

The Blazing Star



NEWSLETTER OF THE NORTH AMERICAN NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

Native Plant to Know

Great Plains Paintbrush

Castilleja sessiliflora

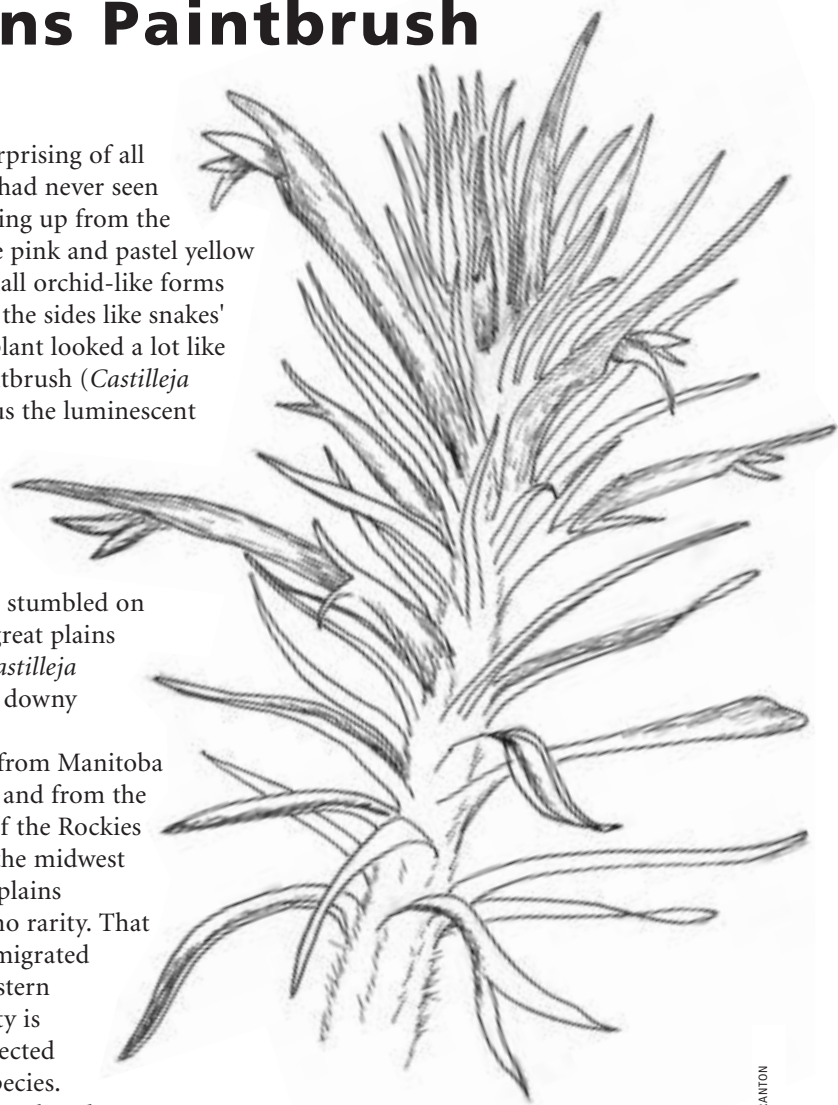
by *Evan Cantor*

Having hiked Boulder Mountain Park in Colorado for 30 years, I knew what to expect of the first spring wildflowers. Here, at the meeting of the Great Plains and the southern Rockies, there's a wide variety of plant life drawn from multiple ecosystems. Quaking aspens (*Populus tremuloides*) hide in protected north-side riparian zones while plains cottonwoods (*Populus deltoides*) punctuate the dry washes spreading east at the foot of the mountain. The usual suspects in the early flower display are old friends: sand lily (*Leucocrinum montanum*), golden banner (*Thermopsis lanceolata*) and spring beauty (*Claytonia lanceolata*).

So it was no surprise that I had already noted spring beauty carpeting the Ponderosa forest (*Pinus ponderosa*) like pink-veined snowflakes. A cool, wet spring led to an extravagant display. A pleasant surprise had been a north-facing meadow bursting with nodding, pale blue pasqueflowers (*Pulsatilla ludoviciana*). Cousin to the garden crocus, pasqueflower is one of the first to pop on high meadows near the tree-line. This was the first time I had noticed the plant at this elevation. Almost shocking was the abundance of bright yellow mountain parsley (*Pseudocymopterus* var.).

But most surprising of all was a flower I had never seen anywhere. Poking up from the grass were pale pink and pastel yellow lances with small orchid-like forms hanging along the sides like snakes' tongues. The plant looked a lot like an Indian paintbrush (*Castilleja* var.), but minus the luminescent bracts that are typical of more familiar alpine and desert varieties. I had stumbled on specimens of great plains paintbrush (*Castilleja sessiliflora*, aka downy paintbrush).

Distributed from Manitoba south to Texas and from the eastern front of the Rockies all the way to the midwest prairies, great plains paintbrush is no rarity. That it might have migrated uphill from eastern Boulder County is within the expected range of the species. But, like many Coloradans, I am alpine-centric and don't spend much time in our state's eastern prairies. Maybe I'm a silly goose, but identifying a flower I've never before seen, especially in my regular haunts, is



a special experience.

Castilleja at large is a widespread genus with nearly 200 species. Because it is so colourful, it is also a well-loved

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The *Blazing Star* is . . .

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Editorial

Inspiration - where do you get it? Well, I certainly wasn't going to get any in the atmosphere of local election rhetoric. The swirl of debates with the same old, tired issues beaten to death was wearing me down. The final straw was a debate on environmental issues in which I brought up the question of dealing with anti-vegetation bylaws. A wannabe councillor responded to the effect that "forests have no place in cities" and that "if you want to grow a forest in your backyard, you should be living in the country." Evidently, someone didn't do their homework. My city, Toronto, promotes tree planting and the slogan on every park sign is "a city within a park". Cities include trees, my friend. Clearly, we have a long way to go.

To regroup after the assault on the senses, I took an inspirational tour, in no particular order:

Stop #1: The Bateman Express. I sought refuge from political pontification at the Royal Ontario Museum. One of our Honorary Directors, the world-renowned wildlife artist Robert Bateman, was in town to promote his new book, talk about the importance of local diversity, and open the Robert Bateman Parkette. According to Robert, he gets inspiration from Mt. Olympus, sort of like a direct line. Although, he did admit that the inspiration for one of his paintings depicting an Orca and kelp came from a less lofty position, when he was in the washroom at a book signing. As he put it: "I paint and rant". Well, not quite, Mr./Dr. Bateman. You also inspire. Your words resonated with the audience. We are the converted who have to reach out to the uninitiated.

Bateman was particularly alarmed at a study that showed young people were spending more than seven hours a day tethered to technology, when they should be outside enjoying the wonders of nature as he did as a child

and as his inspiration, E.T. Seton, did too. He fears that the young are losing their connection with nature and will not miss it if it's gone. His solution: take at least three of those hours to explore nature. The kids will be hooked for life.

Stop #2: The Dalai Lama. His Holiness, who is not one of our Honorary Directors, was also in town. I did not have the pleasure of a personal meeting, but I was thinking about him. He talked about displaced persons, a subject that he knows well from personal experience. What about other species? Native species displaced by invasive species? Don't worry – nature is upmost in his mind. "I feel that we should not only maintain gentle, peaceful relations with our fellow human beings but also that is very important to extend the same kind of attitude toward the natural environment." Thankfully, we have a lot of good people on our side.

Stop #3: Priscilla, Queen of the Desert – the musical with native plants of Australia incorporated into the costume designs. We can all relate to a story of tolerance and acceptance, a theme that plays over and over. Communities are in various stages along the continuum of acceptance of native plant gardens. We are not all in synch, but we will be...eventually.

It is up to us through our words and actions to lead the ignorant into the woods. And as the famous author Robert Louis Stevenson said, "Don't judge each day by the harvest you reap, but by the seeds that you plant". It is obvious that we can't rest on our laurels, but have to push ahead with projects to educate the uninformed. Take a little time to reminisce about the past 25 years and let's move quickly on to figuring out the next 25, as we head towards our golden age.

Janet Harrison, The Local Scoop editor

Visit NANPS Website!

The newest addition to NANPS website, www.nanps.org, is the Restorations Page where members can list their projects and ask for volunteers to help.

2010 NANPS AWARD WINNERS

The three winners of the 2010 Paul McGaw Memorial Conservation Award were:

The Council of Canadians for its instrumental role in raising public awareness about water conservation through the Blue Planet Project.

The Town of Markham for its commitment to preserve,



PHOTOGRAPH BY ERIKA THIMM

Jim French and Jim Hodgins cut their "wedded to wildflowers" cake celebrating 25 years of blissful, native plant gardening together. The cherubic one on the left baked the cake from his favourite recipe.

restore and expand native habitats through its Trees for Tomorrow program, and through policies promoting woodlot preservation, public plantings and wildflower gardening.

LEAF - Local Enhancement and Appreciation of Forests for its

important work promoting the planting and protection of native trees and shrubs in backyard habitats, thereby supporting biodiversity for all living things within the urban ecosystem.

NANPS 2010 Garden Award winners: Patricia Baldwin of Port Perry, Ontario, and Christina Kobland of Lafayette, Pennsylvania (Rural Reclamation), First Nations House of Toronto, Jim French and his Stoney Lake Native Plant Reserve, and Jim Hodgins, First Native Plant Garden in Toronto. Look for their stories in upcoming issues of *The Blazing Star*.

Mary Clark was honoured as NANPS 2010 Volunteer of the Year for her 25 years of commitment to the organization.



PHOTOGRAPH BY DEBORAH DALE

New NANPS Director Alice Kong with Mary Clark, NANPS Volunteer of the Year

NANPS NEW DIRECTORS

NANPS welcomes five new board members this fall. Eileen Atkinson is recently retired from her business photographing homes. Alice Kong has ably chaired NANPS Plant Sale Committee for the past three years. Paul LaPorte works as a computer animator and effects artist for film and TV production. Gillian Leitch has worked in horticulture for the past 22 years and is currently focusing on design. John Oyston is a specialist in anesthesiology who has planted over 2,000 native trees at his property, Oak Hills Farm. Welcome all!

A heartfelt thank you for all your hard work and best wishes to retiring directors Zoe Dalton, Miriam Henriques, Howard Meadd and Ruth Zaugg.

25 for 25

Take the NANPS 25th anniversary challenge: visit www.nanps.org and record 25 things you have done for the conservation of our native flora this year. Submissions deadline is February 28, 2011.

2010 SEED EXCHANGE

Enclosed with this issue is the list of seeds currently available. Please have your order in by January 7th, 2011. Our intent is to mail out seeds by the end of January so that members can stratify those that need a cold winter to inspire germination.

A list of seeds left over from the January mailout, along with late donations, will be published in the winter issue of

The Blazing Star for distribution by early April.

Note: there are limited quantities of some species. First come, first served. Where seed quantities are limited, all donors will be served first in the order that their requests are received. You can choose up to 30 packets of seeds. For further details about the Seed Exchange see the enclosed list.



PHOTOGRAPH BY ERIKA THIMM

25th Anniversary centrepiece arrangements: A boot-iful bevy of blazing bouquets produced by NANPS members using local native plants. The Local Scoop Spokesplant, Canada goldenrod (*Solidago canadensis*) outfitted with PRESS PASS, joins in on the frivolity.

Sowing the Seed

by Irene Fedun

To my mind, Vicki Beard is the ideal spokeswoman for native plant conservation. A gardener herself on a large scale (her original 3/4-acre lot was expanded to one acre with the recent purchase of the neighbouring property), Vicki has energy, passion, commitment and a thoughtful approach to issues.

Sixteen years ago, when Vicki and her husband Mike Fortin purchased their house on a busy street in downtown Guelph, the L-shaped lot was a barren, badly cared-for lawn edged by non-native lilacs (*Syringa* spp.) and Scots pines (*Pinus sylvestris*), with European buckthorn (*Rhamnus cathartica*) starting to make inroads. They set about transforming the space into a pollinator habitat.

Vicki likes to think of the garden as a series of “rooms” with different conditions (sunny/dry, shady/dry, shady/wet) and different vegetation. Of course, there is overlap as there would be in any naturalized garden where plants are not ordered to stay in place but allowed to find their own niches.

The first “room” might best be described as an expansive, welcoming front porch. No lawn here. The city tree, a mature Norway maple (*Acer platanoides*), will eventually make way for the new seedling burr oak (*Quercus macrocarpa*). A severe pruning of the maple has provided space and light for the other new plantings: showy goldenrod (*Solidago speciosa*), pointed-leaf tick-trefoil (*Desmodium glutinosum*), beardtongue

(*Penstemon* sp.) and several serviceberries (*Amelanchier* spp.). This small sampling of the front yard's plant life illustrates the diversity of heights, densities, blooming and seed-ripening times available to wildlife looking for food, shelter and nesting materials. Vicki believes: “It's not about us, it's about what lives here. This is the squirrels' grocery store.” And the raccoons', skunks', rabbits' and birds'. Even the (non-native) carpenter bees are welcome: the first thing Vicki does as I walk through her gate is point out the bees' nest in the wood of the building that is her

fen. Vicki and Mike created this small wetland using as a base an impermeable liner perforated with holes one-third of the way up to allow exchange of nutrients and water with the surrounding area. Water is supplied by rainfall, some coming from an eavestrough and a rain barrel attached to an adjacent building. The fen is a teeming mass of plants, mostly native. Wild yam (*Dioscorea villosa*) and hop vine (*Humulus lupulus*) are climbing the trellis and will soon provide a bit of shade for plants that can appreciate it, such as great blue lobelia (*Lobelia syphilitica*) and



PHOTOGRAPH BY VICKI BEARD

The fen on the left contains great blue lobelia, white turtlehead, hop vine, wild yam, Joe-Pye-weed and cattails. Pokeweed (*Phytolacca americana*), swamp milkweed, woodland sunflower (*Helianthus divaricatus*) and pearly everlasting are among the plants under the arbour.

Gourd Art Studio.

In the backyard, beyond the kitchen garden, picnic area and pool, is the

spotted Joe-Pye-weed (*Eupatorium maculatum*). The skunk cabbage (*Symplocarpus foetidus*) and marsh

A Big Thanks to Markham Environmental Sustainability Fund

The North American Native Plant Society received a generous grant from the Markham Environmental Sustainability Fund (MESF) to conduct an Invasive Plant Awareness Program in the Town of Markham. The program was designed to educate the staff and agencies of Markham and neighbouring municipalities, along with the public, about growing concerns that invasive species are altering natural areas. People were taught how to monitor and remove invasive species where feasible, and replace with native species. The program included a speakers' series, publication of a colour pamphlet, natural garden design workshops, purchase of a weed wrench to be lent out to volunteers and a public awareness day at Charlie Clifford and Grandview Parks. Many thanks to MESF!

marigold (*Caltha palustris*) provide early season delight. Later bloomers include the frothy white foamflower (*Tiarella cordifolia*) and white turtlehead (*Chelone glabra*), punctuated by sensitive ferns (*Onoclea sensibilis*) and cattails (*Typha* spp.).

Most of these plants were recovered on one of many plant rescues with Grand Moraine Growers. Vicki has developed an interesting approach to rescues: “Instead of focusing on the plants, take dirt. The seeds are more apt to take hold if you provide them with conditions they’re accustomed to.”

Beyond the fen is a pond, tiny but admirably serving its ecological function. It’s situated in full sun with rocks large and small bathed in a gentle stream of recirculating water. Butterflies (and other insects) can safely land and have a drink. Smaller birds bathe in the shallows of the pond and toads (from eggs introduced from a nearby friend’s yard) hop about.

For Lepidoptera species, adult and larval food is concentrated in the “butterfly room” of multi-seasonal blooms: violets (*Viola* spp.), pearly everlasting or *Anaphalis margaritacea* (a favourite with Painted Lady butterflies), swamp milkweeds (*Asclepias incarnata*), blue vervain (*Verbena hastata*) and black-eyed Susans (*Rudbeckia hirta*) are a few of the treasures. Some of the vegetable garden’s alien herbs and flowering natives, such as *Liatris spicata* (dense blazing star), offer nectar too. And the trees, shrubs and forbs of the Woodland Garden provide their share of life essentials for butterflies and moths.

Oaks – represented here by two native species, chinquapin (*Quercus muehlenbergii*) and red oak (*Q. rubra*) – are the top-ranked woody plants for supporting Lepidoptera, according to Douglas Tallamy’s book, *Bringing Nature Home*. In his ranking, oaks are followed by willows (Vicki has planted some Bebb’s willows, *Salix bebbia*, in her woodland benefitting viceroy butterflies, red-spotted purples, mourning cloaks and many others). Next comes the *Prunus* genus of



PHOTOGRAPH BY VICKI BEARD

In the woodland garden, native maples share space with grey birch, green ash, Bebb’s willow and a varied understory of forbs, ferns, shrubs and vines including blue vervain (*Verbena hastata*), several asters, bellwort and many more plants.

cherries and plums. *Prunus virginiana* (chokecherry) provides food for 10 species of giant silk moths, including the stunning Cecropia Moth, so it too is included even though Vicki finds that it colonizes rather aggressively. Fourth-ranked among the woody hosts for Lepidoptera are the birches (Vicki’s woodland harbours both canoe or white birch, *Betula papyrifera*, gray birch, *B. populifolia* and shining birch, *B. nitida*) which not only support several hundred species of moths and butterflies, they also feed songbirds and small mammals with their seeds and flower buds.

To Vicki and Mike this is the most important role of their garden: attracting as great a diversity of pollinators as possible and supporting them in each stage of their life cycle. This includes providing native bees and other insects with nesting and overwintering spots such as old raspberry and blackberry canes (*Rubus* spp.) cut and left on the ground, as well as patches of bare soil. Vicki says it’s important to have a variety of different-sized plant stalks for smaller and larger insects to lay their eggs or spend the winter in.

All this amounts to minimizing “cleanup”, treating fallen leaves or branches as valuable additions. Nothing leaves the garden; all is recycled just as it would be in an area not managed by humans. In the

vegetable garden, Vicki composts leaves and organic discards. In the woodland, debris is piled into huge mounds, then dirt is heaped on top to create hummocks. Mini ecosystems are the result (the north side gets less sun than the south, the side of a hummock is drier than the bottom...) with plants quickly claiming their preferred spots: for example, Virginia waterleaf (*Hydrophyllum virginianum*) likes to grow on top and bellwort (*Uvularia grandiflora*) near the bottom.

The woodland nurse crop of fast-growing ashes (*Fraxinus pennsylvanica*) offers protection for trees and shrubs that take longer to become established. They are slowly being sacrificed in the name of diversity. Mike selectively removes the ashes to make way for butternut (*Juglans cinerea*), bitternut hickory (*Carya cordiformis*), ironwood (*Ostrya virginiana*), pawpaw (*Asimina triloba*) and others.

The sugar maples (*Acer saccharum*) in the woodland were transplanted as seedlings from Vicki’s grandfather’s farm in Jarratt. In the 1930s during the Dust Bowl, Ontario farmers were paid \$2 each for every sugar maple they planted along their fencelines. In many parts of southern Ontario those majestic trees are still standing along country roads.

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Understorey and edge plantings include striped maple (*Acer pensylvanicum*), dogwoods (*Cornus* spp.), Ohio buckeye (*Aesculus glabra*) and others. Spring ephemerals, ferns and woodland wildflowers cover the budding forest's floor: wild leeks (*Allium tricoccum*), the delicate pale pink flowers of spreading dogbane (*Apocynum androsaemifolium*), Canada anemones (*Anemone canadensis*) kept in check by shade and competition with other plants, the ant-pollinated wild ginger (*Asarum canadense*), two species of wood ferns (*Dryopteris* spp.), three asters and many more. Bloodroot (*Sanguinaria canadensis*) has extended its range beyond the woodland, popping up all over the veggie garden even though Vicki keeps moving it back. She rather wishes the same were true of the ram's head lady's slipper (*Cypripedium arietinum*) that arrived with a truckload of leaves, but this lovely plant only lasted two years in an environment that simply did not fulfill its needs.

The goal here is high biodiversity (currently the property claims over 170 native species) and the reasons for it are simple: the more plant species, the more wildlife... and the greater the educational and entertainment value! Vicki offers a few examples: the dangling white flowers of American bladdernut (*Staphylea trifolia*) transform in the fall into brown teardrop-shaped fruits with tiny black seeds inside – these make great cat toys and a great educational tool. Waldorf School children, who visit the gardens regularly, are delighted by the

nuts of American hazel (*Corylus americana*) that open up like little purses. Fascinating oddities like these contribute to the popularity of these gardens with kids and adults alike and make it easier for Vicki to spread the biodiversity message. She does this with characteristic generosity – her gardens have been featured for the past seven years on the City of Guelph's annual garden tours and two high school classes visit annually. The gardens are open (by appointment) to anyone who wants to come and learn.

Last year, Mike and Vicki purchased the house next door, a former daycare centre, which they plan to renovate with ecological principles in mind. Even more intriguing is that Mathis Natvik, owner of Natvik Ecological, a Guelph-based ecological restoration and design firm, uses the large backyard as a nursery bed for the rooftop garden plants that will be transplanted into his rooftop installations in the city.

Vicki and Mike practise what they preach, espousing the gardening philosophy of the late Henry Kock: Show people, don't try to convince them. Vicki explains it another way, "People are afraid of the messiness and work of a native plant garden so

allow them what they want and encourage them to incorporate natives into the picture. Never take plants away from people. If they want hybrid roses, rhapsodize about how lovely a blue vervain would look with those roses."

Vicki's commitment to the cause extends well beyond personal gardens. Among her many activities is her involvement with Pollination Guelph, an organization dedicated to recreating pollinator habitat in the city. The first planting will begin next spring at the local landfill site, and plans are afoot to develop a larger garden on the University of Guelph campus. The group has also been charged with the role of finding other suitable locations for pollinator gardens. What could be a more perfect fit for Vicki Beard?

Irene Fedun is the editor of The Blazing Star.



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The End of Autumn

by Merle Gunby

The autumn meadow
Sun warm
Goldenrod yellow
Glowing

Insects
Fly in tangled arcs
Chitin wings
Hum

Crippled apple tree
Leaning
Apples fall
Wormy

Robins
On a southward bent
Visit among the limbs
Resting

The deer
Stands in purple shadowed
stillness
Burnished rack

A wind
Northerly sent
Shatters autumn's golden haze
Brusque

The meadow
Moonlit white
Snow fell soft
Trackless

The vole
Strikes a furrowed trench
Toward his brown grass house
Warm

The great owl
Here from a northern place
Watches
Hungry

Merle Gunby of Owen Sound, Ontario: farmer, photographer, salesman and occasional writer. Avocation: naturalist.

Toronto's Favourite Trees

A select group of respected Torontonians – ranging from artists and filmmakers to community activists and media personalities – were asked to choose their favourite Toronto tree and write about it. Renowned photographer Vincenzo Pietropaolo then captured each one of these trees on film creating an outstanding collection of prints. Seven of the 16 pieces are currently on display at the Toronto Botanical Gardens (777 Lawrence Ave E, Toronto, Ontario) where they will remain until January 7, 2011.

into our own memories, examine our relationship to trees, and consider what the city might be without them. These limited-edition prints use the language of light to convey the undeniable beauty of our urban forest.

The project was masterminded by LEAF (Local Enhancement and Appreciation of Forests) as a way to remind us of the value and magnificence of the city's trees. All funds from the sale of each piece go towards LEAF's planting, education and training initiatives.

Prints are available in limited



PHOTOGRAPH © VINCENZO PIETROPAOLO

American elm, *Ulmus americana*

"My favourite tree in Toronto is the American elm in front of the Press Building at Exhibition Place because of its magnificent historical importance. As the Exhibition Place's oldest American elm, the tree is of significant heritage value to the community as well as past and present visitors. Draping the city's landscape for well over a century, the American elm was able to withstand Dutch elm disease and it is an admirable symbol of strength and endurance. Besides its strength, it is also a representation of resilience to devastation and tolerance to various factors of stress. Its compelling size and graceful presence creates a distinct landmark unmatched by any man-made monument while its characteristics of endurance and resilience are to be admired by nature and man alike." Joe Pantalone, Deputy Mayor of Toronto

The stories bring the viewer through an exploration of how trees relate to each person's sense of belonging, diversity, community building and heritage preservation. Vincenzo's work illustrates the deep connection between Torontonians and their trees. His photographs challenge us to reach

editions of four. The native trees photographed are Atom Egoyan's white ash (*Fraxinus americana*), D'bi Young's ironwood (*Carpinus caroliniana*), Graeme Gibson's white oak (*Quercus alba*), Joe Pantalone's American elm (*Ulmus americana*), Patricia Koval's honey locust

Horticulture and Conservation

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(*Gleditsia triacanthos*) and Maude Barlow's silver maple (*Acer saccharinum*).



PHOTOGRAPH © VINCENTO PIETROPAOLO

Silver maple, *Acer saccharinum*

"This beautiful old silver maple is remarkable for what it is, what it does and what it has lived through. Silver maples, drought resistant yet tolerant of seasonal flooding, know how to manage water - something our own species seems on the verge of forgetting. ... It should provide a cool island of shade for a long time to come where anyone can lie down and be thankful for the wisdom of those who planted it and, perhaps, decide to do the same for future generations."

Maude Barlow, National Chairperson of the Council of Canadians and Chair of the Washington-based Food and Water Watch.

In spring 2009, members of the horticulture industry and the conservation community came together to discuss shared concerns and take cooperative action to manage invasive plants and protect native vegetation. This group of people with diverse yet overlapping experiences, interests and concerns came to be known as the Horticulture Outreach Collaborative (HOC). Earlier this year, the group officially became a committee of the Ontario Invasive Plant Council (www.ontarioinvasiveplants.ca).

The collaborative consists of representatives from conservation authorities, government bodies, not-for-profit organizations, trade associations, businesses and academia. Founding and supporting members include: Credit Valley Conservation, Landscape Ontario, Ministry of Natural Resources, Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters, Ontario Invasive Plant Council, Ontario Streams, Sheridan Nurseries, and Toronto and Region Conservation.

Invasive Plants

Plants that have established in areas outside their natural range are known as alien, exotic or non-native. These plants are considered invasive if they cause significant harm to our environment, economy and/or society. A few of the invasive plants established in southern Ontario are sold at nurseries, garden centres and

other venues. It is this subset of invasive plants under consideration by our group.

Project Goal and Objectives

Our goal is to further environmental sustainability in the horticulture industry through partnerships, research, professional training, and public education. Specific objectives:

- to address the production, sale and use of invasive plants currently on the market
- to increase the sale and use of non-invasive alternatives already on the market
- to grow the native plant market, and encourage the commercial production of such plants

For more information on HOC, contact the Chair: Colleen Cirillo, Toronto and Region Conservation, ccirillo@trca.on.ca.

NANPS 2011 Invasives Program

Excursions to Shining Tree Woods will start in late March/early April. Watch the weather and our website. Volunteers wishing to help remove invasives should e-mail land@nanps.org to register their contact information. Other remediation projects are listed at www.nanps.org/index.php/conservation/restoration. Register your projects at restorations@nanps.org. More info available in future issues of *The Blazing Star*.

In Memoriam: Jane Glassco

One of NANPS most generous benefactors passed away this spring after a long illness. A broadcast journalist and co-founder of Tarragon Theatre in Toronto, Jane Glassco spent her retirement years on the 140-hectare family farm near Schomberg, where she maintained an organic lamb operation. She also worked to recreate and preserve original ecosystems including the large kettle lake, a

wildflower meadow and a maple/beech forest (profiled in the summer 2007 issue of *The Blazing Star*, "Seldom Seen" but Well-Protected). Through a conservation easement, Jane donated her property to the Oak Ridges Moraine Land Trust and received the Charles Sauriol Environmental Award from Robert Kennedy Jr. in recognition. Possessed of a strong social conscience, Jane

supported many charitable causes and brought attention to issues of social injustice, such as the plight of aboriginal communities. NANPS directors and members wish to extend deep condolences to Jane's family and friends, and express enduring gratitude for her contributions to the conservation movement.

Designing my Front Garden

by *Darcie McKelvey*

A couple of years ago, I attended the lecture of an alleged native plant aficionado who was speaking about his front yard garden. To my great disappointment, most of the plants featured were not native. So when I decided to replace a behemoth deck with a smaller porch and a sunny

My canvas was a 12-metre (40-foot) by five-metre (17-foot) area, not exactly a rectangle. The sun comes up behind my house, so the very front gets full sun most of the day, but closer to the house there is shade until mid-morning. Did I mention the soil in which I stake my hopes is a gravel pit? Truly, before the next concession line there is a place called the

were species I had grown in 2008 and had not been able to place, either because of sheer numbers or because I didn't easily have the appropriate habitat for them. For every bed I selected plants that I knew would bloom in spring, a sparse time for native plant flowers (except in woodlands). I created four separate beds, as outlined below.



PHOTOGRAPH BY DARCIÉ MCKELVEY

Nova, the wonder dog, admiring Darcie's front garden

front yard garden, I determined it would feature only plants native to Ontario.

I set these rules for myself: 1) No grasses, shrubs or trees; 2) A pathway slicing horizontally through part of the area to allow me to feature at the front some short “fillers” that usually get lost when the garden bulks up in July; 3) A pond liner under a section of the front to permit the planting of wetland forbs; 4) Spring, summer and fall interest.

I wanted a sculpted garden. I wanted it to contrast with my wild and woolly backyard, which although planned, tends to get boisterous as the season progresses. I wanted to create something a member of the Ontario Horticultural Society would appreciate – a tended look. My aspirations were summed up in the famous quote about the garden of Piet Oudolf, a well-respected garden designer from the Netherlands: “His plants look wild, but his gardens do not.”

Tottenham Pits where aggregate pit mining is ongoing.

Generally, I try to cluster plants in threes or more. I go for a wide variety of species and choose plants with varying bloom times in an attempt to have something flowering all year long (for the bees). Like a classroom picture, the tall plants generally have to stand in the back row with the shorter ones at the front. This narrows the available plant combinations. It also makes sense to group community plants together, so that in terrible weather such as droughts, I could water the wet meadow plants in one part of the garden while leaving the others to “hang in there.”

Rome was not built in a day and neither was my porch. This gave me time to think about what I wanted to include in the garden, and to grow them from seed. Most of the plants were young seedlings grown during the 2009 season, and transplanted into the area during the fall of 2009. A few

Small Sun-loving Plants

I wanted the areas lining the walkway on either side to showcase species that bloom early in spring. I alternated pasque flower and balsam ragwort on one side, and prairie smoke and lakeside daisy on the other. Unfortunately, not one of these species bloomed the first year! I would add that they have bulked up and all look incredibly healthy now, so I'm hopeful for spring 2011.

I generally do not plant in rows but since I was aiming for a tended look, I decided to try this in this segment of the garden. My rows were both horizontal and vertical, and in this area included the following species:

Anemone cylindrica (thimbleweed)
Anemone patens (pasque flower)
Campanula rotundifolia (harebell)
Dalea candida (white prairie clover)
Dalea purpurea (purple prairie clover)
Penstemon hirsutus (hairy beardtongue)
Ruellia humilis (wild petunia)
Senecio pauperculus (balsam ragwort)
Solidago nemoralis (gray goldenrod)
Zizia aptera (heart-leaf golden Alexanders)

Large Sun-Loving Plants

There is a long area in front of the porch for larger plants that love sun. The residents include:

Aquilegia canadensis
(eastern columbine)
Echinacea pallida
(pale purple coneflower)
Eupatorium purpureum
(sweet-scented Joe Pye-weed)
Euphorbia corollata (flowering spurge)
Helenium autumnale (sneezeweed)
Penstemon digitalis
(foxglove beardtongue)

Prenanthes racemosa (rattlesnake root)
Rudbeckia hirta (black-eyed Susan)
Rudbeckia triloba (brown-eyed Susan)
Senna hebecarpa (American senna)
Symphotrichum novae angliae
 (New England aster)
Symphotrichum oolentangensis
 (sky blue aster)
Thalictrum dasycarpum
 (purple meadow rue)
Tradescantia ohiensis (Ohio spiderwort)
Verbena hastata (blue vervain)
Vernonia sp. (ironweed)
Veronicastrum virginicum
 (Culver's root)
Viola pedatifida (prairie violet)

Along both sides of the walkway closer to the porch, I have several *Tradescantia ohiensis* lined up like guards. This serves a three-fold purpose. As I have two mid-sized dogs, I theorized that these spiderwort columns (which attain a fair girth) would create a visual obstacle that would deter canine meanderings through the area. Secondly, I know that *Tradescantia* is a favourite with bees, and having them lined up next to each other brought a troop of bumblebees and honeybees on a daily basis (I love watching bees but it leaves me wistful in the morning as I leave for work). Thirdly, I find that this species is one of the longest blooming in the garden, from June through September.

At the back along the porch, I have plants that will attain a large height and width given a couple of years. I did not crowd them, which means my young garden looks a bit spare. I do think of colour combinations when planting, trying to place different coloured flowers that bloom around the same time in proximity. For example, by the stairs up to the porch, I planted one brown-eyed Susan fronted by three sky blue asters in a triangular formation. Next to the *Rudbeckia*, I planted one sneezeweed, because the lemon petals blend in well with the gold of *Rudbeckia* and contrast with the blue asters. Next to the sneezeweed, I placed a sweet Joe-



PHOTOGRAPH BY DARCI MCKELVEY

Sneezeweed, sweet Joe-Pye-weed, and brown-eyed Susan in back, three species of asters in second row, pale purple coneflower (no blooms), black-eyed Susan and spiderwort in foreground with wild cucumber (Echinocystis lobata) all over.

Pye-weed. I had such poor germination for the seeds of this species; this was the only plant that grew from 13 seeds. However, it was splendid once in the garden, growing tall with lots of violet flowers that opened at different times, giving it a long blooming period and looking stunning with the *Rudbeckia* and *Helenium*. I will donate well-pollinated seeds from this plant to the NANPS Seed Exchange.

Similarly, six *Veronicastrum* were planted in two triangles in conjunction with two triangles of *Vernonia*. The flowers contrast in colour (white and magenta) and shape (spikes vs flowers loosely branched and open). These are fronted by three flowering spurge (tiny white flowers in an open cluster). When I look at gardens, I find repeating patterns are comforting, whereas too many one-off's make me feel over-stimulated and exhausted.

Wetland

The wetland was constructed by digging out a rectangular area 46 centimetres (18 inches) deep and lining this pit with a piece of pond liner. The area was then refilled with the dug-out soil. I poked a few holes in the PCB, but initially did not get this right. Within days, a major rain made walking across the "wetland" similar in experience to reeling across a waterbed. At this point, it was very difficult to put more holes in the PCB but necessity is the mother of

resourcefulness. A pitchfork did not work; I had more success with an old "toy" sword that belonged to my son, which regrettably I ruined. The species in this area are:

Doellingeria umbellata
 (flat-topped white aster)
Eupatorium maculatum
 (spotted Joe-Pye-weed)
Eupatorium perfoliatum (boneset)
Gentiana andrewsii (bottle gentian)
Iris setosa (beach-head iris)
Lobelia cardinalis (cardinal flower)
Oligoneuron ohioense (Ohio goldenrod)
Solidago patula (roundleaf goldenrod)

This wetland was created primarily to feature *Lobelia cardinalis* and bring in more hummingbirds. I decided to plant *Doellingeria umbellata* in the vicinity of the *Lobelia* because it flowers around the same time, would do well in the wetland habitat, and the white flowers would contrast nicely with the red spikes. *Iris setosa* was needed for early spring bloom. The large "pillars" at the back consist of *Eupatorium maculatum* and *E. perfoliatum*. The Joe-Pye-weed is still a young plant and only grew 30 centimetres (one foot) tall in the first year. I have patience and will let it take its time (probably another two years) to evolve to five times this height.

Other Plants

To the right of the walkway is a smaller area, part of which is near trees and will be in shade for over half the day. My species list was adjusted accordingly:

Anemone virginica (tall thimbleweed)
Asclepias tuberosa (butterflyweed)
Asclepias verticillata
 (whorled milkweed)
Cirsium discolor (field thistle)
Erigeron pulchellus (Robin's plantain)
Geum triflorum (prairie smoke)
Lespedeza virginica
 (slender bush clover)
Lespedeza capitata
 (round-headed bush clover)
Maianthemum stellatum
 (star-flowered false Solomon's seal)
Monarda didyma (bee balm)
Solidago caesia
 (blue-stemmed goldenrod)
Symphotrichum cordifolium
 (heart-leaved aster)
Symphotrichum ericoides (heath aster)
Tetaneuris herbacea (lakeside daisy)
Tradescantia ohioensis
 (Ohio spiderwort)

I have found both *Anemone cylindrica* and *virginica* to be useful plants. They maintain their upright stature like tiny soldiers, and have long-season interest. Although their flowers do not inspire love, they are followed by charming seed heads into September. Two heath asters have jumped in – one on each side of the walkway.

First-Year Impressions

I lost about half of the *Dalea* during the 2009-2010 winter as well as a couple of *Penstemon hirsutus* and one *Asclepias tuberosa*. In early spring my garden appeared largely empty with bleak soil. Very early spring plants did not bloom. At this point I was wondering if I had over-estimated the invincibility of my darling native plants!

I mulched the garden with red pine needles and with leaves. I also administered Perelandra Flower Essences to buck up the plants' spirits. I felt a sigh of relief emanating from them when I did this. Then some of the remaining *Penstemon hirsutus* bloomed, followed by *P. digitalis*. As it warmed up, plants started to fill in their allotted space. Most flowered. The harebells bloomed continuously from June through September (although summer flowers did not set seed).

Some plants did not remain upright: I expect this from young *Veronicastrum virginicum*, *Euphorbia corollata* and even *Tradescantia*, and know that with age they will stand straighter. The *Dalea* would not maintain an upright stature either and really didn't work well. Losing half of them over the winter didn't help – there was too much empty space for those who were left.

In retrospect, planting in rows did not quite work, and I plan to mix up *Penstemon hirsutus*, *Zizia aptera* and harebells next spring. I will give *Dalea* another year to shape up or get moved out. White and purple prairie clovers have worked better in other parts of my garden and I now suspect the boisterous plants around them must be holding them up in place.

I am rethinking the use of *Solidago nemoralis* in the front, next to *Oligoneuron ohioense* and *S. patula* in the wetland. Too much yellow at the front of the garden all appearing at the same time! And really, too much *Solidago*, despite the differences in the species. I love *S. nemoralis* when it appears in the garden - short but plucky. However, the ones in the front garden were grown in pots, from seed, and looked like they had been raised on steroids. I cut away half the foliage on each plant before it bloomed; they were so boisterous they seemed to be taking over the entire front yard. What I have learned: transplant the small, naturally seeded ones into the areas where I need them, rather than growing them from seed. I have similar thoughts about heath aster which never seems to look right when grown from seed and transplanted in from pots.

I believe the larger sun-loving area was more successful and I won't change much there. The

Rudbeckia triloba is probably toast, as well as *R. hirta*, so I will rethink what to place there for 2011. The *Senna hebecarpa* reached less than 1 1/2 metres (four feet), and I expect it will be heading up half that much again next year. The mix of heights and colour worked well, but I know it will look even better next season.

One more thing... I discovered during the year, much to my dismay, that one of the plants used in the front garden is not native to Ontario. I will leave you to figure out which one.

Darcie McKelvey loves growing natives from seed.

Letter to the Editor

I think the picture in *Ohio's Invisible Prairies* (spring 2010 edition of *The Blazing Star*) identified as royal catchfly (*Silene regia*) is not correct. It seems to be *Silene virginica*. I obtained seed from NANPS labeled *S. regia* and that agrees with my very ancient copy of *Peterson's Field Guide to Wildflowers*, but not the picture in *The Blazing Star*.

Mary Doering, Ancaster, Ontario

The author replies:

I believe Mary Doering is correct in her identification of the picture as *Silene virginica* rather than *S. regia*. The latter has no conspicuous notches in its petals, but this picture definitely does. Mary is to be commended on her sharp observation. *Perry Peskin*



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flower. One fellow, Mark Egger, has his own website (www.flickr.com/photos/34090482@N03/) dedicated to *Castilleja* where he has posted photographs of 174 varieties, anywhere from 20 to over 100 images each. Mark is a public school science teacher, a published botanist and an Indian paintbrush enthusiast. Of great plains paintbrush, he says that it's mostly white to pale yellow north of Texas, but in West Texas, "it occurs in an amazing range of shades." Just like its alpine cousins, *Castilleja sessiliflora* can appear in many colours: yellow, white, scarlet, rosy pinks, ochres, magentas, and purples. Perhaps my specimens migrated up the east side of the Rockies from West Texas, bringing the pink with them.

One of the reasons for so many colours is that *Castilleja* hybridizes readily. Even trained eyes find it challenging to identify individual species on the basis of colour and shape alone. The distinctive displays are actually leaf-like, outer parts of the flower (bracts and sepals). The flower itself and its reproductive parts poke out from the petals, which are fused into a long narrow tube hiding within the bracts and sepals. This flower is often greenish or yellow and tipped in the same color as the showy bracts and sepals. On *Castilleja sessiliflora*, this is the little orchid-like blossom that I saw poking out like a snake's tongue. All the *Castillejas* are hemiparasitic (partially parasitic), drawing nourishment from other roots that they encounter while enjoying the shade of their hosts.

The genus was first named in honour of Domingo Castillejo, an 18th-century botanist in Cadiz, Spain, by Jose Celestine Mutis. Mutis observed the flower in Colombia, South America and sent back his information to Linnaeus's son. It was subsequently included in Linnaeus' 1781 *Supplementum Plantarum*.

Now that I knew where to find them, I went back in subsequent weeks to visit my new friends. The

cool rainy season continued into summer and the great plains paintbrush grew taller, but increasingly desiccated and less colourful. Looking forward to another reunion next year, I'll be searching for this most distinctive paintbrush amongst the early grasses when the first flowers pop next spring.

Evan Cantor is a musician, artist and part-time flower-hunter living in Boulder, Colorado. He loves Malbecs, Tempranillos and India Pale Ales, especially after a long day of hiking.

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