



# Minnesota Plant Press

The Minnesota Native Plant Society Newsletter

Volume 24 Number 1

Fall 2004

## 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  
9:00 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. 4: “Biological Control of Invasive Plants in Minnesota,”** by Luke Skinner, DNR Coordinator for Purple Loosestrife Program. **Seed exchange. Put seeds of native plants in small packets, labeled with common and botanical names and source of seeds.**

**Dec. 2: “Habitat Selection of Grassland and Woodland Birds,”** by Tom Cooper, wildlife biologist, Minnesota Waterfowl Association. **Plant-of-the-Month: *Viola lanceolata*,** by Scott Milburn.

**Feb. 3:** To be determined

**March 3: “Wetland Restoration at Pioneer Park in Anoka County,”** by Jason Husveth, Critical Connections Ecological Services, Inc.

## 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](mailto:mn-natpl-request@stolaf.edu)

# MNPS awards lifetime membership to botanist Dr. R. H. Mohlenbrock

by Scott A. Milburn

The board of the Minnesota Native Plant Society recently awarded famed Illinois botanist Dr. Robert H. Mohlenbrock and his wife Beverly lifetime memberships in the society in recognition of Bob’s contributions to the botanical sciences.

Bob grew up in Murphysboro, a rural southern Illinois town located near Southern Illinois University (SIU) in Carbondale. During his youth, he had little interest in the subject of biology. However, during his junior year at Murphysboro Township High School, Bob apprehensively signed up for his first course in biology. He was fortunate to have as his biology teacher that year (1947) Miss E. Ester Smith, whom Bob credits for opening his eyes to an entirely different world. Bob describes Miss Smith as being very dedicated to the subject of teaching, encouraging the students to work in her lab after school, and taking them on field trips over weekends and during the summer months. Dr. Mohlenbrock and six other cohorts under the tutelage of Miss Smith went on to receive doctoral degrees in either botany or zoology and to teach at major university institutions. Bob went on to dedicate his book on *Ferns* from the *Illustrated Flora of Illinois* series to Miss Smith, acknowledging her as the person “who first instilled within the author a love for nature.”

Dr. Mohlenbrock received his Ph.D. from Washington University (St. Louis) in 1957 and immediately joined the botany faculty at SIU. He taught for 34 years, serving as chairman of the Botany Department for 16 years and as major professor for 90 masters and doctoral students. A number of these students also went on to have very successful careers. They include Gerould Wilhelm, author of *Plants of the Chicago Region*; Tom Elias, director of the U.S. National Arboretum and author of *Complete Guide to the Trees of North America*; and Larry Stritch, chief botanist, U.S. Forest Service. Dr. Mohlenbrock received many academic honors, has published nearly 50 books and 500 scientific papers, and has served as chairman of the North American Endangered Species Committee for the International Union for the Conservation of Nature for 14 years. He also writes a series, “*This Land*,” which he started in

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## From The President

A warm fall welcome to all Minnesota Native Plant Society members! I am pleased to report that the society continues to grow with new members, and new programs and services for our membership. Over the summer months, our board of directors and many dedicated members have been very committed to improving the society, developing new ideas, and planning future programs, field trips, and symposia.

I'd like to thank Dianne Plunkett Latham, Linda Huhn, and member volunteers for assisting at the Minnesota Horticultural Society's native grasses display at the State Fair. They spread word of our mission and brought in members.

Karen Schik, Doug Mensing, Scott Milburn and Shirley Kooyman are planning our next symposium, on April 16, on Bogs and Fens of Minnesota. We are all looking forward to another fantastic day of scientific talks, networking, and socializing. Linda Huhn continues to plan excellent programs for the monthly meetings. Doug Mensing and I will lead several field trips.

This September, the board unanimously approved the development of a new society Web site, to be located at [www.mnnps.org](http://www.mnnps.org). Over the next year, the site will be developed to include information on current society programs, symposia, field trips, and a wealth of archival information.

Of course, all of these efforts are to provide you, the member, with more opportunities to learn about, experience, and enjoy Minnesota's native flora and natural communities. We hope to see all of you at upcoming events, and we always welcome your comments and suggestions.

*Jason Husveth, president*

## New MNPS Web site

Scott Milburn and Jason Husveth are constructing a new Web site at [www.mnnps.org](http://www.mnnps.org). The new site contains a link to the old site.

## 2005 symposium to be on bogs and fens

Mark your calendars for the 2005 MNPS annual symposium, "*Bogs and Fens: Minnesota's Mysterious Mires*." It will be held Saturday, April 16, 2005, at the Arboretum. Watch for more details.

## Can you help complete the society's archives?

The MNPS is now 24 years old. As we prepare for our 25th anniversary, we are assembling and organizing an archival collection of documents and information. Much of this material will be posted on the new Web site (under construction) and stored electronically on CD-ROM/DVD.

Were you an early member of the society, or do you know someone who was? Would you be willing to donate or loan materials for the archives? Loaned items will be returned, undamaged, after they have been scanned.

Materials that we need include:

- Minnesota Plant Press newsletters from the first issue through Vol. 7, 1988;
- Symposium brochures;
- Program handouts;
- Old MNPS brochures;
- Newspaper clippings.

If you have any of these items, or other mementos, please contact Jason Husveth at [ccesinc.com](mailto:ccesinc.com). He will tell you if your material will fill one of the gaps in the archives.

## A gift for the future

Consider giving a MNPS membership as a gift. Our mission of conservation and education regarding our botanical heritage will make your gift go a long way. Dues are: Individual or family, \$15; Full-time student or senior, \$8; Institution, \$20; Donor, \$25.

## MNPS Board of Directors

**President:** Jason Husveth,  
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**Vice-President:** Scott Milburn,  
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**Treasurer:** David Johnson,  
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# Plant Lore

by Thor Kommedahl

## What is leatherwood?

Leatherwood is *Dirca palustris* in the mezereum family, a small family of shrubs with an acrid, tough, and fibrous bark. It is the only member of this family native to Minnesota.

## What do its names mean?

*Dirca* is named for Dirce, wife of Lycus, who after her brutal murder, changed into the fountain Dirce in Thebes (Greece). *Palustris* means "of swamps." Another name is wicopy, a Cree name for the inner bark of basswood. Because thongs were made from the bark, it was called leatherwood.

## What does the plant look like?

It is a yellowish, largely-branching shrub from 3 to 6 feet tall. The wood is white, soft, and brittle. The bark is remarkably tough and fibrous. Leaves are alternate and more or less elliptical. Note the jointed twigs. Flowers are honey yellow, pendant, and give rise to clusters of 3-4 green, yellowish, or reddish drupes, each with large seeds.

## Where do the plants grow?

In Minnesota, shrubs are found in rich woods near streams, in springy woods, or in swamps; hence the name *palustris*.

## Does it have medicinal properties?

American Indians used the plant to treat toothache and drank bark tea as a laxative. However, contact with bark causes severe blisters and sores. The fruits, if eaten, cause violent vomiting, stupor, and vertigo.

## Does it have any practical uses?

American Indians used the flexible shoots to make baskets and the bark for rope, thongs, bowstrings, and fish lines. Deer and moose graze on foliage and twigs.

# Study of genetic diversity will help restorations

by Kristine Moncada, graduate student, Applied Plant Sciences Program, University of Minnesota  
*This is an abstract of her talk at the April 1, 2004, MNPS meeting.*

Genetic diversity of native plants is an important biological property to study, particularly as it relates to restoration. By analyzing the genetics of a natural population, we are able to determine patterns of relatedness. These patterns give us clues of what plants are adapted to what sites. In restoration, we can then choose seeds from which area or zone would be most appropriate to that location.

The goal of restoration is to establish self-sustaining populations that have the capacity for future adaptation. By discovering the patterns of variation, we can then more closely emulate naturally occurring populations to ensure long-term success for a restoration.

My research is funded by the Minnesota Department of Transportation to aid in developing guidelines for seed collection for their restoration projects. In this project, I am studying the genetics of four native species: big bluestem (*Andropogon gerardii*), purple prairie clover (*Dalea purpurea*), prairie cordgrass (*Spartina pectinata*), and Joe-pye weed (*Eupatorium maculatum*). I have collected these species throughout their range within Minnesota.

Through analyzing the variation at the DNA level, we hope to find the patterns of natural diversity. We can then be able to develop seed transfer zones, which are geographical regions in which individuals of a native species can be transferred with no negative effects on the vigor of the population. It is important to know what seed is best for a restoration project. It can determine the success or failure of long-term plant establishment.

## Dr. Mohlenbrock

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1984, for *Natural History Magazine*. These articles describe important natural areas in North America. Dr. Mohlenbrock is best known for his series of the *Illustrated Flora of Illinois*. The project was started in 1960, with the objective of publishing a complete illustrated account of every plant occurring in Illinois. To date, 16 volumes have been published or are in process. This remarkable series is extremely valuable to the Midwestern field botanist. He is currently working on a three-volume work dealing with the *Asteraceae* of Illinois and a four-volume set of places to visit within the National Forest system.

Since his retirement from SIU, Bob and Beverly travel. He teaches wetland plant identification courses across the country. These classes fill a void in what has become a recent trend in the academic world, an absence of biological field courses. I first met Bob by taking one of his wetland plant identification courses in Chicago a few years ago. He recently taught a field course in the Twin Cities, focusing on grasses, sedges, and rushes, and he will be back again next June to teach a class on wetland plant identification.

## Learn to identify plants in winter on Nov. 13 field trip

Jason Husveth will lead a winter botany field trip at the Tamarack Nature Center in White Bear Twp., Ramsey County, Saturday, Nov. 13, from 9 a.m. to noon. He will focus on the identification of wildflowers, trees, and shrubs from persistent winter characteristics. Register early at [jhusveth@ccesinc.com](mailto:jhusveth@ccesinc.com). Space is limited to 30 people. Details will be posted at [www.mnnps.org](http://www.mnnps.org).



# What we saw on field trips

by Doug Mensing

The MNPS sponsored two spring field trips in 2004, participated in Minnesota's first Bio-Blitz, and co-sponsored one field trip over the summer.

Spring was welcomed by approximately 18 native plant enthusiasts who camped for the weekend or just joined the group for day hikes in and around Whitewater State Park over the weekend of May 7-9. Participants enjoyed the lush and diverse wildflowers of southeastern Minnesota at this special time of year. Several rare plants were also seen in their wild environments.

On May 22, approximately 20 participants met to hike and botanize at Louisville Swamp. Prairies, savannas, wetlands, floodplain forests, and woodlands were among the native habitats we explored, identifying species as we went. As with last year, new records of threatened kittentails were identified near the trail. High water added to the excitement as we waded across a flooded berm. It was enjoyable to see the benefits of restoration efforts. Bloodroot and other native species were growing in areas recently cleared of buckthorn and in areas that recently experienced prescribed burns.

Minnesota's first Bio-Blitz was held on June 11-12 at Tamarack Nature Center. This was a 24-hour "blitz" to identify as many living things within the nature center as possible. 707 species were identified (insects, mammals, birds, etc.), including 277 plant species (many contributed by MNPS members who surveyed portions of the park). Thanks to all who contributed to this important inventory of biodiversity.

On Aug. 28, the MNPS collaborated with the Cedar Lake Park Association to host an educational hike in this Minneapolis park. Keith Prussing, CLPA president, led approximately 16 participants on a tour, conveying the history of the park area and the restoration efforts that have been going on there for over a decade. The restored prairies were seen in their prime-season color. We witnessed results that can emerge from active, concerned citizens.

## Humane Society applies Think Native grant to new memorial garden

by Dianne Plunkett Latham

The Wright County Humane Society has sent a letter of thanks for the MNPS \$200 Think Native grant. The money was applied to their Memorial Garden, on which they worked all summer. Their objective was to be ready for their fall festival Oct. 10.

By that time they anticipated having the southeast corner of the garden completed. This area includes natural pathways, two flowerbeds and the lawn area around them. They expect to plant the native grasses and the grass area around the wall, plus native pond plants before Oct. 31. The other beds will be developed and memorial plaques installed in the spring.

The Wright County Humane Society invites MNPS members to tour the garden. Call Eva Forcier at 320-963-4991 or Paula Savage at 763-479-1918.

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## Minnesota Native Plant Society Member Registration

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (W) \_\_\_\_\_ (H) \_\_\_\_\_ E-Mail \_\_\_\_\_

Membership category (New \_\_\_\_\_ Renewal \_\_\_\_\_)

Individual	\$15	Senior (62 or over, or retired)	\$ 8
Family (2 or more related persons at same address)	\$15	Student (full time)	\$ 8
Institution	\$20	Donor	\$25

Please fill in this form and check the appropriate membership category. Your check should be made payable to the Minnesota Native Plant Society. Mail the completed form and your check to the Minnesota Native Plant Society, University of Minnesota, 250 Biological Sciences Center, 1445 Gortner Ave., St. Paul, MN 55108.

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