



# WILDFLOWER NEWS

'Growing Nature's Garden'

SEPTEMBER 2022

## From your editor:

Welcome to the Wildflower News for September. How quickly summer flies by! There's still lots of time to enjoy the late summer/fall wildflowers in all their glory.

Note the late news at the end of this newsletter re the temporary closure of Bunchberry Meadows.

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*Symphyotrichum lanceolatum* - western willow aster, lance leaf aster. Photo by Sue Panteluk. Clifford E. Lee Nature Sanctuary, August 19, 2022.

## Letters:

Thank you for a most beautiful and informative newsletter [August 2022].

Gloria

Just dropping a note to say thank you for another excellent issue of Wildflower News [August 2022]. This publication is so rich in content, informative, and visually appealing!

I found the article on distinguishing Arnica's informative and practical, and it was an eyeopener to learn about poison ivy in Edmonton.

I appreciate that many hours go into producing high quality content - thank you for all your work!

Best,  
Maria

*WN: We're very happy to learn that you both enjoyed it!*

## Native Plants in Local Gardens and Natural Areas

From Jiri Novak:

The asters in Wagner Natural Area are looking really good right now. I went there on August 22 and took some photos. The seven aster species I noticed were truly spectacular. Here's a sampling:



- L. *Canadanthus modestus*, great northern aster.
- C. *Symphyotrichum boreale*, rush aster, boreale aster.
- R. *Symphyotrichum puniceum*, purple-stemmed aster.

A couple of other photos of plants in bloom out there now:



- L. *Gentianopsis virgata* subsp. *macounii*, Macoun's fringed-gentian
- R. *Sium suave*, common water-parsnip

WN: Thank you, Jiri, for these. *Canadanthus modestus*, great northern aster, is very showy and is suitable for wetlands and acreages. It tends to be too much of a spreader for regular city gardens.

From Sue Panteluk:



Slumber party in the gailardias in my garden. August 23, 2022.



I guess the slumber party didn't work out! August 26, 2022.

WN: Aww...guess they preferred their own bed!

From Judith Basisty: Some of the plant beds on my acreage near Cooking Lake- a mix of native wildflowers and non-natives.



L. Joe Pye weed, giant hyssop, goldenrod species with monarda in foreground and non-native delphiniums. C. Goldenrod sp., large northern aster, showy milkweed, Joe Pye weed and giant hyssop, plus non-natives. R. Giant hyssop, tall fleabane, delphinium and hollyhock.

WN: *What lovely, beautiful gardens - they must be humming and buzzing with myriads of native insects!*

From Kathy Goble, Belgravia Arts Park volunteer coordinator: Thought you may enjoy a few photos from the Belgravia Arts Park Native Plant Bed. The ENPS assisted our community in 2006 in sourcing and planting it. It is still going strong and there are lovely surprises each year.



L. Common tall sunflower, *Helianthus nuttallii*. C. Meadow blazingstar, *Liatris ligulistylis*, and wild blue flax, *Linum lewisii*. R. Beebalm, wild bergamot, *Monarda fistulosa*.

WN: *What a wonderful display of native wildflowers.*

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**EVENTS** - if you would like to post an event that involves native flowers, please email us at [engedmonton@gmail.com](mailto:engedmonton@gmail.com)

**September 10, Saturday - Fulton Place Gardeners Fall Swap and Sale** Bring any plants (indoor or outdoor), seedlings, perennials, tools, magazines, books, etc. Bring your extras and take away new treasures. Whether this is your 1st or 50th year gardening, come find a hidden treasure, add some new gems to your outdoor oasis, learn something new or just have fun talking to your neighbours about flowers! Hope to see you there, rain or shine.

**Time:** 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

**Location:** Fulton Place Park, 6115 Fulton Rd.

**Admission:** Free

**September 17, Saturday - Prince Charles Community Day** Various activities and entertainment are planned for this event and the community would also like to investigate the possibility of putting in a community garden. ENPS will be there with information.

**Time:** 9:00 a.m. to noon

**Location:** Prince Charles Park between 124th and 125th Street at 121st Avenue

**Admission:** Free

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**NEWS...** *If you have a news item involving native plants that you would like posted, please email us at [engedmonton@gmail.com](mailto:engedmonton@gmail.com)*

### ENPS Plant Sales and Activities Reports

August was a very busy month of plant/seed sales and participation at numerous events.

July 31st - **Native Plant Sale at the Orchid Resource Centre** - by Kate Spencer - A remarkably successful sales event. Congrats and many thanks to all the volunteers who helped out, especially Liz who had to go for another truckload load of plants (the first load sold out quickly), and Serena for a fine job of organizing.

August 3rd - **DrinkSwimFish Event** in Riverdale - by Patsy Cotterill. It was well organized, well done and well attended; lots of environmental organizations took part. Quite a bit of interest was shown our ENPS handouts and in our the trail poster depicting trail damage in the river valley.

August 13th - **Nature Alberta's Family Nature Night** at Lois Hole Provincial Park - by Abigail Stosky-Rahman, Family Nature Night Coordinator. Photos by author.

A thank you to the ENPS for volunteering at our *Wetland Champions* event. A total of 165 people joined us, connecting 47 families to nature, and making memories to last a lifetime!

We've received lots of positive feedback and it sounds like everyone had a phenomenal time. People loved the plant displays, and being able to look at cattails up close was a big hit!



August 16th - **River Valley Forest Walk** - by Patsy Cotterill. Eight people joined forest specialist Toso Bozic for a forest ecology walk in Whitemud Park South. We identified trees and shrubs, learnt how to estimate the age of trees, how tree cores reveal seasonal weather patterns, and about tree regeneration and succession, including Edmonton river valley's changing tree cover over the centuries and the effects of climate change. Toso concluded that the forest is undergoing normal, healthy processes but that it needs better invasive plant management..



August 21st - **EHS Garden Festival** - by Kate Spencer. Photos by author. An afternoon of garden-related fun and learning for all ages. Activities included vendors, educators, face painting, photos, food, and more.



\* \* \* \* \*

### **Caring for our North Saskatchewan River (NSR) by Patsy Cotterill**

kisiskâciwani-sîply – “swift-flowing river” in Cree.

Did you know that the NSR travels 1,287 km from the Saskatchewan Glacier in the Columbia Icefields to where it joins its sister river, the South Saskatchewan, in the province of Saskatchewan? And that Alberta Environment and Parks minister Jason Nixon and federal Minister of Environment and Climate Change Canada have accepted nomination of a 718 km stretch of river from Banff National Park boundary to the Alberta/Saskatchewan border as a heritage river under the Canadian Heritage Rivers System? (The 49 km stretch of the river in Banff National Park was designated as a Canadian Heritage River in 1989.)

The North Saskatchewan Watershed Alliance and Smoky Lake County have done much of the work on the nomination, with many conservation groups in support. To achieve designation, a management plan must be in place to show the river’s qualifying values can be preserved.

Can we modestly hope that this will improve conservation and care for Edmonton’s section of the NSR, including the surrounding river valley?

\* \* \* \* \*

### **Front Yards in Bloom 2022 by Kathleen Mpulubusi**

There were 4600 yards nominated for Front Yard in Bloom this year which is down from previous years. The format has changed where judging is done through photos submitted by volunteers when the signs are distributed. Top picks for the categories are posted on the City Facebook and website and anyone can pick their choice.

There were 165 yards nominated as Natural Yards. These were many excellent yards but the following are the Natural Spaces Winners:

7614 118 St. Belgravia; 13336 130 St. Wellington; 14631 91 Ave. Parkview. You can check out the photos at [https://www.edmonton.ca/programs\\_services/landscaping\\_gardening/2022-front-yards-bloom-winners](https://www.edmonton.ca/programs_services/landscaping_gardening/2022-front-yards-bloom-winners)

The Edmonton in Bloom Awards are on September 7 at 7:00 pm at the Heritage Amphitheatre in Hawrelak Park. Everyone is welcome to attend.

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### **Grasses of Peatlands and Calcareous Habitats Part 8.** by Patsy Cotterill. All photos by author.

#### **Slim-stemmed reedgrass, *Calamagrostis stricta***

We have already encountered the reedgrass genus, *Calamagrostis*, in our discussion of the ubiquitous bluejoint, or marsh reedgrass, of wetlands: tall, perennial grasses with rather narrow panicles of numerous, congested, one-flowered spikelets. The florets have a ring of white hairs at the base and a slender awn is attached to the back of the lemma, usually below the middle. The reedgrasses are not an easy group of species to identify, and slim-stemmed reedgrass could be confused with bluejoint with which it may sometimes co-occur in moist meadows and open woodlands. However, it has a more compact, upright and stiff panicle (strict, in a word), with shorter panicle branches than bluejoint, whose panicle is wider, more open and, because the florets are on average slightly smaller, more feathery-looking. At least after flowering, many of our bluejoint populations have panicles that are turned to one side and brownish, whereas in *C. stricta* the panicle remains erect and compact and becomes straw-coloured on drying.

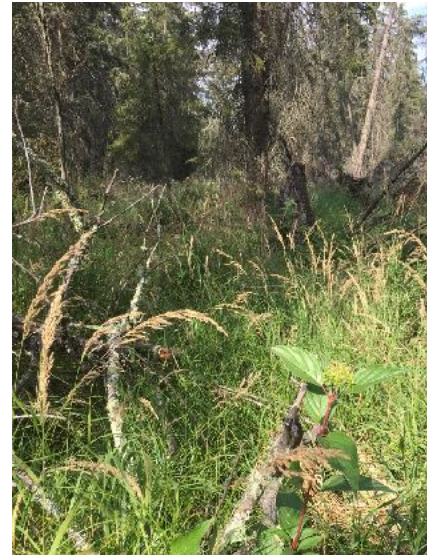
Although *C. stricta* has rhizomes and so can exist in loose patches, it never forms bluejoint’s extensive colonies, nor does it reach the same stature. I tend to associate slim-stemmed reedgrass with peatlands or areas influenced by calcareous

groundwater because there are good populations of it in Wagner Natural Area, especially on the shores of the marl ponds. It also occurs in the more organic wetlands at Bunchberry Meadows. Generally, it is widely distributed throughout the province and across Canada.

Close examination of the spikelets will reveal more differences between the two species, such as *C. stricta* having shorter floret hairs than *C. canadensis*, and of unequal length. Nevertheless, with a bit of experience the two species can be distinguished by the naked eye, and often when in flower *C. stricta* is eye-catching because of its beauty.

A complication for full identification of slim-stemmed reedgrass is that two very similar varieties (formerly considered two separate species) are recognized: the typical variety, var. *stricta*, and a rather more robust form, var. *inexpansa*, northern reedgrass. The former is the smaller grass, with spikelets 2-2.5 mm long, and panicle branches 1.4-4 cm long, whereas var. *inexpansa*'s spikelets are 3-4 mm and panicle branches generally longer (resulting in a broader panicle that is sometimes lobed). The stems of the latter are rough to the touch, while those of var. *stricta* are smooth.

Although the above taxa are all plants of wet habitats, dry land species of *Calamagrostis* also occur, for example, plains reedgrass, *C. montanensis*, at Gibbons Badland Prairie. So, don't be surprised if, in your travels, you come across reedgrass species in prairie or sandy grassland or on dry mountain slopes.



L. *Calamagrostis stricta*. In flower alongside a marl pond in Wagner Natural Area, 2022.07.21. C. *Calamagrostis stricta*. Close-up of the panicle of the same population. R. *Calamagrostis canadensis*. Seen along the Marl Pond Trail in Wagner Natural Area, showing a population of bluejoint, with its feathery, one-sided panicles, in contrast to those of *C. stricta*. 2022.08.21.

### **Spike muhly, bog muhly, *Muhlenbergia glomerata***

My experience of the muhly grasses (genus *Muhlenbergia*) in Alberta has left me intrigued, in that they can't seem to make up their minds whether they like wet or dry soils. There are six species in the province, Margaret Krichbaum having found foxtail muhly, *Muhlenbergia andina*, in the sandy soils of a Gull Lake shore near Aspen Beach Provincial Park a couple of years ago. Apart from the rare (not-in-our-area) *M. asperifolia*, the muhly grasses seem to fall into two groups, those that have a spike-like inflorescence (*M. glomerata*, *M. racemosa* and *M. andina*) and those that don't (*M. cuspidata*, *M. richardsonis*).

My first acquaintance with bog muhly occurred in the fens of Wagner Natural Area, hence my belief for several years that it was predominantly if not exclusively a peatland species. (It also occurs adjacent to a peaty wetland along the tamarack trail in Bunchberry Meadows.) It grows on large mounds that appear to have been old ant mounds: Derek Johnson calls it an "ant hill indicator" species. Its roots and short, white-scaly rhizomes are thus well elevated above the water of the fens. (But if you want your feet dry, why choose a fen to live in?) Later, I came across "bog" muhly in moist grasslands, such as at Nisku Prairie and in Elk Island, where, instead of being confined to a mound and tussocky-looking, it forms small green patches. Only the similarity of the flower spikes would clue you in that it was the same species.

The stems of spike or bog muhly reach 30-120 cm tall and bear flat green or bluish-green leaves that are 2 mm wide or more. The inflorescences is a narrow, dense, slightly lobed spike 0.5-1 cm wide, in which the shortly stalked branches are appressed to the stem. The one-flowered spikelets are on very short stalks and about 5 mm long, the same length as the glumes which bear awns to 5 mm long, giving the spike a spikey appearance. The lemmas are much shorter at about 3 mm in length and both lemma and palea have long white hairs towards the base.

The species occurs widely across North America except for the southern U.S.

Edmontonians should be aware of bog muhly's close relative, marsh muhly (a complete misnomer!) alias green muhly, *Muhlenbergia racemosa*, which is not infrequently found on the dry escarpments of the North Saskatchewan River valley although it is otherwise quite rare in Alberta. Apart from the difference in habitat a quick field character to check has to do with the exposed stems between the leaf sheaths. Those of *M. glomerata* are minutely hairy (detectable as a slight roughness), whereas those of *M. racemosa* are shiny, smooth and often reddish. Perhaps this species pair likes to have dry feet, but live near water, something that could also be said of many humans!



L. *Muhlenbergia glomerata*. Plant growing on an old ant mound in a fen in Wagner Natural Area, 2022.08.21. It is the latest of the peatland species to flower, usually flowering about mid-August. The old spikes remain throughout the winter.

R. *Muhlenbergia glomerata*. Close up of part of the spike showing long awns on the glumes.

### Fowl mannagrass, *Glyceria striata*

The mannagrasses, genus *Glyceria*, of which there are five species in Alberta, are mostly perennial, rhizomatous grasses which all grow in moist situations, fens, wet meadows and stream sides. Other characteristics are that their leaf sheaths are closed for three-quarters of their length, and their lemmas, which are oval and flattened or cylindrical and round, have nerves which run parallel to each other for most of their length rather than converging towards the tip. Local readers are mostly likely to be familiar with the two common species that are emergents, tall colonial plants that form bands around wetland shores. Tall mannagrass, *Glyceria grandis*, of lakeshores, with its large, spreading purple panicles, is likely to be the most seen.

However, visitors to Wagner Natural Area are likely to have noticed fowl mannagrass, *Glyceria striata*, for in certain parts of the Marl Pond Trail, especially in the wooded, hummock-and-hollow sections, it has by late summer formed a conspicuous green verdure along the trail, topped by flowering stems to 80 cm tall. The flat green leaf blades are 2-6 cm wide, and the flower heads are open, spreading or drooping panicles on which the 15-50 small spikelets are strung out, almost like beads on a necklace. These oval, somewhat flattened spikelets consist of 3-6 fertile florets and a terminal sterile floret, subtended by tiny ovate glumes 0.5-1.5 mm long. The lemmas are green or purplish, broadly ovate, rounded on the back and prominently 7-nerved, with whitish-papery tips and edges. The spikelets turn brownish when the grains are ripening.

Fowl mannagrass is not confined to peatlands, but does seem to prefer organic soils well supplied with moisture and shade. It is widely distributed across North America except for far north-eastern Canada. Its closest look-alike, the somewhat larger tufted tall mannagrass, *G. elata*, is rare and confined to southern Alberta and BC.



L. *Glyceria striata*. Flowering populations along the edge of the Marl Pond Trail, Wagner Natural Area, 2022.07.21.

R. *Glyceria striata*. Dense patch showing bead-like inflorescences of green spikelets, in flower, 2022.07.21.



*Glyceria striata*. Image from Minnesota Wildflowers (online), showing structure of floret with parallel-veined lemma, palea and grain.

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## Something Different:

**North Saskatchewan named a Canadian Heritage River** from *River Valley News*

<https://mailchi.mp/5b630ec8363c/river-valley-news?e=65367e1db3>

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**LATE NEWS: Bunchberry Meadows Temporary Closure** - Notice from the Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC):

The months of September and October are an important time for plants and wildlife on the Bunchberry Meadows property. Birds are migrating, and ungulates are rutting, making them sensitive to disturbance. To limit disturbance, property access will be available via guided tours only during this time. <https://www.natureconservancy.ca/en/where-we-work/alberta/featured-projects/bunchberry-meadows.html>

NCC will be hosting guided fall foliage tours on select weekends. We invite you to visit the events section of our website for available dates and to register: <https://www.natureconservancy.ca/en/where-we-work/alberta/events/fall-foliage-tours.html>

Thank you for supporting conservation and respecting the closure. We look forward to seeing you on a guided tour or welcoming you back on October 31, 2022.

**Native Shrub Planting Event at Fort Saskatchewan Prairie**, September 23 and 24

Volunteers are wanted! We will post details as soon as we have them on the ENPS Facebook, <https://www.facebook.com/groups/408066590219>, and web, <http://edmontonnativeplantgroup.org>, pages, as well as the Friends of Fort Saskatchewan Prairie Facebook page, [https://www.facebook.com/groups/582510770115217/?multi\\_permaLinks=608301984202762%2C607151337651160%2C607124224320538&notif\\_id=1661555227713430&notif\\_t=group\\_activity&ref=notif](https://www.facebook.com/groups/582510770115217/?multi_permaLinks=608301984202762%2C607151337651160%2C607124224320538&notif_id=1661555227713430&notif_t=group_activity&ref=notif).

Meanwhile, please reserve the dates if you are able to volunteer!



Aims of the Edmonton Native Plant Society:

- ❖ Promote knowledge of the Edmonton area native plants.
- ❖ Conserve our native plant species and their habitats.
- ❖ Preserve native plant species and habitat for the enjoyment of present and future generations.
- ❖ Educate individuals, business and local governments about native plants.

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Gaillardia, blanketflower, *Gaillardia aristata*, beebalm, *Monarda fistulosa*, and aster sp.  
Belgravia Arts Park, August 3, 2022. Photo by Kathy Goble.