
Washington Native Plant Society

South Sound Chapter

Summer 2001



Meeting Highlights

As many of you may recall, last November the Native Plant Society invited Miranda Wecker, Director for Columbia Pacific Resources Center, to come and be a guest speaker at our monthly meetings. Miranda gave a very interesting and informative talk about research being conducted on *Prokelisia marginata*, a possible bio-control agent for *Spartina alterniflora* at Willapa Bay. The results were encouraging but Miranda ended her talk by leaving the group with an unanswered question. How well will *Prokelisia marginata* survive the winter season? Recently your newsletter editor contacted Miranda to see just how the *Prokelisia* were doing. Here is an update from Miranda Wecker.

As with populations in its native range, a small proportion of the *Prokelisia marginata* that we released into the field in October 2000 did survive the winter. Substantial winter mortality is observed in its native range. We began mass rearing additional insects for release in late winter in our Long Beach greenhouse. Our target was to rear 100,000 for release by June 2001. We exceeded that target by about 50,000. In mid May, we began to transfer these insects into field cages at our 3 established sites in Willapa Bay as well as directly into the field. Our greenhouse reared populations are being released in stages, as they reach a level of maturity that increases the odds of survival. Our team has continued to collect insect demography and plant performance data at the established monitoring sites which include release sites as well as control sites. They have been tracking changes in the surrounding insect communities, making some interesting observations about the increase in spider populations in *Spartina* marshes. Greenhouse experiments last year showed that several spiders in the *Spartina* marshes do eat *Prokelisia*. The remarkable fecundity of *Prokelisia* -- three generations per summer-- gives grounds for hope that predation by spiders may not turn out to be a significant deterrent. Our team has developed a research work plan that includes studies of direct and indirect ecological effects of the release of *Prokelisia*, techniques for improving the efficacy of the bio-control program, and strategies for avoiding the resurgence of insect resistant *Spartina*.

In February Diane Doss, Professor of Botany at South Puget Sound Community College, gave a very enjoyable presentation on the flora of our region. Her talk touched on adaptations of our native flora to the climate of this region as well as a little bit of plant chemistry. Members were treated to a great slide show and Diane shared stories of some very interesting finds in the plant world by her students. For members who were unable to attend, one slide showed a pair of students holding a very large leaf from a big leaf maple (*Acer macrophyllum*).

In May students studying under Frederica Bowcutt, at The Evergreen State College, presented their student projects. From the canopies of the Costa Rican rainforest to a history of chocolate (focus was on the plant responsible for chocolate), members were treated to a lively evening of talks and question & answer sessions with the different project groups. Each group was well informed and did a great job in presenting their work.

Unfortunately your newsletter editor was unable to attend the monthly chapter meetings in March and April. However, I was informed that both Frederica Bowcutt and Kevin Head gave great presentations on their respective subjects!

Meetings start again in October. We will probably have our "open forum" meeting again with a pot-luck in December, so start getting your slides in order. We need to start filling our speaker schedule. Please contact Perry Lund if you have any suggestions or would like to give a talk at one of the monthly meetings.

Upcoming Field Trips

Annual Field Monitoring Walk

Scatter Creek Wildlife Area – Saturday, July 14th.

Our annual trip to monitor weeds in parking lots and along the designated horse trail, especially new introductions. We also will see the summer-blooming prairie flowers, maybe learn to distinguish the leaves of the two prairie goldenrods and white-top aster. Meet at 10 a.m. at the parking lot of the South Unit, at the end of Guava Rd near 180th Ave. For background information, see Carol Piening's report of a spring trip, and Liz Tanke's article on how we can help stop the spread of invasive weeds, which is in the Spring Douglasia. Cars should have a Department of Fish & Wildlife access sticker (\$10). For sign-up and carpool arrangements, which may include sharing the parking cost, call Kathy Raettig, 360-956-1269.

Additional Prairie Walks

Join volunteers from The Nature Conservancy on Saturdays at 10:00 a.m. for two hour prairie walks. Call Thurston County for direction and to register for walk at 360-786-5595.

- Mima Mounds - June 30th
- Glacial Heritage Preserve – June 23rd & July 14th
- Scatter Creek Wildlife Area – July 7th

Conservation

If you contacted your state legislators about protection for native plant habitats, thank you.

Comments were made on behalf of WNPS at a public forum which solicited suggestions for a master plan being prepared for Fort Steilacoom Park, now to be managed jointly by Pierce County Parks and the City of Lakewood. This was the site of our 1988-1989 transplant of Idaho fescue and prairie wildflowers salvaged from a development site in Lakewood. Residents who regularly walk in the park, and are concerned about too much development, are meeting on June 22 at 7 p.m. at the Lake wood Library (Wildaire Rd SW off Gravelly Lake Dr. SW), to form an Association to Preserve Natural Areas in the Park. Natural areas to these people include anything no yet built upon, paved, or made into ballfields. Included are the oak woodland with remnant and transplanted prairie flowers, as well as a piece of second-growth douglas fir with a variety of shade-loving plants. Anyone interested in the park's natural areas may attend, as this is a regional park.

Volunteer Opportunities

Seed Collection and plantings at Mt. Rainier

Seeds are expected to ripen earlier at Mountain Rainier NP. We likely will begin picking in August and continue in early September. Subject to weather conditions, most dates will be during the week, but may include some Saturdays. We expect to work in both Paradise and Sunrise areas.

Coordinator for the trips will be Mary Fries, 253-272-9192, assisted by Lila Muller, 360-570-8296. Call one of us, or write Mary at 620 North C St, Tacoma, WA 98403, to let us know when you can be available, and we will place you on our calling lists.

The greenhouse at Mt. Rainier is bursting at the seams with plants which need to be transplanted before July planting season. If you would like to volunteer to help with this growing experience please call them. They prefer M-F but will come in on Saturday if necessary. Call the green house at (360)569-2211 ex. 6170. Lila Muller will be going some days, so if interested in carpooling call me at (360)570-8296 Thanks

Weed Removal

Tacoma's Swan Creek Park has a population of *Lathyrus torreyi*, a state-listed threatened plant which is being overrun by *Geranium robertianum* (herb Robert). If you would like to help pull it, or take charge of the attack, call Mary Fries.

Monthly Workdays at Glacial Heritage

For the last several years, volunteers have been coming out to Glacial Heritage on the second Saturday of every month to help with prairie restoration efforts. Through continued hard work and dedication volunteers and The Nature Conservancy have helped to save this thousand acre prairie from being lost to scotch broom and other invasive plants. There is always a need for volunteers. If interested please contact Lisa Younger, volunteer coordinator for The Nature Conservancy at 206-343-4344 ext 331 or lyounger@tnc.org

Local Native Plant Gardens

Volunteers needed for summer maintenance at native plant gardens at the following locations:

- Garfield Elementary School
- McKenny Elementary School
- Green Cove Basin
- San Francisco St. Bakery

For more information or to sign up, please call Erica Guttman with the Native Plant Salvage Project at 360-704-7785.

Vegetation Monitoring

People for Puget Sound is exploring the possibility of doing an estuarine restoration project with the Capitol Land Trust next spring, and would need expert volunteers to monitor vegetation for us. If interested please contact Tom Dean, Restoration Coordinator at 206-382-7007 or you can visit their website at www.pugetsound.org

News and Other Items of Interest

Hell from the Passenger Seat

It started innocently enough. My sister Mary gave my husband Mark “Gardening with Native Plants of the Pacific Northwest”. Next thing I knew he was in bed with Arthur R Kruckeberg! The book of course. The book became his constant companion. Soon we went to the source, MSK Nursery. We met Mareen Kruckeberg and Mark asked, again innocently enough, “Where can we get these wonderful plants, they aren’t in any nurseries?” Mareen replied, “You have to go down there”. I exclaimed “to the Siskiyou?” That October we left our Seattle home with our three-year-old son Fitz, in a car seat he hated, headed on our first seed-hunting trip to the mythic Siskiyou Mountains. Narrow, serpentine roads with 5,000 foot drops on my side of the car. I closed my eyes a lot. When I opened them again we were in Happy Camp CA. A hot dusty 108° with no camp in sight and two of us definitely not happy.

Little did I know that was the beginning of our ten-year journey to Fairmeadow Nursery. Mark soon filled our tiny back yard in Ballard with seedling Sadler Oak, *Lithocarpus densiflorus* var. *echinoides* and dwarf *Umbellularia*. We needed more space for plants so we bought a small farm in Grays Harbor County. About a year and a half ago we decided to share our love of native plants with others. Mary, the one who started it all with her innocent gift, Mark, Fitz and I moved to Olympia and opened a lovely retail space at our new home 3110 Libby Road. Our “water wise and nature friendly plants” bring our customers and us a bit of heaven. Not bad for a “trip from hell”.

by Lila Muller, Past Co-Chair, current volunteer contact person

News from the Field

April 27, 2001, Scatter Creek Wildlife Area, Thurston County, Washington

Scatter Creek Wildlife Area is one of a handful of Puget Sound prairies that are still reasonably intact. For the last several years, WNPS has been monitoring plant distribution (natives and weeds) on the prairie, and participating in a Department of Fish and Wildlife-sponsored advisory committee that discusses how to balance the interests of hunters, horseback riders, bird watchers, botanists, dog-trainers and assorted passers-by who use the area. Following the well-marked two-track horse trail around the perimeter makes for a pleasant and interesting 1-2 hour walk.

On April 27, I did just that. It was a wonderful time to be out on the prairie. The camas was just coming in to bloom while tall buttercup and prairie violets were abundant. The scotch broom and oat grass, which dominate some stretches of the trail, were biding their time for warmer weather and longer days (The trail was purposely routed with the intent of disturbing as little intact prairie as possible). I even found a chocolate lily hiding under the skirts of a Douglas fir. Aside from being a pleasant walk and a chance to admire some prairie flowers, the south unit of Scatter Creek provides some interesting lessons in disturbance. Part of the area has been farmed (as witnessed by the barn and farmhouse on the premises), but parts of the prairie remain relatively undisturbed. It is interesting to see how the effects of disturbance have created stretches of the path contain a higher proportion of native plants versus stretches dominated by weeds. Much of the discussion among advisory committee members has been about how to manage the uses for which the area was created (hunting and dog-training) while still supporting, and enhancing, the habitat that makes it useful for those purposes and home to prairie-loving native species.

If you're interested in more information about Scatter Creek, contact Carol Piening at 360-352-3395 or caroloreric@thurston.com, or Mary Fries (who really knows what she's talking about) at 253-272-9192.

Carol Piening

Job Opportunity

Dear fellow native plant fan,

Due to a lack of response, SNP is extending the application deadline and upping the starting wage range for their open nursery crew leader position. Details below. Please feel free to pass this on to anyone you think might be interested.

Thanks, Susan

Crew Leader Needed for Sound Native Plants.
Application deadline - open until filled.

We are looking for someone to supervise the nursery crew for all operations including:

- Plant propagating and transplanting
- Seed and cutting collection at sites in Thurston County
- Maintaining plant stock
- Preventing and controlling disease
- Maintaining and improving nursery facilities (including irrigation system)
- Shipping plant orders

The crew leader will assist the nursery manager with the following:

- Hiring and training crew
- Setting priorities, creating work schedules, ordering supplies, and record keeping
- Inventorying stock
- Creating propagation plans

Required experience/qualifications:

- Strong leadership and supervisory ability
- Experience training and supervising crews
- Substantial nursery experience
- Ability to identify Western Washington native plants
- Willingness to work closely with others, cooperating and collaborating
- Ability to organize and prioritize crew work schedules

Desired experience/qualifications:

- Irrigation system repair and maintenance, carpentry, and general maintenance skills
- Plant pathology knowledge
- Good record keeping skills
- Small business experience
- Conflict resolution skills

Sound Native Plants is a wholesale nursery on the west side of Olympia. We grow containerized native plants for environmental restoration projects in the Puget Sound region. We use an Integrated Pest Management approach to disease control. This is a permanent position, scheduled to begin in early July. Hours estimated at 30-40 hours per week. Starting pay rate is \$10.00 - \$12.00/hr DOQ. Sound Native Plants is an equal opportunity employer. We do not discriminate based on gender, race, color, national origin, sexual orientation, marital status, religion, age, disability, or veteran status. We work hard, have fun, and cooperate. To apply, mail a resume that includes job history with names and phone numbers of previous employers to: Sound Native Plants, PO Box 7505, Olympia, WA, 98507 or sessnp@compuserve.com. Position is open until filled. (Date posted 6/1/01)

Contacts

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