

Sego Lily

Newsletter of the Utah Native Plant Society

VOLUME 29 , ISSUE 5

September/October 2006

Flora, Fauna and Fun with Small Friends

Words and photos by Celeste Kennard

The Utah County Chapter has started a fun new series of hikes geared towards children. We have been exploring the plants, geology, birds and insects all over Utah County. We started off the hikes with a shoreline trail hike just above the water tower at about 1600 N in Orem. Tamara Bahr, April Jensen and Celeste Kennard led the hike and realized we all had worked for the State Wildlife Division doing Range Trend at some point. As we hiked different moms would point out different shrubs flowers and trees. This particular hike involved some exploring inside the stands of Gamble Oak. We searched for last year's acorns and the possibility of some flowers that might be hiding. Two of the older children were interested in trying to discover what was wrapped up inside of so many leaves on all the hackberry trees.



April Jensen and small friends at Cascade Springs

Gardening

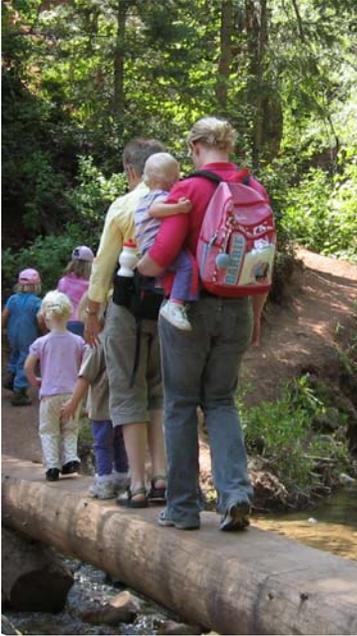
The next outing was in Rock Canyon where we helped weed the Rock Canyon Heritage Garden and plant a few plants. This is a well know area to my children and they took some of the others that were newer to the area on a short hike on the trails near the garden. My son who is now 11, used to really enjoy walking to a small cave that is to the south of the canyon along the shoreline trail. The trail is a great place to look for rocks with colorful veins running through quartzite.

Flexibility Equals Fun

The following week we met just above the State Hospital in Provo at Castle Park. We had planned to access the shoreline trail from this park where there is a paved trail up to the shoreline trail. The kids were having so much fun playing on the castle steps and near the pond that we changed our plans and just enjoyed the summer day in the cool shade of this oasis of a park. If you want to visit this park you have to make reservations.

Flowers Galore

Mid-June we headed up for a look at the riparian flowers that were in full bloom at Cascade Springs just off the Alpine Loop. Monkey flowers were everywhere, along with wild geraniums. We also saw some Maple Mallow, *Iliamna rivularis*, Monks Hood, *Aconitum columbianum*, White Virgins Bower *Clematis ligustifolia*, and more. This was really a wildflower lovers treat and the children were excited every time they spotted fish swimming in the spring fed pools. The trail crosses many of the pools along well-built crosswalks that can be traversed with a stroller, although there are some steps along some of the loops.



Sara Jensen, Donna Gilchrist and youngsters crossing a bridge on the grotto trail

Caves and Water falls, and Grandparents

Payson Canyon has a great hike to a cave, The Grotto. You drive up Payson Canyon past Maple Dell and look carefully for a sign that says "The Grotto trail" This trail is about 13 miles up the canyon. Easy at under a half mile long and the children loved crossing the stable logs that served as bridges over the small streams. This area was wooded and shady and everyone from the babies in backpack carriers to the moms, dads and grandmas enjoyed this winding trip past many shrubs and flowers like Kinnikinnick, *Cornus sericea*, Mt. Lover, *Pachystima myrsinites*, Utah Serviceberry *Amelanchier utahensis*, Mountain Snowberry *Symphoricarpos oreophilus* and Sticky Geranium, *Geranium viscosissimum* and at least 3 different Penstemons. The trail ends at a waterfall that cascades off a cliff and down in front of a cave where everyone that wanted to cool their feet could walk in the shallow pools.

Insects and Geology

In Battle Creek Canyon we hiked to the waterfall that can be reached by following a gravel road up the mountain just to the south of the Kiwanis Park in Pleasant Grove. We discovered a small pond below some small waterfalls/rapids that refrigerated the whole area to a nice comfortable temperature on a hot July day. This spot is a great place to learn about geology, on the other side of the small pond right at eye and touching level for youngsters is a Paleozoic layer cake of sea bottom mud faulted to create a great viewing and teaching experience. Plus all the small shale rocks that had broken off the exposed rock were great fun for the 2 year olds to hurl into the water. For the more sure footed you can reach the larger falls further up the trail.

On this particular trip the dragonflies were very lazily buzzing around and let us get a long detailed look at their segmented abdomens, compound eyes and delicate wings. We did not find many things in bloom but there sure were lots of spider webs decorating the branches of the Gamble Oak. It can be fun to ask children to describe what they think happened to the branches of a Choke Cherry tree that has been attacked by Black Knot fungus. My 11 year old thinks the disease reminds him of when he lights a charcoal snake pellet. Its almost like the branches burned and bubbled from the inside out.

Let's Find a Swimming Hole

Our last adventure took us to a man-made swimming and fishing hole in Spanish Fork Canyon. You can get directions to this reservoir by going to the Spanish Fork City website and looking up the details about Spanish Oaks Campground. A future trip when it is not so hot has been planned so we can explore the trails around the campground.

If you want to join us or get more specific directions send Celeste Kennard an email at celeste@byu.edu or give her a call at (801) 377-5918. We will continue these hikes every Wednesday morning until it gets too cold or the snow flies.

Lifetime Member Update

Teresa Mareck of Salt Lake City, Utah became our 26th lifetime member in July of 2006.
Thank you Teresa!

Notice of UNPS Annual Meeting

Date: October 21, 2006

Place: Cache Valley Learning Center, 75 South 400 west, Logan, UT 84321

Time: 2 PM

Happenings: Talk tba. Annual New World Potluck Dinner. Bring a New World dish to share. BYOB.
Short business meeting. More info to follow via mailings and via Internet.

For Website - Map: [Cache Valley Learning Center](#)

RSVP to - Steveripple@comcast.net or Davewallace@xmission.com



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The Sand Cholla – *Opuntia pulchella*

Words and Photos by Jeff Mitchell



This is perhaps one of Utah's most unique cacti. It is a small branching cactus with a large tuber root. I've not seen one in the wild over three inches tall or over four inches wide. It grows a bit larger in cultivation, but not much. It flowers in mid May and occasionally has late blooms throughout the summer. The flowers are a pretty pink/magenta color (see left). The seed pod is light and bristly and rolls easily in the wind, one of the more odd ways of seed dispersal. It lives in the Utah west desert and is known from records as far north as the Promontory Point area to possibly as far south as Enterprise and west from Utah to the very eastern edge of California.

The common name I first heard was the sand cholla, its common name is listed as sand club-cholla on the Flora of North America website. This name is misleading. I've never found it in sandy areas which resulted in my first couple trips resulting in failure. My wife found one on a hillside at Cowboy Pass next to the south end of the Chevron Ridges. My wife had found some prickly pear seedlings and they have round stems at that point in life, but upon digging them up there was no tuber. We continued our search and we explored some rocky outcrops that had bivalve fossils in them. Then my wife called out and said she'd found something odd and would I take a look at it. I went over and looked at it and it didn't look like prickly pear seedlings. We dug it up and sure enough, there was a tuber. No sand. None. California agencies call it the sagebrush cholla which at least fits with the second and third specimens I found. However, most of the plants I've found didn't have sagebrush anywhere close to them either. This makes another example of why common names can be troublesome. Scientific names would be just a tad less troublesome if the taxonomists could quit making name changes. The genus is now technically *Grusonia*, but I found I confused people if I used that name, similar to my first efforts at using *Escobaria* instead of *Coryphantha* on the common pincushion cactus. At least Flora of North America recognizes *Grusonia* where it doesn't recognize *Escobaria*. So I stick with *Opuntia* because people I talk to know that name and because it is hard to switch when the plant behaves like an *Opuntia*. The seeds look almost identical to *Opuntia polycantha* and it has glochids and the spines are slightly barbed. I'm told there are good arguments for *Grusonia*, and I guess I'll just leave it there.

When the sand cholla was first discovered, it was classified as three different species. As people got to know the plant better, I think they realized that the different types were really the same plant at different points in its growth. As a new seedling (first year) it grows a single thin stem with areoles covered with white fluff and short spines flattened against the body. The second year, the white fluff is less pronounced, the stem gets darker green and fatter and doesn't quite look like it is the same plant. It also may put out two to four branches and looks like a miniature saguaro. It doesn't yet look like an adult either as the tubercles have not become pronounced yet and the white fluff is almost non-existent. The adults are different still, and if that wasn't enough, some plants have smooth round branches and others have prominent tubercles, and some have both. So the early confusion was understandable. At this stage, first or second year, the plant has a droopy behavior. Some days it will be standing upright. Some days it will be drooped all the way over and touch the ground. Not all plants droop like this. I still haven't figured what causes that, but did try experimenting with whether it needed water or not. I couldn't get any consistent responses, so that is still a mystery. As a plant gets older the stems become woody and stiff. The branches still droop during winter, but most *Opuntias* do that.

In cultivation, they are very easy to grow. Seed germination is high, greater than 90 percent from my experience. Sprouting occurs in three to five days. For some reason most of my hundreds of two year old seedlings tilt to the west. They are on the west side of my house, but far enough away from the house that I don't think the house shadow in the morning accounts for it. Again, the bigger the pot they are in, the faster they grow. On my front porch on the east side of my house, I planted some extra seeds next to one of my pincushion (*Coryphantha vivipara*) cacti in a 20 gallon pot. This pot is close to the house and gets seven or eight hours of sunlight rather than twelve to fifteen during the summer. Yet these plants are twice as large at two years old as those planted in gallon pots that were sown two or so weeks earlier. The larger pot allows roots to go deeper as well as retain more moisture at the deeper levels giving greater growing resources.

As the plant gets older, the tuber becomes larger and larger. It has an ancient woody look to it, and the glochids are large and bushy at the top, the rest of the tuber being bare. The tuber grows below ground level, but since I find it an attractive and interesting feature, when I replot my plants, I have about an inch worth of the tuber sticking out for aesthetic effect.

The sand cholla can also be grown from cuttings. I usually do the cutting when a branch is two years old, right after the seed pods come off. At three or four years, the branch dies anyway, so I figure I can plant it instead of it going to waste. A cutting develops a thick tap root, and I'm watching to see if a tuber develops. I also did an experiment on seeing how they grow back when deer, antelope or cattle eat them. I cut all the branches off, and replacements will grow back within eight to eleven weeks. I'm also trying some experiments on sculpting the growth by various pruning techniques.

I'll offer a disclaimer here that the observations above are based mostly on personal experience, and I haven't observed them long enough to know how all the observations will play out over time or whether or not my preliminary conclusions will hold up. All in all, I consider this one of the most intriguing cacti in Utah and a real fun one to grow.



Tuber of *Opuntia pulchella*

New Editor for Segó Lily

As some of you may know, this is my last issue of the Segó Lily. I will be leaving my posts as Editor and Membership Co-ordinator at the end of August. I have enjoyed my two year tenure as Editor and I hope that the issues I have produced have both educated and informed. Don't worry though, your new Editor will be Walt Fertig, president of Manzanita Chapter, so the Segó Lily will be in very capable hands indeed.

I hope you will join me in welcoming Walt and if you have any articles you would like to see in upcoming editions please get in touch with him (contact details on the back page). Thanks everyone, it's been fun!

Paula Longhurst, Editor

Natives in the News

This article from 2005 is re-produced with permission from the authors, thank you to the Salt Lake Tribune
Research by Kelly McNulty

Natural Landscaping Benefits Our Community

By Emily Aagaard

At Wasatch Community Gardens our mission is to help people grow and share fresh produce, to teach urban youth responsibility, cooperation and ecological awareness and to be an active resource for sustainable organic gardening. I have the opportunity to witness the connection children can make with nature when exposed to gardens. I often sit in on the youth classes we provide for groups of children from downtown after-school programs. Children arrive at our gardens weekly to tend to their own plot while learning about everything from composting and recycling to responsibility and cooperation. The development of the children from their first visit to the end of the season is phenomenal.

Often, they start out complaining about how yucky vegetables are. By the end, they are eagerly waiting for their tomatoes to ripen so they can make and eat salsa and salads from the garden. They understand the importance of bugs instead of fearing them. Most of all, they have fun and learn without even knowing it. There is no better classroom than nature.

Wasatch Community Gardens is frequently called upon to provide guidance to people and groups who want to start their own gardens. As a small non-profit, our resources are limited, so we self-published a Community Garden Start-Up Handbook. (It and all our other free materials are available on our Web site, <http://www.wasatchgardens.org>.)

But when we were invited recently to take a look at an innovative new garden in a public space, the newly rebuilt Indian Hills Elementary, I couldn't resist going. As a former student at Indian Hills, I jumped at the chance. It was there that I gave a report on whales, bought an acre of rainforest with my classmates, and planted a tree on Arbor Day. Now, as a grown-up, I've maintained the interest that my elementary school fostered in me, and it has become my career. I was excited to go back and see how they're approaching kids and nature now.

The most innovative feature at the new Indian Hills Elementary is a hill currently covered in dirt. Previously unusable lawn space in the front of the school will soon become natural gardens. The school, located above Foothill Drive in Salt Lake City, reopened to students this week. I applaud the thoughtful efforts of the community design committee, architect and district officials.

Indian Hills has a uniquely large and sloping lot, complete with the challenge of an underground spring flowing throughout the property. Parents on the community-based design committee, facilitated by the district's facility design supervisor, Claudia Seely, envisioned the enjoyment that trails through natural gardens would bring to the neighborhood.

Instead of seeing the spring as an obstacle, architect Gerald R. Nichols, president of NJRA Architects, and

the district's grounds supervisor, Karen Perry, found a way to integrate the spring into the natural gardens, reusing the water for the sprinkling system. The project presented a larger upfront cost in landscaping, but the long-term benefits of lower water bills and decreased grounds maintenance should more than compensate.

Although I was not involved in the process or decisions to create the natural gardens at Indian Hills Elementary, the benefit to the students is as evident to me as it was to those who promoted the project. While these elementary students still have their grassy soccer fields and expansive playgrounds, they have also been given a new classroom for learning.

Creating a natural classroom at an elementary school was an uphill challenge overcoming tradition, but the project earned the support of Superintendent McKell Withers. This innovation may even become a trend at the Salt Lake School District; Escalante Elementary, west of I-15, was also built with interactive garden space and natural landscaping by the same district employees and architects.

The importance of connecting with the environment, understanding nature and being good stewards of the land is ever-increasing. While we may feel we have the luxury of lush lawns and lawns, the choice diminishes with each coming generation.

Emily Aagaard is executive director of Wasatch Community Gardens, Salt Lake City.

Date: September 4, 2005 Page: AA3 Section: Opinion Salt Lake Tribune



Salt Lake Chapter News - By Bill Gray

Painter Spring Field Trip On a beautiful weekend in June Maggie Wolf led a group of us out into the West Desert to visit Painter Spring. This is a remarkable place on the west side of the formidable House Range, dominated by Notch Peak. A narrow canyon between immense pinkish granite towers is home to a free-flowing spring. It was the site of a CCC camp in the 1930s, when water was piped down for cattle in the valley below. Despite this there is a wonderful riparian area, well shaded, where everybody was overwhelmed by a display of thousands of Giant Helleborine Orchids (*Epipactis gigantea*). Another highlight was the Long-flowered Snowberry (*Symphoricarpos longiflorus*), a small shrub related to our common Mountain Snowberry.

After camping on the eastern side of the range in totally different surroundings of limestone cliffs we hiked along a canyon to see if we could locate the endemic House Range Primula (*Primula domensis*). Although it eluded us we did find the rare Utah Fendlerella

(*Fendlerella utahensis*), and enjoyed the unique habitat.

Kipp Lee organized a plant sale at REI on July 15th. Despite blistering weather, we had a good turn out and raised some money. Several UNPS members graciously donated plants for the sale, including penstemons, datura, showy goldeneye, cacti, and several other species. All were grown from seed or cuttings by our members.

Visiting Conferences Two major conferences were held in July at Snowbird, with UNPS members participating as field guides. July 4th weekend was the National Wildlife Federation's "Family Summit" for which Ann Kelsey, Kipp Lee, Ty Harrison, and Bill and Sylvia Gray led walks. The visitors, mostly from the Eastern US, were rather shocked to find more snow than flowers in Albion Basin, but were equally amazed at what was in bloom along the gravel road. Three weeks later the North American Rock Garden Society held an international conference, organized by Bill King and the local chapter of NARGS, including several UNPS members. By this time the flowers were in full swing and we logged over 130 species blooming between Albion and Brighton. My highlight was *Anemone parviflora* by Lake Catherine, which I had never seen. This was found and identified by somebody from Oregon! It's quite amazing to walk with a group from around the world, some of whom seem to know our plants as well as we do.

Bald Mountain August 12th we are visiting Bald Mountain in the Uinta Mountains. At almost 12,000 feet elevation this is real alpine terrain, and has a host of neat plants. Since the trailhead is at almost 11,000 feet it is a relatively short walk. Afterwards we shall be camping at Mirror lake.

Monthly Meetings These will resume on Tuesday October 3rd, meeting at the Sweet Library (9th Avenue and 'F' Street) Salt Lake City, at 7 p.m.

Utah County Chapter News

The Utah County Chapter of the Utah Native Plant Society will hold their quarterly meeting on Friday, August 18th with a potluck at 6:00 pm and a tour of the Utah Valley State College Herbarium at 7:00 pm. The potluck will be held in the botany lab adjacent to the herbarium. Donna Barnes, the Herbarium Curator will tell us the herbarium's history and show us the herbarium. The herbarium is located in room PS 109. For a map to the herbarium visit <http://herbarium.uvsc.edu/location.shtml>.

The Utah Native Plant Society is planning on hosting a native plant sale on September 30th. We would like any donations of plants (seeds, cutting, or actual plants) for the sale. We also plan on having a sale on April 28th, 2007. If anyone has available greenhouse space for growing plants, or know where we could find some we would appreciate it.

Bristlecone Pine Hike

Kim Despain is going to hike to the Bristlecone Pine grove at the Price Canyon Recreation Area Saturday September 16. The hike will start from the Price Canyon Recreation Area camp ground parking lot around 10:00 AM.

The turn off to the Price Canyon Recreation area is about 3-4 miles south of the top of Price Canyon on Highway 6. The road from highway 6 to the camp ground is paved but narrow and windy. The trip can be made in a regular automobile. The hike to the bristlecones is about a 3 mile round trip. The hike is not strenuous but will take 2 - 4 hours. Kim takes it slow because he takes photographs.

Information will be presented on the pines of Utah. If there is enough interest after the hike, a side trip to the radio towers at the summit of Price canyon will be made to see more bristlecones and a grand view of the Wasatch Plateau.

Seed Collection Trip and Propagation Workshop

The Utah Valley Chapter is sponsoring an activity in conjunction with Kim Despain's trip to visit the Bristlecone Pine Forest at Price Recreation area on September 16 (see above). We will collect seed of several native species during and after the hike with Kim. We will provide paper bags for seed collection. All members of any chapter are invited. Those who are interested may spend the night at the campground. If enough people register in advance, we can reserve a group campground.

Then we will hold a propagation workshop at Rock Canyon Trailhead Park, 2300 North in Provo, on October 28 at 10 am and clean seeds and plant them so members can grow them outside at home through the winter. The plants can be donated back to the chapter for the plant sale or planted at members' homes. The chapter will donate book planters and potting medium to those who donate plants back to the chapter. Those who keep their plants need to pay \$5.00/rack for supplies.

The workshop will be by reservation only. Please contact Robert Fitts at 801-796-8631 or Susan Garvin at sgarvin@xmission.com for more information or to reserve campsites or spots at the workshop

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Many thanks to Xmission for
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Please direct all suggestions,
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**The deadline for next issue
is 12th October 2006**

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