

# Colorado Native Plant Society



## NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 4      NUMBER 3

MAY - JUNE      1980

"DEDICATED TO THE APPRECIATION AND CONSERVATION OF THE COLORADO FLORA"

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\* Year when terms expire is given in ().  
Numbers following names are phones where  
Directors can be reached. All of Colorado  
is reached by area code 303.

### COMMITTEES

EDUCATION	Virginia Dionigi
HORTICULTURE & REHABILITATION	Mark Phillips
LEGISLATIVE	vacant
Karen Hollweg is representative on COSC	
MEMBERSHIP	Myrna Steinkamp
PUBLICATIONS	Scott Peterson
THREATENED & ENDANGERED	Bill Harmon

### ADDRESS

Please direct all correspondence and inquiries  
to:

The Colorado Native Plant Society  
P. O. Box 200  
Ft. Collins, Colorado 80522

### MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS & INFORMATION

Please direct all membership applications,  
renewals and address changes to Myrna  
Steinkamp, Membership Chairperson,  
CONPS in care of the above address.

### SCHEDULE OF MEMBERSHIP FEES

LIFE	\$ 250.00
SUPPORTING	50.00
SOCIETY	25.00
FAMILY	12.00
INDIVIDUAL	8.00
STUDENT & RETIRED	4.00

Nonmembership subscriptions to the News-  
letter are \$ 4.00.

### NEWSLETTER ARTICLES

Please direct all articles of interest to  
the CONPS to Dieter Wilken, Editor, CONPS,  
in care of the above address.  
Deadlines for the 6 bimonthly Newsletters  
are the end of January, March, May,  
July, September and November.

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## ASSOCIATION OF WESTERN NATIVE PLANT SOCIETIES

On April 19, 1980 I had the pleasure of representing the CONPS in a meeting of native plant societies in Salt Lake City. The purpose of the meeting was to develop an umbrella organization for societies in the several western states. A meeting was originally held in Reno, Nevada during February but at that time the CONPS BOD elected to communicate by letter rather than sending a representative.

The major outcome of the Salt Lake City Meeting was the formation of an Association of Western Native Plant Societies. The purpose of the new organization is to endorse goals of individual societies with regard to promotion of public knowledge and awareness of native plants, encouraging the cultivation and landscaping use of native plants, to facilitate exchange of information and cooperative action among native plant societies and to formulate and publicize consensus views on legislative acts affecting the native flora.

Membership in the organization is at the society level only, although individuals can subscribe to the quarterly newsletter. Mitch Beauchamp of the California NPS graciously agreed to serve as the newsletter editor, which is available for \$2, AWNPS, P.O. Box 985, National City, CA 92050. Representatives present at Salt Lake City agreed that the new organization should be loosely defined, with 1 annual meeting and the quarterly newsletter. Business will be conducted primarily by mail. A member will be a native plant society that subscribes to the AWNPS purposes and will be allowed one vote. The annual chairperson of the Association will be the society delegate for the state in which the annual meeting is held. The first annual meeting will be in Phoenix, Arizona in September.

A large portion of the Salt Lake City meeting was devoted to the exchange of ideas on money-raising plans and most of these ideas can be successfully utilized by the CONPS. If any CONPS member has specific interests, a report is in the hands of Myrna Steinkamp. The meeting was not all conducted in a windowless room. Participants toured the facilities of a commercial nursery that deals in native plants. Discussed during the tour were seed collection, propagation by cuttings and the novelty of tissue culture, which proved quite interesting. We also toured the University of Utah's planned native plant arboretum.

If you desire any additional information regarding the AWNPS, I would be happy to exchange ideas on a personal basis.

--- J. Scott Peterson



## CONPS PARTICIPATES IN LIFE VISION ENVIRONMENTAL FAIR

To commemorate the 10th anniversary of Earth Day the Colorado Open Space Council arranged a week-long series of activities culminating in a "Life Vision Environmental Fair". The Fair was sponsored jointly by the Denver University's Environmental Awareness Group and was held April 26 and 27. To gain some public exposure for the CONPS, The CONPS Education Committee (Virginia Dionigi, Ann Armstrong and Miriam Denham) arranged for a booth at the Fair. A continuous showing of slides of Colorado natives plus some large photographs and a display of our new poster with Colorado Native Plant Society in bold black letters helped to attract fairgoers to our booth. Also, membership information, application forms, schedules of field trips and notes on plants showed in the slide presentation were available in the booth and posters were offered for sale.

Those who viewed the display thought the CONPS booth was one of the most attractive in the entire Fair! Many thanks to members of the education committee and to those members who helped with the project.

--- Lloyd Hayes

## SOME RECENT ACTIONS OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The Education Committee in March reported progress in establishing a collection of slides illustrating Colorado's native flora. Several 100 slides currently are in the collection. The Committee plans to develop 3 sets of slides, each accompanied by a taped narrative. Each set will be directed toward a different educational level, probably elementary, junior high school and senior high school or adult groups. The first topic for a slide/narration package will be "Common Plants of Colorado". Packages on other topics will follow.

Tom Eamon has arranged for our 1980 Annual Meeting to be held on October 25th at the Denver Botanic Garden. Mark your calendars and watch for further announcements in the NEWSLETTER.

The BOD approved development of the first Society poster. See the last NEWSLETTER for specifics.

Lloyd Hayes developed first-draft statements of proposed objectives for each of the Society's standing committees. These have been distributed to all BOD members and appropriate committee

chairpersons for study and recommendations.

A good cooperative relationship has been established with the Colorado Natural Heritage Program for exchange of information, particularly on endangered or threatened species.

CONPS donated \$50 to "Operation Wildflowers" of the Colorado Federation of Garden Clubs, to aid in the use of native wildflowers for highway beautification.

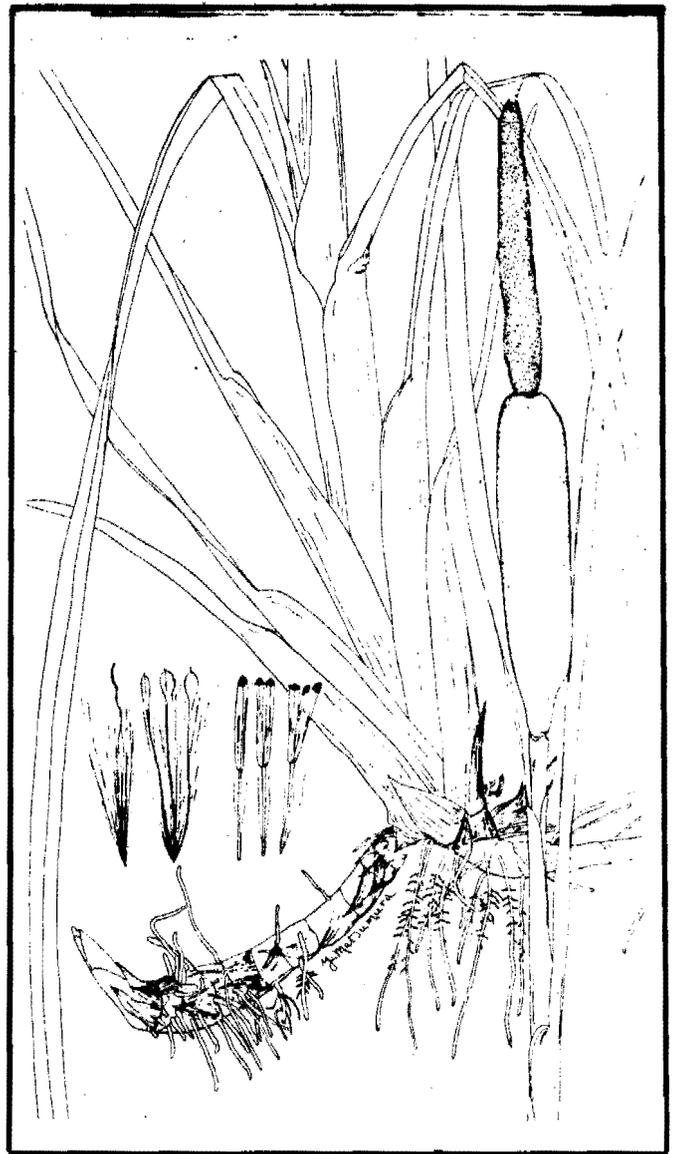
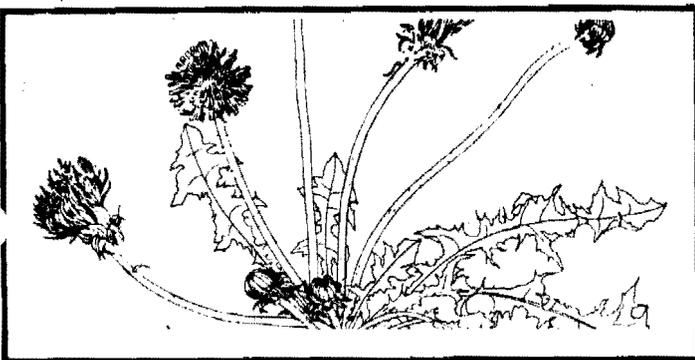
Myrna Steinkamp was elected CONPS Treasurer, replacing Walt Ruzzo, who has left Colorado.

--- Lloyd Hayes

#### A GLIMPSE OF COLORADO'S EDIBLE WILD GARDEN

With the coming of summer and the consequent bloom of wildflowers, it's time to venture out in search of our many native edible plants. The common CATTAIL (*Typha latifolia*) is considered by some to be the "outdoor pantry" and the DANDELION (*Taraxacum officinale*) is not an unwanted species at all.

Perhaps the best and most preferred delicacy of the CATTAIL is that prepared from the inner core tissue of the lower stems and rootstocks. The outer leaves should be peeled away and the tender inner portion extracted. These have an excellent flavor whether eaten raw in salads or prepared, like ASPARAGUS, with butter and seasonings, a cream or cheese sauce. Secondly, the young spikes can be removed from their sheaths early in the season and eaten raw or cooked and eaten like corn-on-the-cob. The flowers as well as the pollen can be collected and used in baking as a substitute for flour, in the making of muffins, breads, cakes or even flapjacks. (a recipe can be found in Harold Harrington's Edible Native Plants of the Rocky Mountains, University of New Mexico Press, p. 223). After CATTAILS have turned brown in the fall, the soft dry "down" of the "TAIL" is an excellent "fire starter" when faced with an absence of tinder. The rootstocks are relatively high in carbohydrates and therefore a good nutritional food. The outer tissues should be peeled away to reveal the white central core, often 1/2 inch in diameter. These cores can be boiled, baked, fried or eaten raw as well as dried and ground into a flour. The rootstock buds also contain a high starchy material and are quite favorable.



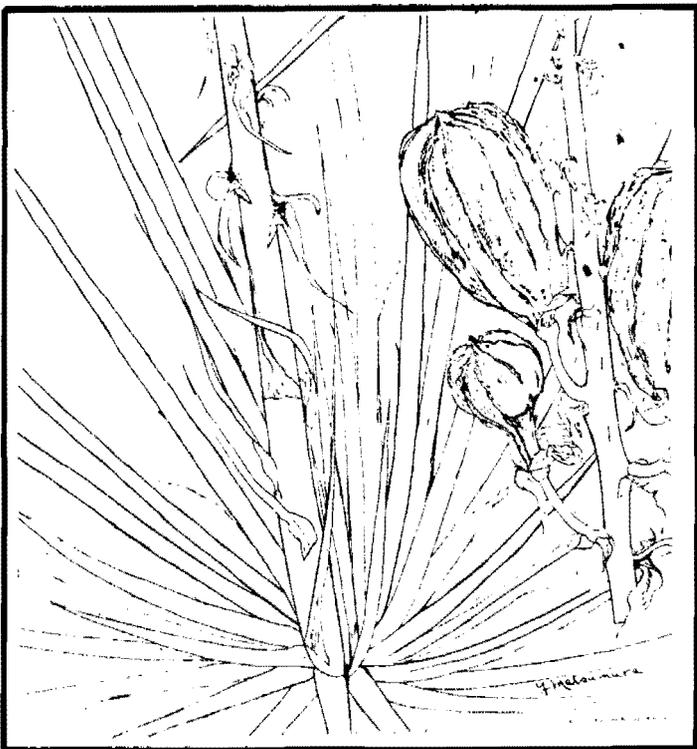
Don't spray your DANDELIONS! Your neighbors may disapprove so it may be wise to be cautious. A weedy member of the SUNFLOWER family, the DANDELION has a number of uses. The young leaves can be used in salads, tossed with a mixture of other wild greens. The leaves tend to develop a rather bitter taste with age and may require blanching. However, the bitter taste can be favorable in small amounts. The young leaves can be boiled as a pot-herb or dried for tea. The slender taproots are excellent when sliced in salads, roasted or fried. They also can be roasted and ground as a substitute for coffee. The yellow flowers add an interesting flare to pancakes, cornbread or muffins and are famous as the major stock to DANDELION WINE (see Harrington, p. 102). NOTE: Exercise caution when harvesting DANDELIONS from unfamiliar places. It is a common practice to spray these weeds with herbicides such as 2,4-D.

There are many species of VIOLETS that are edible. The young leaves and flower buds are great in salads. There is no bitter taste to the leaves. The leaves and buds also make a good potherb, cooked like spinach, or dried for a favorable tea. The flowers can be candied or boiled down to a sweet syrup.

Colorado's weedy RUSSIAN THISTLE (Salsola kali or Salsola iberica) is another introduced species common to disturbed and waste places. The young shoots of this plant make an excellent potherb. Served like its close relative spinach, RUSSIAN THISTLE can be prepared with seasonings, lemon juice or bacon, one of the very best of the wild potherbs!

A common perennial to the eastern slope is the SOAPWEED, Yucca glauca. The immature fruit, when peeled and boiled, tastes somewhat like squash. The large showy flowers can be added raw to salads or boiled and served with butter and seasonings. The fibers of the leaves can be used in weaving cordage or rope and the roots may be used as a substitute for soap. However, the leaves and roots contain salicylic acid, which is harmful in high doses, and consequently should not be eaten!

FIREWEED, Epilobium angustifolium, is a species of high elevation meadows and burned sites and is also a valuable edible plant. The young shoots can be prepared like ASPARAGUS and the tender young leaves are a supplement to salads or potherbs. The flowers in bud are also good. The leaves can be dried and used in making tea. Peeling away the bark of the stem tissue reveals a tender inner pith having a "sweet" flavor when eaten raw. This inner pith can be used as a thickening for soup and stews.



In moist woodlands and valleys and along streams the ELDERBERRY (Sambucus) may be found. A shrub to small tree, the ELDERBERRY is known principally for its wine. The berries, when eaten raw, may taste rather bitter but make excellent jams, jellies, pies and syrup. The can be used dried as a flavoring. The young shoots can be prepared as a potherb. The flowers when shaken from the inflorescence into a batter make delicious elderberry pancakes. The flower clusters are excellent dipped in a sweet batter and fried (as "fritters") and resemble a lace cookie. The flowers may be also used for tea. It should be noted that the mature leaves, bark and roots are known to be poisonous.

These are only a few of Colorado's many native edible plant species. All can be a welcome and novel addition to any meal or camping trip with practice and a little imagination. This summer you too may wish to sample our "wild garden".

--- Karen Wiley Eberle

#### A NEW COLONY OF MINER'S LETTUCE (MONTIA PERFOLIATA)

"Montia perfoliata Donn, Hort. Cantab. 25. 1796....South Dakota to British Columbia, south to Colorado and California. No specimens from this state were located by the writer, although the variety depressa (Gray) Jepson is to be expected." The quotation is from Harrington's Manual of the Plants of Colorado, 1964.

Dr. Harrington apparently was not aware of Dr. E.H. Brunquist's collections of this species in Douglas County in 1960 in the vicinity of Roxborough Park. Dr. Dieter Wilken located a population near Kassler north of Roxborough Park in 1979, but efforts to relocate Brunquist's find proved ineffectual.

In late April this year I was fortunate to stumble on quite a respectable colony of Montia perfoliata in Jefferson County at about 5500 feet in T5S, R69W, S28. It is on the southeast slope of a cliff on Ken Caryl Avenue just beyond the last of the housing developments. Ken Caryl Avenue crosses S. Wadsworth not far north of its junction with Colorado Highway 75.

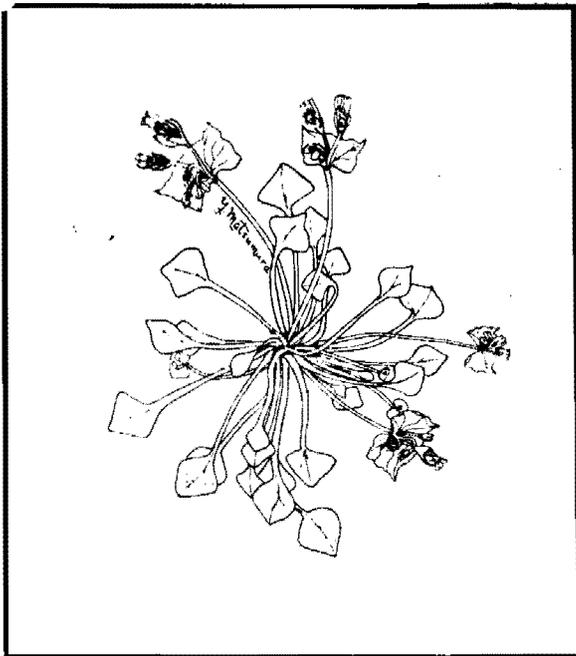
In April, the little plants were clustered under the edges of rocks and shrubs in dampish ground. It may have been damp only because it was the day after one of our numerous spring snows! There were no leaves on the shrubs but the hillsides was well yellowed with Alyssum minus. A few blossoms of Viola nuttallii were showing as well as Claytonia rosea, Microsteris gracilis and the ubiquitous Chorispora tenella.

Montia is an unusual plant with tiny (3mm in diameter) pinkish-white flowers with 2 sepals, coming one at a time in a small cyme, which is subtended by 2 circular leaves fused together around the scape. The scape is 6-8 cm longer than the basal leaves. Each little leaf, broadly deltoid to orbicular, the widest to 12 mm, has its own petiole from the base of the plant. Leaves, petioles and scapes are almost succulent in appearance and are completely glabrous. This annual grows from a small taproot.

To the best of my knowledge this is the third population to be found in Colorado, all of them from an area roughly 8 miles in diameter. Did the first ones escape from someones herb garden?

One little tidbit about Montia is to be found on page 97 of the Mug House, the account by Arthur Rohn of the excavations on Wetherill Mesa in Mesa Verde, published by the National Park Service in 1971. In dried fecal material examined by the excavators were found seeds of Montia. This might be the origin of the common name, INDIAN LETTUCE, given to the plant by Dr. Harrington and others. An idle speculation but fun.

--- Berta Anderson



## CACTUS RUSTLING!

In the Sunday, May 25 edition of the Denver Post there appeared an article on cactus rustling, which "threatens to deplete rare desert plants". A recent article in the magazine Science 80, July-August, further details the problem. The following are excerpts:

"Widespread rustling of cacti has occurred on lands administered by the BLM. The administrator of BLM's Mojave Desert Unit in California reported in 1976 that 1000's of Joshua Trees, red barrel cacti, golden chollas and other species were stolen each year, often by people using heavy equipment and large trucks."

"The volume of the cactus trade can be only estimated, since, for example, vast quantities of globular cacti were recorded by Arizona authorities as being shipped from Texas. In 1978 one dealer alone sent shipments of between 60,000 and 95,000 plants to Arizona almost every month."

"Although the volume and deleterious impacts of the cactus trade have received little attention from the public, some programs have been established to regulate it. The first state to do so, Arizona, adopted its Native Plant Act in 1929. Strengthened in 1967, the act prohibits collecting of 9 species of plants for any reason and collecting of another 200 species is regulated by permit. The 1977 Desert Native Plant Act in California protects plants in the desert counties. New Mexico has just begun to regulate the taking of plants."

Implementation of laws passed under the Endangered Species Act and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species is currently shared by the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service of the US Dept. of Agriculture. Until recently the latter agency began to rigorously enforce only importations of exotic plant species with regard to the Convention. No attempt has been made to enforce exportation of plant species from the United States.

Another aspect of this problem, particularly with regard to cacti and other plants used for landscaping in the Southwest is that now commercial collectors may be driven out of enforced states, such as Arizona, New Mexico and California and begin their lucrative harvesting in states such as Nevada, Utah and Colorado.

Although Nevada is contemplating a law concerning the taking of native plants, Utah and Colorado legislatures are making no effort in this field. When will they start?

--- Editor