

Loasa - *The Newsletter*

Jan. 2007 – A new year filled with native plants



A beautiful, late fall day: *Grindelia squarrosa* is visited by a Woodland Skipper near Twin Falls. In the microclimate around springs: *Mimulus guttatus* might still be in bloom; but memories will, for the most part, tide us over to the first flowers of 2007.

Dear Loasa,

We're about to reach the end of 2006 and the beginning of 2007. At this time I would like to thank the membership of Loasa, for what I deem to have been a good year in the life of our chapter. Each of you should be commended, for your participation in the functions of the chapter, for without your work in our activities, we wouldn't exist.

With this said, I encourage you to look forward to even more participation in 2007. Some of the activities that need to be addressed are the following:

1) For the upcoming chapter elections we need a nominating

committee. 2) We need your suggestions for programs and field trips. If you have some ideas, please contact me (886-7051 or jones@kelvin.myrf.net). 3) Help with the annual meeting at the Craters of the Moon, this will be a spectacular opportunity to enjoy the geology and botany of Craters and meet all of the other chapters of INPS. 4) With Kent leaving, we need an editor for this newsletter (see inside). Remember that our next meeting will be a potluck dinner at our home, north of Shoshone. At that time I would like to run some ideas by the membership, concerning field trips for summer 2007. It will also be a good time to renew your 2007 membership.

See you on the 21st,
Kelvin

Calendar

Dec 21st, 2006 Monthly Meeting – Christmas Party – Kelvin Jones
Contact Kelvin for more info (886-7051) or see inside

Jan 18th, 2007 Monthly Meeting – Poisonous Plants – Dylan Levy-Boyd
Room 258 of the Taylor Building at CSI 7-9 pm

Feb 13 & 14 Rare Plant Conference – Boise – Go to it!

Feb 15th, 2007 Monthly Meeting – Grasses – (speaker to be determined)
Room 258 of the Taylor Building at CSI 7-9 pm

Five Favorite Plants - Julie Regula, Landscape Designer CSR, Inc

When it comes to selecting the right plant for your landscape, the task can easily become extremely complex very fast. So many things to consider (aspect, water, soil, size, benefit, and of course beauty) can often take the fun out of the project. To help you start, I'd like to present you with my personal favorites: five wonderful southern Idaho native plants for your residential landscape consideration, most of which are available for sale at CSR, Inc. Each plant is distinctly different in the hopes that one will strike your fancy!

- Bitterbrush (*Purshia tridentata*) - a lovely deciduous shrub with healthy green to olive green leaves, it is highly adapted to low water and well-drained desert soils with a pH between 6.0 and 7.0 and full sun. Bitterbrush grows up to 8' high but in a landscape setting can be trimmed to retain a smaller size and has a variable free-form growth habit. Yellow to white five-petaled flowers appear profusely in late spring, giving the plant a warm glow when in the sun. It is an excellent food source for native wildlife like antelope, so be aware that your plant may get munched!



- Prairie Camas (*Camassia quamash*) - highly utilized as food by the Native Americans in our area, this bulb in the lily family usually grows in meadows and low areas which retain spring moisture. Flower color can vary from light to dark purples and blues, and be up to 2" in diameter; leaves are rich green and grass-like. Camas will definitely knock your socks off during spring if allowed to spread over a large area. Note: Death Camas (*Zygadenus venenosus*) is a similar looking plant but grows in drier areas of sagebrush steppe, has small white flowers, and is poisonous.



- Creeping Oregon Grape (*Mahonia repens*) - an evergreen shrub with green holly-like leaves, Mahonia has excellent crimson & orange fall foliage color. Maximum height is 1 ½ to 2' high, and the plant can be used as a tall groundcover if given time to spread. Mahonia requires moderate water and soil pH between 5.5 and 7.5 for best growth, and is tolerant of full sun to shade. Yellow flowers appear in clusters in early summer, followed by dark blue berries which are edible but best for juicing & jam. Note: although Native Americans used this plant often, it is generally advised to limit intake of berries, roots, and leaves as the plant can be toxic in large amounts.



- Blue Grama (*Bouteloua gracilis*) - one of the cutest steppe grasses, Blue Grama is a full sun only bunchgrass growing up to 1 ½' high with very low water requirements. During summer it sends up flag-like seed heads which will dry and drop seed in fall. An excellent source of food for grazers and a great addition to any native turf lawn.



- Sagebrush Peony (*Paeonia brownii*) - not often spotted, this is a perennial forb with thick lush green leaves arching out from the base of the plant. Sagebrush peony makes a beautiful green mound in landscapes with moderate water availability, soil pH between 6.0 and 8.0, full to part sun, and only reaches up to 1 ½' high. The distinctively colored flowers appear in mid spring and nod towards the ground before producing thick "pea" pods that will dry before opening to release their black seeds.



As it was exceptionally difficult to narrow down my list of natives to the five favorites, I'd encourage everyone to continue researching and discovering new plants to expand their list of five into five hundred favorites!

The Patriarch of the Desert

Loren R. Wells 3/26/06

He stands tall and proud. He stands guard like a sentinel day and night. He is the patriarch of the desert. I want to ask him. How old are you? How long have you been on earth watching over the desert in the Catavina Boulder fields, of Baja California, Mexico? I am sure you have been here long before I came into this world. You have enjoyed the plentiful years when there was abundance water. You have watched the desert blossom into a profusion of color from the wild flowers that adorn the ground among the granite boulders. I am sure you have also witnessed the lean years when water was scarce and the landscape was dry and barren of color. Your shallow root system helps you to take advantage of the unpredictable rains. You persevered waiting for another year that would surely bring more rain and the color back into the desert.

I stand and marvel at the Cardon. It stands 60 feet tall and must weigh several tons. Oh, how I wish he could talk and tell me about his life. When he first germinated and began to grow. As a small seedling, what fears would he have had? Was he concerned about whether he could get enough water to survive? Did he worry if a rodent would come along and make a meal out him? Then there was always that chance of being stepped on by some large animal. However with luck and fate he grew. I'll bet he was so proud when he first started to branch out. To look like a mature plant, like those that surrounded him.

Did he know he would live longer than all the other Cardons? Did he know he would become the patriarch of the desert? Oh, what tales could he tell if I could converse with him?

** The Cardon is the largest known cactus. It is a massive tree like plant with several to many heavy, erect-ascending, columnar branches bearing coarse ribs. Fragrant flowers are borne on upper parts of the ribs. The floral tubes short, white or faintly tinged with rose or purple; fleshy, bur-like, golf ball sized fruit with readily detached spines, eventually breaking up into numerous clusters of spines, bristles, and tufts of felt. The seeds are small and black.

There are two representatives of this genus, both occurring in Baja California. Some are believed to be over 200 years old and to weigh 10 tons. There are no leaves. There are 11 to 17 vertical ribs on the trunk and branches. The skeleton consists of a circle of hard wood rods alternating with the



ribs, separated above but fused below into a cylinder that thickens with age. The many massive, upsweeping branches have 10-15 vertical ribs and may be 2.5 dm in diameter and reach a height of 20 meters. The areolae of 20-30 gray spines are widely separated when the plant contains abundant water.

Once the spines are destroyed they do not return, a fact known to the aborigines who often found it necessary to climb the trunk in order to reach the fruit. This effort was aided by using a long pole consisting of a Cardon rib with a hook formed by tying a short branch to one end.

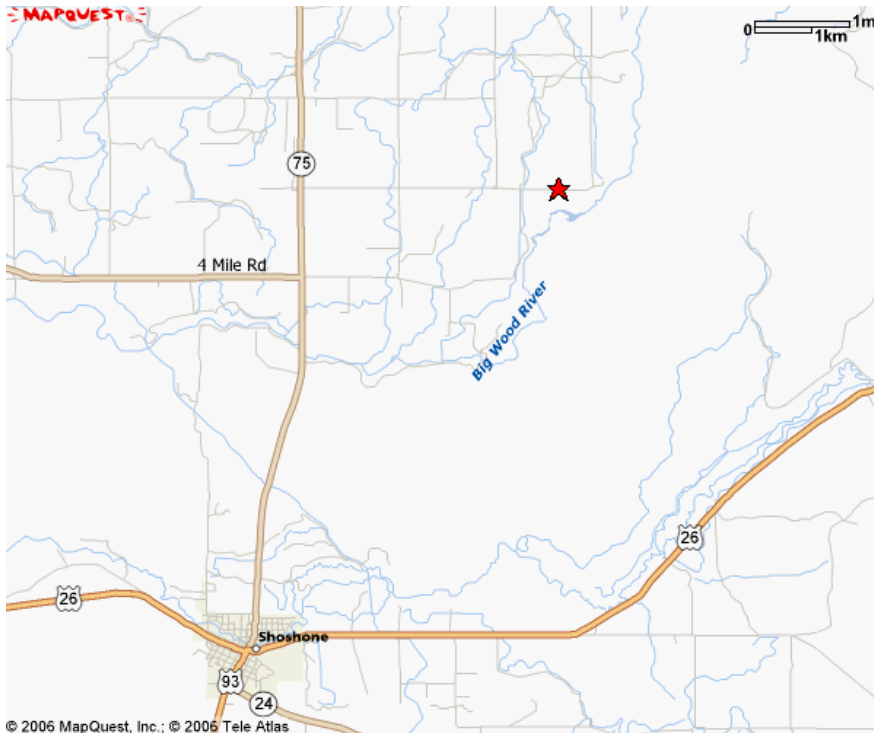
** Baja California Plant Field Guide – by Norman C. Roberts

A Newsletter in Search of an Editor...

Quite frankly the constant adoration, complementary meals, international travel, and general jet-setter lifestyle has worn thin. Smoking undescribed herbs with tribal chieftains on tropical beaches, keying plants in smoky Berlin discotheques, and meeting with despotic third-world leaders in their ill-gotten, pleasure palaces to enact rare plant protections has become tiresome and old hat. The current editor is stepping down from the lofty pinnacle of editorial power that is the Loasa newsletter to pursue new challenges. You too can be elevated far beyond mortal and enjoy the view from atop Mount Olympus (plus don't forget partying 'til dawn with other hard rockin', plant minded fun-bots) and step up to the editorial challenge that is Loasa.

On another note, please check out the way cool vibe in this newsletter. That is because many people wrote articles for it AND BECAME FAMOUS, SEXY, AND COOL IN THE PROCESS!! So even if you can't be an international star (like the editor) maybe you can increase your attractiveness by writing about a cool trip, your favorite plant, or maybe even that bean seed you planted in a Dixie[®] cup when you were in grade four that never grew... Please send articles for the newsletter to: kent@csr-inc.com until a new mega-star editor arises to wield ultimate power!!

Christmas Party at the Kelvin and Connie's House!!!



Our monthly meeting will be a potluck at the Jones' house north of Shoshone (see map). From RR tracks 5.2 miles north on 75, turn right on 520N and proceed 2.8 miles – house is on left. Bring finger foods to share. Please RSVP by 19-Dec-06 to Kelvin and Connie by phone: 886-7051 or e-mail: jones@kelvin.myrf.net See you there!

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