



Wood lily, *Lilium philadelphicum*
Fort McMurray, June 2019

From your editor:

Welcome to the Wildflower News for July. What a difference a month makes. We've gone from drought conditions to an oversupply of rain and the plants are loving it. My native flowers and grasses quickly went from undersized to super-sized in June.

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Something a little different

Letters:

I enjoyed your latest newsletter and was pleased to see a plant that grows beside a little house we own east of the city. The plant we have looks just like the Penstemon (in the June Wildflower News). Due to age and mobility problems we will be selling our little retreat and are wondering if you know of anyone that might be interested in the plants or the seeds. If it comes back this year as it has in the past I would be pleased to know that it might grow again somewhere else.

I had not actually thought of transplanting some of the plant and would be interested in knowing how to do so as it would probably do well in front of our north facing home here in the city.

Please let me know.

M. Jenkins

It's fairly easy to transplant. Just treat it like any other perennial. It will need regular watering until it has settled into your Edmonton yard. In the wild it prefers sun but not too dry. Your plant (plants?) might have old seed heads from last year and they might still have seeds in them, or you could collect seeds from this year and grow them out and have more plants.

Native Plants in Local Gardens

From Allan Jones:

Blue eyed grass - seeds were planted about 4 years ago and they have suddenly appeared!



WN: Love these little blue stars!

Looks like a nice prairie crocus on the right too!

From Hubert Taube:

Wild blue flax and Philadelphia fleabane;



Wild blue flax and gaillardia (blanketflower):



Looking good Hubert! The plants are obviously thriving for you.

From Manna Parseyan:

Some of the plants in my native flower garden -

balsam groundsel with wild blue flax, fleabane and slender blue beardtongue; Philadelphia fleabane; slender blue beardtongue and wild blue flax.



The groundsel is an interesting addition - one doesn't often see it in gardens!

Thank you Alan, Hubert, and Manna for sharing your delightful native plantings with us!

Correction: The article "Field trips and phenology without flowers" by Patsy Cotterill, in the June Wildflower News, mentioned that the results of the May Plant Counts will appear on the Nature Canada website. Results will be posted in the Nature Alberta magazine, NOT Nature Canada.

EVENTS - if you would like to post an event that involves native flowers, please email us at engedmonton@gmail.com

July 1, Monday - Canada Day at the Muttart Conservatory.

The Edmonton Native Plant Society will have info and native plant sales tables in the courtyard near the doors - weather permitting!

There will be tours of the Native Plant Demonstration Garden too! (NW corner of the parking lot)

Time: 11:00 am to 3:00 pm

This is free, but regular admission will apply to the Conservatory.

July 6, Saturday - Edmonton Nature Club Plant ID walk to Gibbons Badlands Prairie - This Environmental Reserve is located along the Sturgeon River and has recently been protected by the Town of Gibbons. It has unique geological and botanical features, including prickly pear cactus growth (*Opuntia fragilis*) which will be the prime target of this walk. Kathleen Mpulubusi who has visited the area often will be our botanical leader for this outing.

Meeting places:

09:15 h at Tim Horton's at Westmount Shopping Centre for carpooling; **or**

10:00 h at the Town Office, 4807 50 Ave, Gibbons, AB; see the map. (we will reduce the number of cars going to the ultimate site as much as possible). End time is flexible; we might be finished earlier than 2 pm.

Difficulties: The walk is mostly on single track trails. Bring solid footwear, insect repellent, water and snacks, perhaps a light lunch.

Contact: Hubert at taubeha@shaw.net

July 20, Saturday - Elk Island Parks Day and Bio Blitz - Parks Day is an annual celebration of parks and green spaces held every third Saturday of July where families and friends come together to participate in activities and events that highlight the important role that parks play in maintaining and protecting the environment as well as heritage and culture. For the first time, the park is also hosting a BioBlitz with the Canadian Wildlife Federation. Visitors to Parks Day will find experts on hand to help with the IDing of the flora and fauna that they may find on guided walks or out and about on their own.

Time: 7:00 am to 10:00 pm

Location: Astotin Lake Recreation Area, Elk Island National Park

Admission: The usual Park entry fees will be in effect.



Edmonton and Area Land Trust was the recipient of a 2019 Emerald Award in the Grassroots Community Group or Not-For-Profit Association category

"Last year, EALT celebrated its 10th Anniversary of conserving, stewarding and enhancing the region's natural areas for citizens to value and enjoy. This effort is long term, taking years to conserve just one parcel; but years of hard work and significant commitment to the environment is evident in the 12 natural areas now conserved, in this the most fragmented and densely populated ecoregion in Alberta."

The Edmonton Native Plant Society congratulates EALT on its sterling work and a well-deserved win!

(The Alberta Emerald Foundation is an organization that recognizes environmental excellence in various sectors all across Alberta. They host an annual awards presentation and have various other programs to inspire environmental success and innovation in our province.)

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Discovering Calgary's Bee Corridor

Calgary city staff are buzzing about an endangered bee discovery as the boulevard preps for another season; 2 gypsy cuckoo bumblebees were spotted in the city's bee corridor, which is gearing up for its third year. Gypsy cuckoo bumblebees used to be spread across Canada but have been on the decline over the last 30 years, being added to the endangered list in 2014. This year the species was only spotted in Calgary, northern Alberta and a small part of the Yukon.

A partnership between the City of Calgary, loads of nature-loving students and select universities is blooming into something exciting. A so-called bee boulevard was created a couple of years ago on Canyon Meadows Drive, and this winter researchers identified an endangered pollinator frequenting the blooms.

David Misfeldt says the bee is called a gypsy cuckoo bumblebee — or *bombus bohemicus*. "We didn't find just one, we found two, so that's a good sign," said the boulevard maintenance technician who dreamt up the idea of the pollinator-friendly corridor to help reduce road maintenance. He helps maintain roughly 1,400 hectares of land for the city, and said Canyon Meadows boulevard "always looked bad."

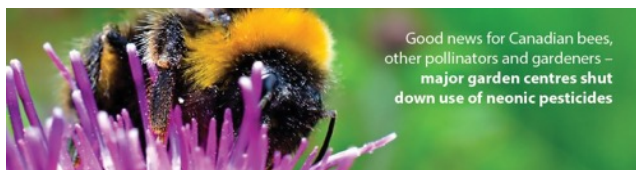
"When we started this project, I wanted it to have credibility behind it, and not just planting something again on the side of the road, or in the median, as a test plot," said Misfeldt. "I thought if I got universities involved and very smart bee people it would gain credibility." Now Misfeldt says the researchers are studying how much the site is helping pollen-hungry species for five years.

Read more at: [Calgary Bee boulevard](#)

Watch the video at: [Discovering Calgary's Bee Corridor](#)

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A victory for bees! (and bats and swallows too!)



Canada's big box stores are reporting they have almost eliminated the sale of neonicotinoid-contaminated flowering plants.

Friends of the Earth Canada has spent the last five years testing flowering plants from garden centres across Canada for bee-toxic neonicotinoid pesticides. Neonics are systemic pesticides that are taken up by the whole plant and contaminate the nectar and pollen

which is so important to native bees, honey bees and other pollinators.

Friends of the Earth Canada surveyed 12 major garden centre chains this spring to gauge the progress in eliminating neonicotinoid-contaminated flowering plants.

"In the context of our long term flower testing and the results of this year's survey, we have real cause to celebrate Pollinator Week (June 17-24) this year," said Beatrice Olivastri, CEO, Friends of the Earth Canada.

Top place for neonic-free flowering plants goes to two big box chain stores and one regional chain: Home Depot, Lowes (which includes RONA and Reno-Depot Corporate stores across Canada and Sheridan Nurseries in Ontario. As a close second, Canadian Tire Corporation reported that it has reached 95% neonicotinoid free.

View our detailed chart – [2019 Policy on Use of Bee-toxic Neonics by Largest Garden Centres across Canada](#) – to learn more about how major garden centres are shutting down their use of neonic pesticides.

Read more from [Friends of the Earth](#)









It's that time again...when totally erroneous hysteria begins to erupt about Giant Hogweed! Reprinted with permission from the Alberta Invasive Species Council <https://abinvasives.ca>

As the native species, cow parsnip, *Heracleum lanatum*, begins to grow and bloom across our province, we see a number of concerned members of the public reaching out for confirmation of the plants true identity. Due to the many similarities between this native species and the prohibited noxious weed, giant hogweed, *Heracleum mantegazzianum*, (syn. *Heracleum caucasicum*, *Heracleum giganteum*) we have some tips on how to differentiate between the two.

Please note: THERE IS NO GIANT HOGWEED IN ALBERTA.

Alberta Agriculture advises that all reports of giant hogweed in Alberta have been proven to be inaccurate, and are, in fact, cow parsnip.

Giant hogweed is NOT found in any of the Prairie Provinces, although it can occur in B.C., Ontario, Quebec, and the Maritimes.

Giant Hogweed	Cow Parsnip
<p>Height: 15 to 20 feet tall</p> 	<p>Height: 5 to 8 feet tall</p> 
<p>Stem: 5-10 cm in diameter with many purple spots and stiff bristles</p> 	<p>Stem: 1 to 2 inches in diameter with few purple spots and deep ridges with fuzzy hairs</p> 
<p>Leaves: up to 1.5 m, alternate, compound, and deeply lobed leaves</p> 	<p>Leaves: 2 to 2.5 feet wide, palmate-shaped, compound leaves</p>  <p>looks similar to a maple leaf, or an open palm with fingers outstretched), divided into 3 segments</p>
<p>Flower: umbel-shaped, rounded white flower up to 1 m across</p> 	<p>Flower: umbel-shaped, rounded white flower, and up to 20 cm across</p> 

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Harvesting and Foraging in Edmonton Parkland including the River Valley and Ravine Systems is Illegal - Bylaw 2202

Many of us have become deeply concerned about the promotion of, and amount of, native plants being harvested in the river valley system. It is now clearly established, with legal review, that under Edmonton By-Law 2202 foraging and harvesting in the Edmonton River Valley is **illegal**. There is more to these actions than just the harvesting: not staying on maintained trails, collecting for commercial purposes, etc.

Bylaw 2202 states:

“The purpose of this bylaw is to regulate the conduct and activities of people on Parkland (WN note: ‘parkland refers to the river valley system, including ravines, and public land) in order to promote the safe, enjoyable and reasonable use of such property and to protect and preserve natural ecosystems for the benefit of all citizens of the City.”

Under the *Preservation of natural areas* section, the following is stated:

“While on Parkland no person shall:

- enter into any undeveloped or natural area other than on an Improved Trail or an Unimproved Trail;
- remove any rock, gravel, sand or soil;
- **move, remove, cut or damage any tree, shrub, flower, other plant or deadfall”**

Many people feel that our natural areas are their untapped grocery stores or pharmacies. They fail or refuse to even think about their negative impacts on the overall eco-system or down to individual plant, animal, bird and insect species that all rely on every aspect of a healthy habitat. The Park Ranger Service, however, will tolerate folks gathering items for personal consumption, limited in scope/volume and respecting what is laid out in 2202. For example a person is free to pick and eat a handful of berries as they walk along a trail.

Wild harvesting to collect commercial quantities of plant material, or even occasional collecting for things like decorative arrangements, or berries for jam or freezing, can have serious impacts on both the target plant species and the surrounding habitat.

If anyone should notice harvesting of native plants happening in our river valley, please report any and every such incident in a prompt and detailed manner by either calling or e-mailing 311. Perhaps takes a photo of the activity as well.

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Epcor solar farm update. Submitted by Patsy Cotterill

City Council has deferred a decision on rezoning river valley land to allow Epcor to build a solar farm of some 45,000 solar panels on their river terrace land adjacent to the E.L. Smith Water Treatment Plant below Cameron Heights. On June 19th it passed a motion requiring Epcor and City planning staff (administration) to work on relations with the Enoch Cree Nation after the latter had belatedly withdrawn its support for the project following the results of archaeological excavations at the site. The City also wants clarification on public access to the area. I assume that solving these problems will enable a majority of Council to vote in good conscience for the development to go ahead.

No mention was made in the motion of investigating the environmental impacts that were questioned, such as restriction of wildlife movement, loss of habitat, and strikes by birds and aquatic insects which could mistake the reflective surfaces of the panels as water.

The only faint hope that some councilors may have reservations about the project lies in the second part of the motion, which required administration to determine whether the project is essential in this location, as required by River Valley Bylaw 7188 (1985). Common sense dictates that it is not essential, as speaker after speaker stated during the public hearing June 18th and 19th, suggesting alternative sources and locations of solar and indeed green energy in general. However, a development may be deemed essential if Council considers it is in the public interest (and, in my cynical opinion, especially if another level of government is paying for it!).

With about 40% of the river valley in private ownership, and strong pressure for development as Edmonton grows, the public should realize that zoning is often the only obstacle to protect the river valley, and zoning can be changed at the whim of a pro-development Council. (And in this case there is dispute as to whether Council even needs to consider the “essential” issue.) Our river valley system deserves better ecological protection, and I maintain that only concerted demand and pressure by Edmontonians is likely to change the status quo.

Bee lawns - What's all the buzz about? by Jackie Bastianon, Nature Conservancy of Canada's (NCC's) 2018 communications intern for the Alberta Region. *Reprinted with permission from Nature Conservancy Canada: natureconservancy.ca/ab* Edited to reflect Edmonton area species.

Look out into your backyard. What do you see? A large square of lawn groomed to emerald green, monoculture perfection? Or a vibrant space full of colourful tiny flowers and grass, filled with thriving native pollinators?

If you want to save the bees, you should get used to that second picture, because a new, easy way to help them out, right in your backyard, has Albertans all a-buzz. It's time to change your manicured lawn into something cooler and much more functional: a bee lawn.

A bee lawn is made up of three important components: short flowers, grasses and tall flowers, all of which serve a different purpose. Keep in mind that traditionally you tend your lawn with the goal of keeping out flowers and other species, but a bee lawn will challenge the way you think about your lawn.

There are many perks that come with the creation of a bee lawn. They require less maintenance, they reduce fossil fuel use because they require less frequent mowing, they're conservation friendly because they require less water and they provide pollination sources. If you're into wild bee conservation, you'll be pleased to see lots of native species on your lawn.

Getting started:

1. Mow your lawn down as short as possible. Then use a rake to remove all of the lawn clippings to expose the soil.
2. Aerate your lawn. This involves creating small holes (using a shovel or an aerating machine) in your lawn in order to allow air, water and nutrients to enter the grass's roots. It's not required, but it does help the roots of your plants grow deeper and stronger.
3. Spread the seeds (see below) over the grass.

What you'll need:

1. Short flowers: These can cater to different kinds of bees, which have varying levels of nectar needs and access. Once sprouted, these short flowers can be mowed to three inches or higher. Examples include early blue violet, prairie buttercup, three-flowered avens, pussytoes.
2. Grasses: Rocky Mountain fescues are ideal because they have thin blades. Their longer roots and slow growth allow flowers to grow around them, and they do not need much maintenance. June grass and blue gramma grass are also good.
3. Taller flowers (optional) These flowers are optional and tend to add an aesthetic component to bee lawns. Once sprouted, they will grow above mowing height, so they should be added around the edges of the bee lawn or in the surrounding garden. Examples include slender blue beardtongue, blanketflower, wild blue flax, wild beebalm, giant hyssop and many others.

Maintaining your lawn:

Once planted, bee lawns are very easy to maintain. The longer you leave your grass to grow without mowing it, the better. University of Minnesota graduate student James Wolfin researches bee pollinator enhancement, and he advises letting the grass grow between four and six inches long.

Bee lawns are a relatively new practice, but all reports indicate that they have an incredible success rate in attracting a wide range of native species. In the past, flowering lawns have had a bad reputation, because they go against the look of a traditional green grass lawn, but that is changing. There is more acceptance now for non-traditional lawns, and for the presence of bees on people's properties.

In some places, natural lawns are not only accepted, they're openly encouraged. The city of Edmonton's Front Yards in Bloom recognition program is about celebrating the efforts to make communities more beautiful. There is even a category for natural yards, judged by the Edmonton Native Plant Society, that awards bonus points for native plants of Albertan origin that attract pollinators!

Pollinators play a vital role in our food chain and are responsible for providing one-third of the food that we eat. We all have a responsibility to do our part to help them survive, and with bee lawns, you can create change easily and close to home.

Website of the Month:

Plant Blindness - the inability to see or notice the plants in one's own environment.

Plant blindness, not surprisingly, results in an under-appreciation of plants – and in a **limited interest in plant conservation**. Plant biology courses around the world are shutting down at a dizzying rate and public funding for plant science is drying up. While studies haven't been done on the extent of plant blindness and its change over time, increased urbanisation and time spent with devices means that “nature deficit disorder” (the harm caused to humans by being alienated from nature) is on the rise. And with less exposure to plants comes greater plant blindness.

<http://www.bbc.com/future/story/20190425-plant-blindness-what-we-lose-with-nature-deficit-disorder?fbclid=IwAR1r-f7SWFd5jAdvxlxWodLmno4IsLEofQWc6NKgOwxO1DA5uunOhfzVOjk&linkId=66765795>

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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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Cherry Dodd, editor

Judith Golub, publisher

www.edmontonnativeplantgroup.org

And now for something different...



Silky lupine and Arnicas and native grasses in a Waterton meadow.
June 2019

Photo by Patrick Kyle