

# MANZANITA

NEWSLETTER OF THE KANE  
COUNTY CHAPTER OF THE  
UTAH NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

December 2005 News

## Upcoming Events

December Monthly Meeting: Tuesday, December 6: Sex in the Garden by Dr. Carolyn Shelton. Despite the risqué title, Carolyn assures us that her presentation will be about how plants reproduce via their flowers and pollinators (though this still sounds a lot like the birds and the bees to me). Just to be on the safe side, no one under 17 will be allowed to attend without a parent or legal guardian. The meeting will be at 7 PM in the public meeting room of the BLM Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument (between the Holiday Inn and new truck stop). As always, the meeting is open to the public and will be followed by desserts and general socialization.

January 2006 Meeting: Monday, January 9: Adding Color to Garden Design. Our January speaker will be Allysia Angus, Landscape Architect/Planner/Jackolyn of All-Trades at the Escalante office of the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument. The meeting will be held on a Monday instead of our normal Tuesday evening to accommodate those members who are participating in the Master Gardener's course this winter. Allysia will discuss designing landscaping and gardens with an eye towards the color of flowers and foliage at different seasons of the year. Look for more details in the next edition.

## Announcements

2006 Master Gardener's Class: A new session of the Master's Gardener's course will begin in January 2006, meeting on Tuesdays and Thursday nights. For more information, contact Kathy Walls (jwalls@kanab.net) or Larry Baer (Baersden@kanab.net).



*Above: Cronquist's woodyaster (Xylorhiza cronquistii) is a white-flowered, daisy-like member of the Sunflower family (Asteraceae or Compositae) that is found only in Kane and Garfield Counties. Genetic evidence strongly suggests that this species is of hybrid origin, involving a cross between the Hurtleaf woodyaster (Xylorhiza tortifolia – named for its spiny, holly-like leaves) and the Henrieville woodyaster (X. confertifolia). Cronquist's woodyaster (named in honor of Arthur Cronquist, one of the most famous American botanists of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, who first discovered the Henrieville woodyaster while botanizing southern Utah in the 1960s) has narrow leaves like X. confertifolia, but short teeth and long-pointed involucre bracts like X. tortifolia. It typically grows on barren, rocky slopes of the Kaiparowits or Chinle formations and flowers in mid May to early June. The plant in the photo above was found in a mixed population containing its close relative, the Henrieville woodyaster. Cronquist's woodyaster was once a BLM Sensitive species, but was dropped due to its hybrid origin, though it appears to breed true today. This species is currently known from only 3-4 populations, but can be easily overlooked due to its barren habitat and similarity to other species. Botanist Peter Lesica and I discovered one population on Chinle badlands near the Paria Movie Set on Grand Staircase-Escalante NM in 2004 and another in Horse Canyon in Garfield County this year. – Walter Fertig*

Renewal Time: Many members who joined last fall need to renew to remain members in good standing of the state organization. Please consider renewing at your earliest convenience. For those who have still not joined – memberships make a great holiday gift!

# Botanica

(Or Odds and Ends from the Botanical World)

By Walter Fertig

This edition of the Kane County Native Plant Society news was written by Walter Fertig. Reader submissions are welcome. For more information about upcoming events, contact Walt Fertig at 689-0224 or [walt@kanab.net](mailto:walt@kanab.net).

## Two Thousand Year Old Seeds Sprout

The Judaen date palm once formed extensive forests throughout ancient Palestine and served as an important source of food, fiber, shade, and medicinal drugs. The palm was wiped out by the first or second centuries AD, a victim of warfare and desertification.

Nearly thirty years ago, archaeologists excavating the ruins of King Herod's palace on Mount Masada discovered a stash of Judean date palm seeds. Carbon dating indicated that the seeds were 2,000 years old. In 2005, ethnobotanist Elaine Solowey of the Arava Institute for Environmental Studies in Israel acquired three of the Masada seeds to study whether they might still be viable. Solowey planted the seeds on the day of the Jewish Festival of Trees (25 January 2005) after soaking them in warm water and applying gibberellic acid and rooting hormones. To Solowey's surprise, one of the seeds germinated after five weeks and produced a small shoot with three leaves. The seedling, named Methuselah, is the new record-holder for having germinated from the oldest known seed, eclipsing the previous mark of 1,200 years for a species of Chinese lotus.

Date palms are dioecious (with separate male and female plants) and the sex of Methuselah is not yet known. It may be possible to vegetatively propagate additional specimens from this one surviving plant to build up a larger number of Judaen date palms, though without at least one male and one female the species won't be able to form a viable breeding population. Still, the resuscitation of a once extirpated species from surviving seed provides some hope for other plants considered long extinct.

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