Our Amazing Prairie Plants
Pasque Flower, *Pulsatilla patens*

often called “twin flower” or “old man of the prairie” because flowers usually appear in pairs and the seed heads resemble the gray hair of an elder person.
Ground Plum, *Astragalus crassicarpus*

The little pea-like fruits were used as a seasonal indicator for corn planting schedule.
“used as a remedy for colds; dried tops burned as incense.

Fringed Puccoon, Lithospermum incisum
Hoary Puccoon, Lithospermum canescens
• red dye from roots and used to color gum from compass plant; powder from roots to treat gunshot wounds.
Bitterweed, Hymenoxys scaposa
Soapweed, *Yucca glauca*
• root soaked in water to make sudsy soap. Bound with sinew to make fire drill. Fire source in treeless prairie.

• Leave fibers used as thread and tip as needle; used to help extract thorns
Desert Globe Mallow, *Sphaeralcea coccinea*

“the most arresting color on the Plains from early May to July…its brilliancy is set off by the gray-green, rough-hairy leaves. Strong ground-gaining roots, to be well considered when placing in the garden.” – Claude Barr
“it wins an honored place by bearing at the apex of each stem an ample, flat-topped cluster of inch-wide heads, all in deep, rich yellow and centered about a disk of intense, glowing orange” –Claude Barr
Prairie Ragwort, Senecio plattensis
Slender Wild Parsley, *Musineon tenuifolium*
• All parts are edible, leaves, flowers, stalks & roots.

• When steamed the stalks compare to asparagus. Young leaves & flowers used in salads

• The Lakota made a blue paint from the flowers that they used to decorate their clothing, hence the name Indian Paint
Prairie Spiderwort, Tradescantia ohioensis
• Local names include “snotweed” and “cow-slobbers”

• A poultice made by crushing the leaves of the plants was used as a treatment for insect bites and stings.

• Mucilaginous juice resemble spider’s silken strands.
Gumbo Lily, *Oenothera caespitosa* "has four wide, heart-shaped petals, like an open parachute landing upside down." –Claude Barr
Calylophus serrulatus, Toothed Primrose
Calylophus lavandulifolius, Lavenderleaf Primrose
called “sour herb”; Pawnee say the buffalo were very fond of this plant; children ate leaves and flowers.
Meadow Anemone, Anemone canadensis
• The root is one of the most highly esteemed medicines, eye wash.

• The right to use this plant belonged to the medicine men.

• Pulverized root for wounds taken internally and applied externally; “eye wash medicine”
Prairie Alumroot, *Heuchera richardsonii*
• Poultice of powdered roots applied to sores.

• Decoction of root or root chewed for diarrhea.

• Infusion of root used to wash sore eyes.

• Used pounded dried roots to help close wounds that were difficult to heal. Also soar throats.

• The chemical “alum” is an astringent and antibacterial.
Dwarf Blue Indigo, *Baptisia minor*
White Wild Indigo, Baptisia lactea
The leaves were used by all the tribes to make a drink like tea. The taste is something like that of the Asiatic tea and is much better than that of the South American yerba mate.
“plump columns of wide trumpets, more intensely brilliant than any sky, above long and narrow, channeled, blue-green leaves.” –Claude Barr

Narrow-leaf Penstemon, Penstemon angustifolia
Shell-leaf Penstemon, Penstemon grandiflorus
• called “butterfly flower”; root boiled used for pains in the chest or stomachache;

• tea from leaves for fever.
Showy Penstemon, Penstemon cobaea
Pale Purple Coneflower, Echinacea pallida
Culver’s Root, Veronicastrum virginicum
Leadplant, Amorpha canescens
Hoary Vervain, Verbena stricta
Prickly Poppy, *Argemone polyanthemos*
Purple Meadow Rue, *Thalictrum dasycarpum*
Canada Milkvetch, *Astragalus canadensis*
Butterfly Milkweed, *Asclepias tuberosa*
Swamp Milkweed, Asclepias incarnata
Smooth Milkweed, Asclepias sullivantii
Common Milkweed, *Asclepias syriaca*
Whorled Milkweed, Asclepias verticillata
“each of the several to many trailing or clambering, little-branched stems carries its compliment of flowers…inch-wide balls of fluff of a lovely rose-pink.” – Claude Barr

Sensitive Briar, Schrankia nuttallii
• Purple Poppy Mallow, Callirhoe involucrata
• Called “smoke treatment medicine” by the Teton Dakota

• Dried root fired, the smoke was inhaled for cold in the head; the aching parts bathed in it.

• The large tapering root is edible and was eaten raw, boiled or roasted; the leaves were used as a thickener in soups and stews.
Purple Prairie Clover, Dalea purpurea

"the thick cones, which attain a length of two inches, are dark green, a bit silvery hairy, and the circles of flowers are a beautiful purple-red from light to deep in hue….a gay atmosphere is added by the many long-filamented anthers of gold or burnt orange." –Claude Barr
White Prairie Clover, Dalea candida
Rocky Mountain Beeplant, Cleome serrulata
Upright Prairie Coneflower, *Ratibida columnifera*
• called “little sunflower” or “used to drink milk with”; tea from leaves used for stomachache and tea from flowers to relieve headache.

• beverage tea from the leaves; boiled leaves and stems to relieve poison ivy.
Dotted Gayfeather, Liatris punctata
Scaly Blazing Star, Liatris squarrosa
Yellowdicks, *Helenium amarum*
“children gathered chewing gum from the upper parts of the stem, whee the gum exudes, forming large lumps.”

**Compass Plant, Silphium laciniatum**
•“Ponca say where this plant abounds lightning is very prevalent, so they will never make camp in such a place.”
Grassleaf Goldenrod

*Solidago graminifolia*
Downy goldenrod

*Solidago petiolaris*
• If you like pollinators and birds, goldenrod is one of the best plants to have.

• Research shows that plants in the Solidago genus serve as a host plant for at least 115 different species of butterflies and moths, more than any other perennial plant. Goldenrod’s late blossoms open during the migration of fall butterflies, including monarchs.

• The pollen and nectar in goldenrod also supports native bees and other pollinators and songbirds eat the seeds in winter.
Stiff Goldenrod

Solidago rigida
Showy Goldenrod
Solidago speciosa
Plains Prickly-Pear Cactus, *Opuntia polyacantha*
• The fruits were eaten fresh after the bristles had been removed, or they were stewed.

• The mucilaginous juice of the stem was utilized as a sizing to fix the color painted on hides.

• The mucilaginous juice was rubbed on moccasins as a natural sizing agent.
How’s It Growing?

Wednesdays 11:00am - Noon

Hosted by
Bob Henrickson, Nebraska Statewide Arboretum, Inc.
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“Dedicated to answering your growing questions”
...enriching lives through the beauty and wonder of plants.

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