



Minnesota Plant Press

The Minnesota Native Plant Society Newsletter

Volume 23 Number 1

Fall 2003

Monthly meetings

Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge
Visitor Center, 3815 East 80th St.
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
9:30 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. 6: “Old Growth Trees, a Seed Source for Reforestation and Propagation,” by Lee Frelich, University of Minnesota Department of Forest Resources; **Seed Exchange.**

Dec. 4: “Minnesota Wild Rice,” its biology, traditional harvest and cultural significance, by Darren Vogt. He is with the 1854 Authority, which is in charge of wild rice management in the 1854 Ceded Territory, the Arrowhead region of Minnesota. **Plant of the Month:** to be announced.

Feb. 5: “Native Plants of Papua, New Guinea,” by George Weiblen, Department of Plant Biology, University of Minnesota.

MNPS Web site

<http://www.stolaf.edu/depts/biology/mnps>
e-mail: MNPS@HotPOP.com

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

Projects are restoring wetlands and prairies

Prairie and wetland restoration projects are underway in many Minnesota locations, but we hear mainly of losses of natural areas. From time to time news of some of the new or successful projects will be included in the Minnesota Plant Press. Is there a project in your area that would interest MNPS members? If there is, contact Gerry Drewry, editor, at 651-463-8006, or gdrewry@infionline.net

Olmsted County

by Joel Dunnette

If you wonder if you can make a difference, I have an example for you. Six years ago, with aid of a DNR Conservation Partners grant, we developed a “local origin” seed production nursery in Chester Woods Park in Olmsted County. It took many hours of effort, many collaborators and volunteers to establish. Now the nursery is mature and producing seed for harvest. The parks department has built their own harvester for seeds of grasses and major forbs. To provide diversity, we still need to hand-harvest many species of forbs. So we have volunteers and parks staff hand-collecting seed each summer and fall.

We had already begun developing a prairie management program with Olmsted County Parks — including prescribed burning and brush cutting. The seed production fits well into this program. To date, Parks has planted more than 30 acres to prairie, adding to the about 100 natural acres. Production is going so well that the county is starting to use the seed for converting lawn areas to prairie around the administration buildings.

We planted a seed of an idea and nurtured it for several years. Now it is growing on its own and bearing fruit.

Dakota County

by Karen Schik

A 50-acre wet meadow and wet prairie restoration will be taking place this fall at the Empire Wastewater Treatment Plant north of Farmington. With a grant from Metropolitan Council, Friends of the Mississippi River and Applied Ecological Services are working on restoring an existing agricultural field to its pre-settlement condition. Located in Empire Township near the Vermillion River, this project

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From the president

Greetings, Minnesota Native Plant Society members! I would like to introduce myself and provide some background regarding my experience with MNPS and my botanical interests. I have been an active member of the Minnesota Native Plant Society since 1999. I came to Minnesota from my native state of New Jersey to pursue a master's degree in 1995. I joined the Minnesota Native Plant Society in 1999 to learn more about the native flora of the state and to meet other native plant enthusiasts. In the fall of 2000, I was appointed to the MNPS board and have been organizing and leading several field trips each year. I am a professional botanist and landscape ecologist and spend much of my time in the field conducting natural resource inventories and rare plant surveys in Minnesota and throughout the midwestern states.

The society is fortunate to have such an enthusiastic and experienced board and a wealth of knowledge among our diverse membership. I hope to increase the exposure of the MNPS among the public, to increase the diversity and size of our membership, and to offer many additional opportunities outside of our monthly meetings to learn about our native flora. I wish that I had learned more about the MNPS when I was in graduate school. For this reason, I want to make a concerted effort to extend a welcome to college students and increase their involvement with the society.

It should be no surprise that I consider our society field trips as one of the best ways to experience and learn about our native flora. I have had the privilege of working closely with board members Doug Mensing, Dan Mielke, and Janet Larson in organizing and leading field trips to some of our favorite natural areas. We intend to continue offering quality field trips. We want you to join us on our tramps and to consider leading a trip to your favorite spot. MNPS member Scott Milburn and I will be co-leading a winter botany field trip at the Minnesota Valley Wildlife Refuge on Nov. 15. Join us in learning more about identifying native plants in winter.

Planning for the March 2004 symposium is underway, and I am excited about the prospects for this annual event. The symposium will focus on the ecology and native plants of woodlands and savannas in Minnesota. We have a great facility lined up and are currently working on identifying speakers and focused topics. I want to encourage all members who are interested in helping with planning the 2004 symposium to contact the planning chairs – Karen Schik, Shirley Mah Kooyman, and myself. We are eager to hear your ideas, and we can always use any help you can give.

Finally, we want to develop new opportunities for MNPS members to get involved with natural resources and native plants throughout the state. I will be working with board members such as Dianne Plunkett Latham and Janet Larson to create a core group of society volunteers. We may adopt a DNR Scientific and Natural Area, or help organizations such as Great River Greening and the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area to restore and manage native plant communities. If you are interested in becoming an active volunteer member, please contact me or other board members.

I consider it an honor and a privilege to serve as the president of our society. I will strive to represent the interests of our board and all of our members, and to continue the excellent work of those who have served before me. I look forward to meeting all of you at our meetings, our symposium, and future field trips.

Jason Husveth, President

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Restorations

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will improve water quality and reduce runoff to the river while providing wildlife habitat and connectivity to other natural areas.

Wet meadows are one of the wetland types most likely to be impacted by development projects and least likely to be restored by mitigation projects. Wetland mitigation projects typically create deeper emergent marsh wetlands. Wet meadows have become increasingly rare across the state, so it will be a treat to see a sizable one restored. This project also provides a link in an important greenway corridor across Rosemount that connects the Vermillion River with the Mississippi River. Eventually, the Met Council hopes to make this site available to the public for birding and wildlife viewing.

A 30-acre wet meadow and wet prairie restoration is also underway this fall at Lock and Dam No. 2, in Hastings. Friends of the Mississippi River is working with the City of Hastings to establish native vegetation at a former industrial site that used to be occupied by numerous petroleum tanks. The tanks were removed in 1995, most of the property was donated to the city, and it is now known as Hastings River Flats Park. The city has been working to improve the property and restore its natural features for public enjoyment and education. An interpretive center and other facilities are part of a long-term site plan.

Equal Protection

The MNPS board has endorsed a California NPS campaign for equal protection of plant species under the federal Endangered Species Act. The ESA protects listed animals anywhere they live, but most endangered plant species are protected only on land under federal jurisdiction. The campaign's goal is to raise public awareness of this discrepancy in federal law.

Symposium to be March 27

The 2004 Native Plant Society Symposium has been scheduled for Saturday, March 27, at the Bunker Hills Activity Center in Coon Rapids. The topic will be savanna and woodland ecology — the dominant historic plant communities of the metropolitan area.

We will explore details about these communities, their geologic origins, current threats, research and restoration efforts, and much more. The Bunker Hills building is surrounded by recent native prairie and savanna restorations that may provide an opportunity for exploration. Watch the newsletter and Web site for more information.

Members of the symposium committee are Karen Schik, chair, Shirley Mah Kooyman, and Jason Husveth.

Fall Plant Sale?

Various means of raising money were discussed at the Sept. 4 MNPS Board meeting, as a \$1,000 deficit is projected for 2003/04 if current project funding levels are sustained.

One suggestion was to have a plant sale in September. This sale would not be as extensive as the spring sale. Plants that are left over could be taken home by the grower, or they would be donated to a public park restoration project. Before MNPS attempts a fall plant sale we would like to hear from the members.

1. Would you be interested in purchasing native plants in the fall?

2. Would you be likely to have any native plants to donate to such a sale if it were held in September?

Please contact Dianne Plunkett Latham with your response. Call her at 952-941-3542, send an e-mail to PlunkettDi@mn.rr.com or write: Dianne Plunkett Latham, 7013 Comanche Ct., Edina MN 55439.

Plant Lore

by Thor Kommedahl

What is Culver's-root?

Culver's-root, or Culver's-physic, is *Veronicastrum virginicum*, in the snapdragon family.

How did it get its name?

It was once named *Veronica virginica*, but the genus name was changed to *Veronicastrum*; the suffix *-astrum* means false, so this is a "false veronica." It was named for St. Veronica who was reputed to have wiped the sweat off of Christ's face. The roots contain a powerful laxative and emetic substance, hence the name. Culver or Culvert was said to have used it in his medical practice in Massachusetts.

What does the plant look like?

It is a native perennial, about two to five feet tall, with leaves in whorls of three to seven around the stem leading to terminal spike-like panicles of tiny, usually white, tube-like flowers that bloom from June to September.

Where does it grow?

Culver's-root grows in almost all counties in the state in moist meadows, thickets, and woods.

Does it have any medicinal uses?

Early colonists learned its uses from Indians. The Seneca Indians, for example, used the root as a purgative. Dried roots are used. Fresh roots are violently laxative. Cotton Mather's daughter in 1716 had tuberculosis, and Mather specially requested Culver's-root as a treatment (not appropriate for a lung ailment). She died soon after.

Seed exchange is Nov. 6

The annual exchange of native plant seeds will be held Nov. 6. Seeds should be in individual envelopes and labeled with the common and scientific names, place of collection, original location of the seed source, if known, and type of habitat. Dave Crawford is chair of the exchange.

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