



Minnesota Plant Press

The Minnesota Native Plant Society Newsletter

Volume 25 Number 1

Fall 2005

Monthly meetings

Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge
Visitor Center, 3815 American Blvd. East
Bloomington, MN 55425-1600
952-854-5900

6:30 p.m. — Building east door opens
6:30 p.m. — Refreshments,
information, Room A
7 – 9 p.m. — Program, society business
7:30 p.m. — Building door is locked
9:00 p.m. — Building closes

Programs

The MNPS meets the first Thursday in October, November, December, February, March, April, May, and June. Check the Web site for more program information.

Nov. 3: “Plant Communities of the Mississippi River Gorge,” by Karen Schik, ecologist with Friends of the Mississippi River and MNPS board member. **Seed Exchange.** Labels should include your name, common and scientific names of plant, seed origin (nursery name if plant was purchased, or city/county location) and habitat (prairie, savanna, wetland, woodland).

Dec. 1: “Moonwort Madness, Part II,” by Cindy Johnson-Groh, biologist, Gustavus Adolphus College. This is an update of her 1999 program on this interesting Minnesota fern.

Feb. 2: To be announced

New MNPS Web site

www.mnps.org
e-mail: contact@mnps.org

MNPS Listserve

Send a message that includes the word “subscribe” or “unsubscribe” and your name in the body of the message to: mn-natpl-request@stolaf.edu

Wild lupine has key role in saving endangered Karner blue butterfly

Wild lupine, *Lupinus perennis*, is the only plant eaten by the caterpillars of the endangered Karner blue butterfly, *Lycaeides melissa samuelis*. Efforts to preserve the Karner blue are underway in Minnesota, which is at the western edge of the butterfly’s traditional range. Today it can be found in two valleys in the Whitewater Wildlife Management Area near Winona. Until the early 1980s, a colony of Karner blues also existed alongside a gravel road in Cedar Creek Natural History Area in Anoka County. Then the wild lupine was scraped off by a grader during a road improvement project, and the butterflies vanished.

The topside of the male Karner blue is silvery or dark blue with narrow black margins; the female’s topside is grayish brown to blue, with irregular bands of orange crescents inside the narrow black border. They were named for the vanished upstate New York hamlet of Karner, where millions of the butterflies once flocked. The inch-wide insects were once plentiful in a narrow swath of oak savanna and pine barrens in 12 states from Maine to Minnesota and in Canada. They are now found in isolated pockets in seven states. Wisconsin is a leader in the preservation efforts.

In Minnesota, current efforts to preserve the Karner blue are focused on restoring oak savannas that have open patches in tree canopies and sandy soil where wild lupine thrives. Jaime Edwards, a nongame wildlife specialist with the Minnesota DNR, has been working in the Whitewater area for about five years, endeavoring to recreate the habitat that Karner blues prefer. She said that Minnesota may have started its conservation efforts too late. “We’re really playing catch-up to get the habitat in shape before we lose the butterfly,” she said.

Minnesota preservation efforts began in the 1990s, when Cynthia Lane studied the Karner blue for four years while pursuing a doctorate in conservation biology at the University of Minnesota. She learned the insect’s life cycle, which includes two generations a year, and the varied habitat of sun, partial shade and dense shade that it requires.

For additional information, go to www.fws.gov/Midwest/Endangered/ or to Maja Beckstrom’s article in the Sept. 25, 2005, St. Paul Pioneer Press.

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Plant identification system on CD-ROM is available to members at discounted price

by Ron Huber

A new expert identification system for Minnesota plants is available on CD-ROM and may be purchased at a discount by members of the Minnesota Native Plant Society.

Flora ID Northwest, Minnesota is an interactive key developed by Bruce Barnes that allows the user to identify a plant using any number of different characteristics, such as leaves, stem, inflorescence, flower or fruit. It has color photos of almost all Minnesota native and introduced naturalized plant species. Detailed descriptions and geographic ranges for each species are included, as well as some line drawings. For a description and demo, go to: www.xidservices.com/FID

The CDs (for Windows 98 through XP) are available for purchase, by members only, through the Minnesota Native Plant Society for \$70. The regular price is \$100. A portion of the proceeds will support the society.

A similar key for plants in the Great Plains covers a much broader area. MNPS members may purchase it for \$150. Multiple-site licenses are also available. The CDs are published by Flora ID Northwest, LLC.

Both the Minnesota and Great Plains Flora ID keys will be available at MNPS regular monthly meetings through Treasurer Ron Huber. Both CDs are also available through the mail, but add \$2 each for shipping. For mail order, contact Ron at huber033@umn.edu or huber@mnnps.org

Bruce Barnes suggests that purchasers contact him at

flora@ucinet.com about once a year for any updates, which he will send free.

Winter botany field trip is Nov. 12 at Maplewood

by Ken Arndt

Join MNPS President Jason Husveth and MNPS Board Member Ken Arndt for a winter botany field trip at the Maplewood Nature Center Saturday, Nov. 12. We will be leading a walk through the nature center grounds to learn about the many native wildflowers, grasses, sedges, trees, and shrubs and will focus on the winter aspects of vegetation, natural communities, and vegetation associations.

The field trip will start at 9 a.m. and go until noon. We will meet inside at the nature center, where we will learn about the history of the Maplewood Nature Center and briefly talk about the ins and outs of winter botany before we venture outside.

Depending on the time and amount of ground we cover at the nature center, we may drive to Jim's Prairie, which is located a short distance from Maplewood Nature Center. Many consider Jim's Prairie to be the finest wet prairie in Ramsey County. Although only five acres in size, it has more than 150 different plants throughout the preserve.

For sign-up information and directions, go to our Web site at www.mnnps.org or e-mail Jason at president@mnnps.org to sign up in advance. Space will be limited to 30 society members, so sign up today to reserve your spot.

MNPS Board of Directors

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Prairie plants on the Web

Plants in Prairie Communities is a University of Minnesota Web site. It contains information compiled by MNPS member Roy Robison, Donald B. White, and Mary H. Meyer about three typical prairie communities — wet, mesic, and dry — and the most significant plants found in each of them. Go to www.extension.umn.edu/distribution/horticulture/DG3238.html

From the president

Welcome back to all of our members to the beginning of another membership year of the Minnesota Native Plant Society. I am pleased to report that we continue to grow in membership and as an organization, thanks to an active board of directors and the contributions of our membership.

What a fantastic summer it has been to be a member of the Minnesota Native Plant Society! Our members really stepped up and offered some exceptional opportunities to visit natural communities throughout the state. On behalf of the society, we thank Hannah Texler, Paul Bockenstedt (MNPS) and the Iowa Native Plant Society, Karen Schik, Barb Delaney, and Ken Arndt for leading outings to Minnesota's Scientific and Natural Areas and destinations on the Minnesota-Iowa border. Thanks to Doug Mensing for his effective service as field trip coordinator in 2005, and to Ken Arndt and Mary Brown for serving as coordinators for 2006.

Our board and officers are working on some interesting projects to move the society forward in 2006. Planning for the spring 2006 symposium is underway. It is pointing to a location south of the Twin Cities, addressing the ecology of vegetation in the Driftless Area of southeastern Minnesota.

The board is working on designing and printing our very first Native Plant Society T-shirt in the coming months, which should serve to increase our exposure within our communities and social circles. Scott Milburn and Jason Husveth will be participating in workshops through the Science Museum of Minnesota (funded by the National Science Foundation) to document the Society's 23-year history and to preserve the many archival materials on loan from our many members. We plan to incorporate much of this archival information into the

society's new Web site (www.mnps.org) and have this information more readily available for the society's 25th anniversary in 2007. Shirley Mah Kooyman and Linda Huhn are investigating the possibility of establishing a society scholarship to benefit Minnesota students of botany, ecology, and related areas of study.

We always welcome the ideas of our members, and we invite all of our membership to participate in the many programs, field trips, and special events we are planning for the coming year. Please feel free to send your ideas and suggestions to me at president@mnps.org. I look forward to seeing you all at the November native seed exchange, winter field trips, and future meetings.

Jason Husveth, president, Minnesota Native Plant Society

Master Naturalists

The first Minnesota Master Naturalist Program is underway. This volunteer program is similar to the Minnesota Master Gardener Program. Three locally taught 40-hour courses are: Big Woods, Big Rivers, started this fall; Prairies and Potholes, starting in 2006; Northwoods, Great Lakes, starting in 2007. Additional information is at www.minnesotamasternaturalist.org

Grey Cloud Dunes SNA

2005 marked the first year of the society's stewardship role at Grey Cloud Dunes SNA in Cottage Grove. In cooperation with the DNR, we hosted three work events and one prairie hike. The prairie hike was the best-attended event. Four hard-core souls worked on honeysuckle removal in February, about 15 people stacked brush and cut large trees with hand saws in March, and four intrepid volunteers pulled spotted knapweed on a "slightly warm" evening in July. Many thanks to all members who helped. We hope to increase our participation in 2006.

Plant Lore

by Thor Kommedahl

What is moonseed?

Moonseed, also called Canada moonseed, is *Menispermum canadense*, a member of the moonseed family.

How did it get its name?

The bluish-black fruits (drupes) each contain a single, crescent moon-shaped, flat seed, hence the name *Menispermum*, which means "moonseed" from the Greek words.

What does the plant look like?

It is a climbing, woody vine up to 12 feet long. Leaves have three to seven shallow lobes, and the petiole is attached to the blade above the leaf base. The flowers are small and whitish. Some have mistakenly identified moonseed as wild grape because of the resemblances of leaves, fruits, and vines. Leaves are more obtuse than grape leaves. Remember, wild grape vines have tendrils.

Where does it grow?

It is native to Minnesota in rich, moist thickets and along stream banks.

Is it edible or medicinal?

The yellow root extract once served as a substitute for sarsaparilla in soft drinks. Early on, it was used as a diuretic and laxative and even listed then as an official drug in the *US Pharmacopeia*.

But is it poisonous?

Yes. Fruits and seeds are poisonous. Cases of poisoning, with some fatalities, have been reported from children confusing moonseed with wild grapes (which are edible). The poison is an alkaloid that affects the nervous system. *Menispermum* is in the family of plants that produce tubocurarine, the chief ingredient of curare — the South American arrow poison.

Would anyone actually cultivate this plant?

Yes, it is cultivated outdoors for its foliage. It can be propagated from seeds and by cuttings.

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