not difficult if the plant is found in flower and with good foliage. With today's gadgets and cameras, I usually take a small inexpensive camera into the field with me and take pictures of the natives; come home and study them and compare them to other photos I have on file.

Most *Penstemon* like full sun, and regular-to-dry, well-drained soil. "Wet feet" are not good for

Penstemon. Deep shade will cause them to die out.

As mentioned above, there are several *Penstemon* species in Kansas. Western Kansas has the beautiful *Penstemon albidus* growing up to 18 inches tall with 5-inch-tall-clusters of white flowers in May, June and into July. According to Mike Haddock, this is the most common *Penstemon* in Kansas.

In far Eastern Kansas, we have several counties with *Penstemon digitalis* growing to 18 inches tall and white flowers in summer. Sometimes you will see that these flowers have a slight pink blush to them, if you look closely. A horticultural selection of *Penstemon digitalis*, called "Husker Red" with darker purplish-bronze foliage, was created and has was promoted by the Perennial Plant Association as the "Perennial Plant of the Year" in 1996. *Penstemon digitalis* is one of the easier *Penstemon* to grow from seed, and this along with attention given to the Husker Red strain have helped all *Penstemon* be looked at as nice perennials to grow.

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Meadow with blooming *Penstemon digitalis*

Growing Plants from Seed: The Challenging Penstemons

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Three years ago I was on some side roads in Bourbon County in the Southeast section of the state, I pulled off the road to examine more closely some tall Penstemon that had lavender flowers. I did not have my camera or any of my books; so I did not know for sure which one it was. I kept thinking it was *Penstemon grandiflorus*. A few years before I had ordered *P. grandiflorus* seed from The Penstemon Society. (www.penstemon.org). My seed germinated and had been sending up nice stalks and flowers. I was sure it was *P. grandiflorus* even though the USDA website at the time did not list *P. grandiflorus* in Bourbon County. (No, I had not been drinking the county's namesake.) I still think it was *P. grandiflorus* but have not been able to find that spot again where they were growing and flowering. Here is a photo showing the *P. grandiflorus* in my dry flower gardens.

Several books and articles tell how to germinate Penstemon seed. My best success is to gather the seed, take a small brick and crush the seed pods gently in the bottom of a container that will hold the seed. A five-gallon-size bucket works well for me. Shake and clean the debris from the seed, and then I choose one of two ways for planting. One is to plant the seed immediately in the field or flower bed where I want it. Since it is a sun-loving plant, I do not cover Penstemon seed very deep and actually just brush over it with my hand after I have worked up and smoothed down the soil.

The second technique for planting is to put the seed in a paper bag or envelope and put it in the freezer for about 3 or 4 months. Then plant it in a pot or tray in a just-above-40-degree-place in light sun or dappled shade for three or four weeks. At that time, move the containers into a warm (above-65-degree area) in some sun, but not so sunny the plants will get scorched during the day. If in doubt, keep the containers in morning sun or full sun during the cool spring, and when it gets hotter give them a bit of shade after 1 or 2 pm. Keep the soil lightly moist and do not let it dry out. Germination will be very irregular and sometimes you will have seed germinating for several months. Prick out the seedling when it gets tall enough to transplant and put in a 4 inch pot to get some size on it and then transplant into the ground in your flower beds. Do not give up on the soil in the pot even if you carry some over for another season. These seed do not get in a hurry to germinate.



Penstemon grandiflora



Ken O'Dell's dry flower garden with penstemon



Book Review: Pioneer Naturalist on the Plains

by David M. Bartholomew
reviewed by Karen Hummel

Pioneer Naturalist on the Plains is a great read for anyone who has a passion for plants, especially for those native plants that live where you live. Early Kansas Pioneer, Elam Bartholomew discovered the plants of the plains and never looked back.

Elam established a homestead near Stockton, Kansas, in 1874, and set about to build a frame home for his bride-to-be, Rachel. He and Rachel were wed in Farmington, Illinois, and took up residence on the homestead in 1876, the year of Custer's last stand. Elam's childhood had been spent in Ohio, and his adolescence in Illinois. He was fascinated with "the difference... in the grasses, wild flowers, other plants, shrubs, and trees" in his new land. He started collecting botanical specimens, logging and preserving them. "He would not be content until names were known for everything growing in the area." His references were textbooks, neighbors, and visitors.

In addition, Elam kept a diary. He wrote nearly daily entries from 1871 to 1934, recording events of his life as a botanist and homesteader. The 5600 pages are preserved in archives at the Kansas State Historical Society in Topeka. Elam's grandson, David, distilled the essence into a book, which is available by special order from Claflin Books and Copies in Manhattan, KS.

In 1885, two professors from Kansas State Agricultural College visited the Bartholomews, to look at Elam's botanical collection and invite him to accompany them on field research in the area. They struck up a friendship, and the professors "inadvertently" left a microscope for Elam, as they departed. This was the start of a partnership, and the Bartholomew farm became a place for agricultural crop experimentation. Professors Plank and Kellerman urged Elam to choose a specialty for his botanical pursuits. Elam chose mycology – the study of fungi and their diseases that impact plants.

In 1889, Elam prepared 100 specimens of parasitic fungi to be sent to Prof Kellerman for

identification. The results were exciting. A number of the specimens were new to science, and one of the species, *Diplodina bartholomi*, was named in his honor.

Elam established a private Herbarium, and the Stockton Academy Herbarium. He provided specimens to the Division of Vegetable Pathology of the USDA, and to a number of universities and botanical gardens. His intent, in part, was to positively identify the specimens. As his reputation grew, there was increased demand for him to provide collections of specimens. He also traveled widely throughout the United States as a lecturer.

In 1901, Elam embarked on a subscription program, where customers could subscribe for collections of 100 distinct and correctly documented and packaged fungi samples. Each set of 100 formed a "century." This enterprise lasted until 1917. Elam's diary entry reveals a secret to its longevity: "In the past 15 years, we have put up 2527 copies of this publication comprising 252,700 labeled packets and the good wife has been a constant and faithful assistant in this great work, doing much of it with her own hands, unaided."

Ted Barkley, curator of the Herbarium at Kansas State from 1961-1998, and editor and contributor to *Flora of the Great Plains* projects, sums up Elam's outstanding contributions. "Early on, Elam grasped the significance of fungi as the cause of many plant diseases, and he set about collecting and correctly identifying those that are parasitic on grasses and other plants. It was not long before he clearly knew more about fungi, particularly the plant-parasitic fungi, than anyone else did for this part of the world."

"Any mycological herbarium or laboratory with pretensions to the ability to identify fungi and sort out the correct names for them must either possess or have access to Elam's work. His work retains its utility in large part because of its thoroughness and accuracy. From our time, we biologists look back at him in admiration."



Pussytoes - *Antennaria neglecta*

text by Lorraine J. Kaufman, artwork by Joyce Fent



Pussytoes
Antennaria neglecta

They are as cute as their name in their gray-white, furry hats when they appear in early April, and I distinctly remember my introduction to this charming species, *Antennaria neglecta*. I was about nine years old when I tagged along with my older brother

and some of his friends to climb Elk Horn Nob, the highest hill in our area. Three miles from our home, it beckoned us with its aura of mystery from tales of Indian scouts and early pioneers.

As we trudged up that steeper-than-I-thought hillside that warm April day, we encountered blooming Midland fawn lilies and numerous

colonies of white, furry plants. What were they? "Indian tobacco". Roy declared with authority. "Indians smoked 'em." I looked with admiration into his dancing brown eyes and believed him, impressed with this apparent knowledge from one not known for his scholarly pursuits. I was more impressed however, (and quite delighted) that Roy had responded to this little sister- tag-along tomboy.

Since then I have learned that pussytoes are perennials that grow in full sun in the prairies in the eastern third of Kansas. Their foliage stays green in winter and provides food for rabbits, quail and deer. The male and female plants grow in separate colonies. The female plant produces three or four soft, white, woolly flowerheads about one-third inch long that resemble toes. The single whitish head of the male plant is less furry, has protruding brown stamens and gives the impression it is sporting a beard. The female plants mature at about twelve inches and the seed is dispersed by the wind on small tufts of white, woolly hair.

These cute little plants would add interest to an early spring rock garden without the fear of frost.

Membership News

NEW MEMBERS FROM 12/30/10 TO 3/20/11

Susan Appel - Leawood
Netti Biggs - Overland Park
Tayler Blodgett - Lawrence
Jessica Casey - Hays
Berry Clemens - Lawrence
Jan Curry - Overland Park
Steve Davis - Wichita
Dale & Dodi Dickson - Shawnee
Lynn Fogle - Overland Park
Aubrey Guenther - Leavenworth
Marjorye S. Heeney - Topeka
Craig Hensley - Shawnee
Linda Hoffman - Paola
Carolyn Koehn - Burns
Lafarge/Mark Metcalf - Fredonia

Lenora Larson - Paola
Mike Morrow - Topeka
Constance K. Murphy - Spring Hill
Collyn & Phyllis Peterson - Louisburg
Rock Springs 4-H Center - Junction City
Steven Rolfsmeier - Chadron, NE
Danielle Saurenman - Wichita
Marilyn J. Sharkey - Oskaloosa
Teresa Shields - Overland Park
Julie Stielstra - Lyons, IL
Stephanie Turner - Oakland, CA
The Villages/W. Clement Stone Nature Center - Topeka
Sandy White - Shirley, IN
Roselyn Wiedmer - Troy
Brad Williamson - Olathe
Rob Wimhurst - Shawnee
Kathy Wolfe - Salina

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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.

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