



NYFA Newsletter

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of the New York State Museum Institute

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New York State Museum The Nature Conservancy

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Address all Correspondence to NYFA, 3132 CEC, Albany, NY 12230

Fall NYFA Meeting, 1990 --

On September 22, our fall meeting was held with good attendance from across the state. Twenty eight people (10% of our membership) showed up at the New York State Museum and shared ideas about the organization and its future, and we also covered the planned agenda. We deferred financial policy discussions until the advisory council is in place, and received a number of nominations for that group. Rare plant discoveries were announced (see articles to follow) and a number of subjects were discussed, including the promising possibility of workshops at future meetings. Despite a soggy atmosphere, we saw ginseng, golden-seal and green violet at Joralemon park, along with about one third of New York's native fern species.



Pawpaw, *Asimina triloba* L., recently found on Staten Island after 111 years.

Pawpaw Rediscovered on Staten Island --

Dick Buegler reported at the NYFA meeting that a well-developed pawpaw stand was found this year by Raymond Matarazzo, assistant curator of science for the Staten Island Institute of Arts and Sciences. *Asimina triloba* L. may not be well-known to some New York botanists, since it ranges south and west of our state for the most part. It is a shrub or small tree of the custard-apple family (Annonaceae) that bears edible, fleshy fruits. It is significant that an extant stand was found on Staten Island, since it is the northernmost station ever reported for the species along the Atlantic Seaboard, and all historically known populations of it north of southern New Jersey were previously thought to have been extirpated. Pawpaw is known from western New York State, along the Great Lakes, where it is also rare... once used as a food plant by Native Americans. The Staten Island population occurs in a forested area with rare, native willow oak (*Quercus phellos* L.) which had been reported to hybridize with black oak there 110 years before. The site, in Tottenville, has been targeted for a 400 unit townhouse development, but efforts are underway to save the plant community.

Other Rare New York Plants Found in 1990:

In their botanical explorations this past summer, Anne Johnson and Nancy Eldblom found a site on the St. Lawrence River with about 100 plants of *Zigadenus elegans* var. *glaucus* on calcareous dredge spoil. Returning to the area on August 12, Anne found the rare fringed gentian (*Gentianopsis procera*), once thought to be extirpated from the state. In 1986, it was relocated near Niagara Falls by Richard Mitchell, Richard Zander and Patricia Eckel, after not having been reported there for over 100 years (Clintonia, 1986). This second rediscovery of the rare gentian marks a new site for it a short distance from a site on Polly's creek, where plants were collected 60 years ago. Both species are protected under New

York State law. The white camas (*Zigadenus*) is listed by the New York Natural Heritage Program, with a legal status of threatened and the highest priority state rank of S1. The gentian is listed endangered also, with a state rank of S1.

A New Weed Recognized for New York: Gordon Tucker and Richard Mitchell noted a weed that has been overlooked in New York and New England, though it has been here for fifty years or more. *Sagina japonica* (Sw.) Ohwi, has been known as a adventive on the West Coast of North America for some time, but specimens have only recently been recognized from sites in New York, Connecticut and Massachusetts from waste places and urban settings. It is easily distinguished from our only other annual pearlwort, the rare *S. procumbens* (Ell.) T. & G., by its glandular-pubescent pedicels and globose capsules with plump, dark seeds. Probably introduced first in Boston or New York City, it had spread as far west as Elmira in Chemung County, N.Y. by the 1940's.

More Adventives Found by Gordon Tucker:

Salix cinerea L., Gray Willow, native of Europe, was found in a damp, gravelly, seepage area in Dover, Dutchess County. It is the first report of this species in either New York or New England.

Centaureum pulchellum (Sw.) Druce, Centaury, was reported from Queens County in Torrey's Flora of New York (1843) but it had not been recently vouchered until found by Norton Miller in 1983 in Rensselaer County and by Tucker in 1989 at two sites in damp gravelly disturbed places in Millerton and Dover, Dutchess County.

Brunnera macrophylla (Adams) I. M. Johnston, Siberian Bugloss, is naturalized in woods and roadsides in the village of South Westerlo, Albany County. Similar in general appearance to native *Cynoglossum boreale*, this native of central Asia had not been reported as an escape in North America.

Noteworthy Botanical Finds at Orient Beach State Park --

by Eric Lamont

Richard Stalter and I have been conducting a floristic inventory and ecological study of Orient Beach State Park (OBSP) since 1988. It will be a comparative flora, using Roy Latham's (1932) flora of the park as a baseline. The park is located on the North Fork of Long Island on a recurved spit, just southwest of Orient Point. Of particular interest is a mature red cedar maritime forest that dominates storm ridges in the park. *Juniperus virginiana* L. and hackberry, *Celtis occidentalis* L., dominate the canopy of this rare plant community.

Rare plants recently identified at OBSP include: blackjack oak, *Quercus marilandica* Muenchh. (at the

northeastern limit of its range), Scotch lovage, *Ligusticum scoticum* L. (at the southern limit of its range), wild pink, *Silene caroliniana* Walt. var. *pennsylvanica* (Michx.) Fern., seabeach knotweed, *Polygonum glaucum* Nutt. and another knotweed, *P. tenue* Michx. The only known extant Long Island locations for tower-cress *Arabis glabra* (L.) Bernh. and rock spikemoss, *Selaginella rupestris* (L.) Spring are in the park.

Plantago pusilla Nutt., a rare introduced plantain in the State, was once listed as native, but is now thought to be adventive from its native range further south. It was discovered at Orient Beach State Park this spring. As in the other vouchered extant New York State population (found by Zaremba, Mitchell, et al. in eastern Long Island), the habitat is sterile, sandy soil adjacent to a parking lot. Other rare introduced species naturalized at OBSP are: horned poppy, *Glaucium flavum* Crantz, cutleaf blackberry, *Rubus laciniatus* Willd., and Japanese daisy, *Leucanthemum nipponicum* Franch ex Maxim.

We are still seeking several rare plants reported by Latham from the area, but fear that they may have become extirpated. These include: *Draba reptans* (Lam.) Fern., *Oenothera oakesiana* (Gray) Robbins, *Onosmodium virginianum* (L.) A. DC., *Fimbristylis castanea* (Michx.) Vahl and *Paspalum setaceum* Michx. var. *muhlenbergii* (Nash) Banks, for which a voucher specimen has yet to be seen.

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Fishers Island Flora Project --

by Gordon Tucker

Fishers Island is a narrow island about 9 miles long, just off the shore of southeastern Connecticut, but part of the town of Southhold, Suffolk Co., NY. A checklist of the flora was published a half century ago by Charles C. Hanmer (Torreya 40: 1940) which included about 500 species. Gordon Tucker and Edwin H. Horning (Curator, Ferguson Museum, Fishers Island) are preparing an updated account of the vascular flora of Fishers Island. So far, we have added about 60 species to the island's flora, and located populations of several species rare in New York State. These include: *Carex straminea*, *Cyperus odoratus*, *C. erythrorhizos*, *Eleocharis halophila* and *Angelica lucida*. We have also found a number of interesting adventives, including *Clematis terniflora*, yam-leaf clematis, *Althaea officinalis*, marsh-mallow, *Exochorda racemosa*, pearl-bush, *Eragrostis curvula*, weeping lovegrass, *Erysimum perofskianum*, wallflower and *Cardamine hispida*, hairy rockcress.

Nominations for NYFA Advisory Council --

Twelve nominations to the NYFA advisory council were received, representing a wide range of personalities, interests and talents. Our original intent was to have a seven-person council, but since the dozen people nominated seem to be such a well-rounded group of qualified participants, we ask you (the membership) if we may invite them all to participate, requesting your comments (positive or negative) on the subject. If a number of you feel that an election is more advisable, then we will do so. The following is the list of nominees, in no particular order:

- **Paul Huth**, Director of Research at Mohonk Preserve, Inc. (M.S., SUNY, New Paltz) is a field botanist and board member for the Eastern New York chapter of TNC, John Burroughs Association, Ulster County Environmental Management Council and the Torrey Botanical Club.
- **Claire Schmitt** of Rexford New York is our liaison with the New York State Museum Institute, who will be of great help to us in interpreting activities between the NYFA and its parent organization.
- **Steve Clemants** did his Ph.D. work at the New York Botanical Garden, and was the N.Y. Natural Heritage Program botanist before joining the staff at the Brooklyn Botanic Garden, where he now directs the Metropolitan Flora Project.
- **Anne Johnson** botanizes the North Country and works with Nancy Eldblom to produce a botanical newsletter particularly concentrating on the St. Lawrence and Franklin counties areas. These are the persons who found two S1 rarities this year.
- **Bob Smith** is chairman of Biology at Hartwick College (Ph.D., University of Florida). He has long been interested in New York flora, especially Otsego County, and he is currently interested in implementing publication of Karl Brooks' Catskill Flora manuscripts (see below).
- **Skip Blanchard** (Ph.D., Cornell) is a biology professor and Director of Graduate Environmental Studies at Long Island University, Brookville. He is currently the chairman of the Long Island flora committee, and past president of the Long Island Botanical Society.
- **Knowlton Foote** (Ph.D., SUNY Syracuse) is a botanist, originally trained in plant physiology, who is also interested in writing on higher plants, especially the ecology and physiology of common wildflowers and weeds.
- **Les Mehrhoff** is State Biologist of Connecticut. He can bring us an out-of-state perspective, through his many botanical activities and affiliations, such as being Vice President of the New England Botanical Club. He has an M.S. and is currently a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Connecticut.
- **Breta Sisson** is the Budget Control Officer Emerita from State Univ. College, Cortland. She has 35 years experience in fiscal accounting and budgeting. She took botany courses while in college, and has a strong interest in wildflowers and gardening.
- **Gordon Tucker** (Ph.D., Duke University) is a specialist in the sedge and grass families and northeastern flora, now employed as a scientist working on the State Flora Project at the New York State Museum.
- **Ripley Golovin** is currently a visiting lecturer at Vassar College, teaching cultural botany. She holds a MBA degree from Columbia University and has held an N.S.F. scholarship at the Boyce Thompson Institute. She is a columnist for *Garden Design* and is currently seeking a Masters degree in Landscape Architecture at Univ. Penn.
- **Eric Lamont** is a student of the Aster Family and currently a Ph.D. candidate, studying at The New York Botanical Garden. He is very interested in field botany, and currently teaches high school biology on Long Island.

Karl L. Brooks (1912-1990) and the Fate of his Catskill Flora and Economic Botany --

by Richard Mitchell

Those of us who knew him and those who have become familiar with his work were saddened at news of the death of Karl Brooks in August of this year. He was of the very highest ilk of self-trained field botanists, a scholarly man with a great knowledge of the flora of southern New York State and folk uses of plants.

Long before he retired as an editor for Roman & Littlefield Co. of New York City, he developed an interest in higher plants, working first on a flora list for Putnam County and later throughout the Catskill Mountains. By establishing a summer home in Arkville, near Margaretville, he was able to carry out field work in the area for two decades, during which time he contributed many hundreds of specimens to the New York State Museum and developed strong ties with Stanley J. Smith, the curator at NYS from 1947 to 1978.

Karl Brooks' very significant contribution to the literature of New York botany is contained in the partially published work: *A Catskill Flora and Economic Botany*. This series will eventually be a 13 volume, illustrated flora, containing a wealth of historical information on folk medicine, Native American plant uses, recipes, current pharmaceutical

uses of Catskill plants, etc., but there is much to do before it is in final form. The first five volumes appeared as New York State Museum Bulletins (see the bibliography in the NYFA Newsletter, vol. 2).

The initial volume on ferns sold well, but then sales dropped, even with extremely low prices on the individual fascicles. When the State Museum computerized publication procedures, the Catskill Flora could no longer be published in inexpensive, camera-ready, typewritten form, and publication of the series was discontinued. Even so, Karl continued to work away on his ambitious project, which he brought to virtual completion. All volumes exist in manuscript form, though the last two will need work.

Three manuscript volumes remained at the State Museum, and the remainder were donated by Karl to Hartwick College in Oneonta. I have turned the camera-ready volumes over to Dr. Robert Smith, chairman of the Biology Department at Hartwick College (and nominated member of our new NYFA advisory council). He will now make every effort to find support and funding to see that the entire life work of Karl Brooks is published. We at The Botany Office of the museum want to cooperate in any way possible to further this effort. The volumes already published will be combined in some way with those yet to be released. A condensation into fewer volumes is also possible.

If you can suggest ways to help further this effort, or if you would like to donate services or funds to its goals, please contact Bob Smith. I hope Karl knew that we, the botanists of New York and New England, would eventually seek a way to rally behind the fine legacy he has left us, and that we will try not to let such a wealth of valuable information go unpublished.

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A Special Offer on Subscriptions to "Wildflower" Magazine --

The periodical called *Wildflower* is a well-edited and lavishly illustrated botany magazine put out by the Canadian Wildflower Society. Its coverage is very broad, featuring articles about tropical rainforests, and conservation, as well as a wide range of articles on North American flora. In an effort to expand their membership, they are offering a year's subscription to members of botanical associations at a reduced price of \$15 (instead of \$20) for the first year. Send a check for \$15 to: WILDFLOWER - Subscriptions, Canadian Wildflower Society, 75 Ternhill Crescent, North York, Ontario, Canada M3C 2E4 before Dec. 30, 1990. Mention that you are a member of NYFA to get the discount.

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Woodsia cathartiana Robins., Now Extirpated in New York State?

by Richard Mitchell

I received the sad news from Stephen Eaton this fall that the only known colony of this very rare fern is down to one, shriveled frond. He has carefully monitored the population for decades, and he is more worried about it this year than ever before. Extensive searches on the lake cliffs where it occurs have failed to turn up more individuals, and the nearest colony of the species is in Minnesota.