



NATIONAL WILDFLOWER RESEARCH CENTER

wildflower

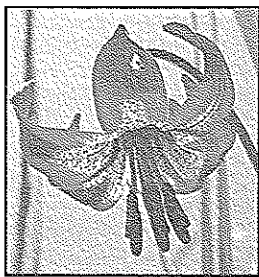
July/August 1996

Volume 13, Number 4

Education Director's Report:

THE WORTH OF A NATIVE PLANT

Dave Imper



WESTERN LILY
(*Lilium occidentale*)

What comes to mind when you hear the phrase,

"endangered species?" If you are like most folks, your first thought is probably of a Bengal tiger or perhaps a giant panda. Undoubtedly, the image is not of the western lily, a nodding red beauty growing in isolated pockets on the extreme northern coast of California.

As humans, we are generally more attracted to creatures we can relate to, creatures wildlife biologists refer to as "charismatic mega-vertebrates." Some biologists even joke about the "survival of the cutest" phenomenon. It's natural to be enamored of (or at least aware of) a grizzly bear or whooping crane and oblivious to a tiny Shasta salamander or a whorled pogonia (one of our rarest orchids, surviving in small numbers in the Northeast).

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The Pros and Cons of Using Rare Native Plants

Maria Urice
Resource Botanist

Primrose monkey flower's short, leafy stems and delicate, yellow blossoms create a useful and attractive groundcover; what western Montana gardener could resist? And what Vermont landscape designer wouldn't want to use Culver's root, with its candleabra-like flower heads, in a woodland edge design? How could an Oklahoman, naturalizing a dry, rocky field, pass up the splash of red that royal catchfly adds to a landscape?

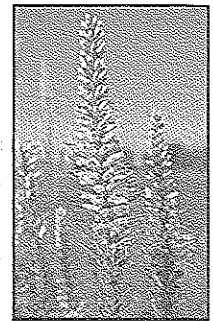
These three native wildflowers are

commercially available, yet their use in the above situations raises serious ethical, if not legal, questions.

These are state-listed endangered plants – primrose monkey flower in Montana, Culver's root in Vermont, and royal catchfly in Oklahoma.

Rare plants have long been sought

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CULVER'S ROOT
(*Veronicastrum virginicum*)

Prairie Restorations, Inc.

COMING . . .

Joseph Hammer
Director of Visitor Services

One way the Wildflower Center increases awareness of its mission is through the use of product licensing and royalty agreements with manufacturers and publishers.

The Center has had a number of these agreements – with major manufacturers of such items as fine china, porcelain sculptures, wallpaper and fabrics, as well as postcard books and gift wrap. The Center provides technical expertise in the

TO A STORE NEAR YOU

creative process, authenticates native plant species, assists with ideas, and licenses the use of the Center's name and logo. The finished product becomes part of the company's regular line available for sale to stores across the country. In return for its participation, the Center receives a royalty or contribution based on the item's sales volume.

The Center currently has a licensing

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Director's Report

There are nearly 1,000 species of plants and animals listed as threatened or endangered in the United States. Of these, about 130 are birds or mammals, with the vast majority being reptiles, amphibians, fish, insects, spiders, and other invertebrates. *In the United States today, more than 400 species of plants are at risk of extinction.*

Does the idea of an endangered plant surprise you? Why should we care about a little-known native plant called the Missouri bladderpod?

The loss of one native plant species can cause the extinction of 30 insect species which depend on it for food or shelter. These insects may be the pollinators of other plants or food for song

birds, reptiles, fish, or other animals (which may become food for our favored charismatic mega-vertebrates).

Although there are almost 80,000 species of edible plants worldwide, we use fewer than 20 to produce nearly all the world's food. Losing one undiscovered food source is a grave loss. The vast majority of medicines we use on a regular basis have their origins in the natural world, many from native plants. Are we willing to give up the possibility of a cure for cancer or AIDS by allowing the extinction of plant species we know so little about?

All species, represent unique genetic combinations which, if lost, can never be created again. *Losing one*

species is a loss to the Earth and to us all.

Native plants are beautiful to photograph, paint, and talk about. The loss of a single species is a great aesthetic loss for all humankind. Some brilliant, bold species like the western lily may even hold a special place in our hearts similar to that held by our native bears, bighorn sheep, and whooping cranes.

The web of life is complex. Who among us has the wisdom to choose a bear, over a beetle, over a bladderpod?



Julie Barrett Heffington, is the Education Director of the National Wildflower Research Center

The National Wildflower Research Center is a nonprofit research and educational organization committed to the preservation and reestablishment of native wildflowers, grasses, shrubs, trees, and vines in planned landscapes.

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New Membership

Levels Now
in Effect

To serve the growing diversity of Wildflower Center membership better, we have reorganized membership levels. Your annual membership still includes all the great benefits you are accustomed to: free admission to the Wildflower Center, the bimonthly newsletter, a 10% discount in *Wild Ideas: The Store* and the catalog, and discounts on Clearing-house information. However, you now have more membership level choices.

The \$25 Individual Membership is perfect for a single person or a couple – you and a guest receive free Center admission plus all the other benefits. With the \$35 Household Membership, you and your immediate household receive free admission to the Center

(plus all the other benefits).

Benefits increase for higher membership levels, and the Membership Office staff will be happy to explain all the other available options. You can reach the Membership Office at (512) 292-4200 Monday through Friday, from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. (Central Time).

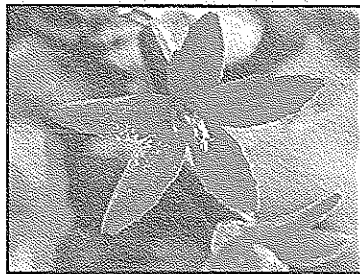
Tributes Grow Wildflowers

Wildflower Center members have been dedicated supporters of the Tribute Program. Honoring a loved one or making a personal remembrance through a gift to the Center signals your commitment to our native flora. Please use the attached envelope for your Tribute gift, or for further information call the Development Office at (512) 292-4200.

by gardeners with a passion for growing the unusual. Creators of natural landscapes and restorationists seek rare plants to add authenticity and diversity to projects. Because of consumer demand, nurseries often grow and sell many state-listed endangered and threatened plants. In most states, however, the propagation, distribution, and use of these plants is regulated by law. Generally designed to protect existing rare plant populations, these laws vary from state to state and can have a significant effect on growers, landscapers, and gardeners working with rare native plant species.

Why Not Plant A Rare Species?

When a rare species becomes a popular landscape plant, natural populations become vulnerable in a number of ways:



Eric Menges

ROYAL CATCHFLY
(*Silene regia*)

Wild Collection

To meet the demand for difficult-to-propagate native species, large numbers of wild plants are dug from natural populations. This wild collection has long been a serious plant conservation issue as it contributes to the depletion of a species and the degradation of the species' habitat. Though less obvious than the effects of collecting individual plants, over-collecting seed may also impact a natural plant stand by reducing its potential for regeneration.

New Populations

Successfully planting rare species creates new populations which, if not closely monitored, might be mistaken for natural populations. This, in turn, may jeopardize the legal protection of genetically pure, natural stands and the habitats in which they grow.

Genetic Pollution

The genetics in rare plant populations are as rare as the plants themselves. These locally adapted genotypes have taken hundreds, perhaps thousands, of years to evolve, and provide the key for many questions relating to the species. If species derived from non-local genotypes are planted near natural populations of the same rare species, hybridization of the two genotypes creates "genetic pollution," destroying the value of the genetics in the natural stand.

Can Planting Rare Species Help?

Despite the above complications, planting rare species in planned landscapes can be beneficial to a rare species in many ways:



Prairie Restorations, Inc.

CULVER'S ROOT
(*Veronicastrum virginicum*)

Educational Value

One of the greatest benefits of using rare plants in natural landscapes and gardens is the potential for educa-

tion. As people become more familiar with rare species, they develop a better understanding of the issues related to the conservation of these species.

New Populations

Obviously, the existence of several separate populations reduces the risk of species extinction. Even if a rare plant is not in imminent danger of extinction, it is worthwhile to gather propagation, establishment, and other cultural information. This knowledge, obtained from successful new populations, can be used in a variety of applications, most importantly in recovery efforts.

Gene Flow

In certain situations, natural populations may be enhanced or even saved by introduction of new genetics from local ecotype plant material. This is particularly true when habitat destruction isolates and reduces the size of a population to such a degree that gene flow and genetic diversity is lacking. While there are differing opinions as to what makes a plant ecotype "local," in general this applies to ecotypes from plants within a 50 - 200 mile radius.

Clearly, there are positive and negative aspects to using rare plants. Most state policies are designed to maximize the advantages and minimize the disadvantages through various permitting systems. Consumers can do their part by learning about their state's rare plants and rare plant policies, by becoming educated about plant conservation issues, and by purchasing rare plant materials from local nurseries who are aware of rare plant ethics and laws.

COMING . . . continued from page 1

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contract with Abbeville Press, publisher of Mrs. Johnson's book, *Wildflowers Across America*, and its spinoff products. With the help of our education staff, Time-Life Books recently published *Wildflowers* as part of its *Complete Gardener* series. These products provide thousands of users with information about, and a greater appreciation for, native plants.

We are pleased that Ashton-Drake Galleries, one of the premier manufacturers of collectible dolls, recently introduced a collection of wildflower dolls in partnership with the Wildflower Center. Bette Castro's *The Wildflower*, a poetry book which brings royalties to the Center, is available through Fulcrum Publishing.

The Wildflower Center plans to join a number of other national nonprofit organizations, such as the Environmental Defense Fund and the American Cancer Society, as a participant in the Cards for a Cause campaign. Proceeds from the sales of these notecards help support the Center's mission and education programs.

Product licensing is an excellent way for the Center to spread the word about all the benefits of native plants and raise extra funds for our educational programs. Be sure to look for these products in your area stores.

Northeast

Washington Crossing, PA: *Wetland Plant Identification*, July 17, *Summer Wildflower Walk*, August 24, Contact: Bowman's Hill Wildflower Preserve Association, Box 103, Washington Crossing, PA 18977, (215) 862-2924.

Atlantic Coast

Stevenson, MD: *Fifth Annual Native Plant Seminar*, August 24, Contact: Irvine Natural Science Center, 8400 Greenspring Ave., Stevenson, MD 21153, (410) 484-2413.

Midwest

Gray Summit, MO: *Morning Prairie Walk*, July 6 & July 20, Contact: Shaw Arboretum, Box 38, Gray Summit, MO 63039, (314) 451-0850.

Southeast

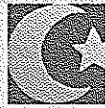
Athens, GA: *Using Natural Dyes*, July 9, *A Day of Wild Edibles*, August 10, Contact: The State Botanical Garden of Georgia, 2450 S. Milledge Ave., Athens, GA 30605, (706) 542-1244.

West

Kalispell, MT: *Wildflowers of the Eastern Slopes*, July 10 - 11, *Glaciers to Glacier Lilies: Geology and Plant Ecology of Glacier*, July 29 - 31, *Wild Medicinal Herbs II*, August 4, Contact: The Glacier Institute, Box 7457, Kalispell, MT 59904, (406) 755-1211.

Canada

Hamilton, Ontario: *Sow and Grow Children's Program*, Thursdays, July 4 - August 8, Contact: Royal Botanical Gardens, Box 399, Hamilton, Ontario L8N 3H8, (905) 527-1158.



Wildflower Serenade



The Wildflower Serenade Series continues Sunday, August 11, with a concert under the stars in the Center's Courtyard featuring the Geezinslaws. Bring your family, a blanket, and a picnic dinner and enjoy some of the best live music in Austin! For more information, call the Special Events Office at (512) 292-4200.



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- ✿ *Wild Ideas: The Store*, call (512) 292-4300
- ✿ General Information, call (512) 292-4100

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