

## Field Trips

---

With no currently scheduled field trips by the chapter for the summer months, we wanted to present you some ideas for botanizing on your own or in a group.

### Taking the High Road – Visiting Hart’s Pass

If you are looking for a spectacular wildflower hike in July or August, Hart’s Pass may be for you. Hart’s Pass is the highest point you can drive in the state of Washington. It is accessible by car, although the road, built in 1893, is not for the faint of heart. The narrow gravel road goes along a cliff wall (sans guard rails) and provides some breath taking views of the canyons. Although the road is maintained for sedans, passing on coming vehicles can be challenging. The road ends near the timberline and opens into the center of the North Cascades, where you may access the Pacific Crest Trail and a number of side-trails into the Pasayten Wilderness and Canada twenty miles north.



Depending on the weather, the peak wildflower viewing is in the first three weeks of July but may be later. The Pacific Crest Trail at Hart’s Pass has an amazing variety of wildflowers and wildflower habitats from rocky talus and scree slopes to lush alpine meadows. Every turn in the trail is a new delight! The Washington Native Plant Society and the Methow Valley Ranger District cooperatively produced a booklet called “Watchable Wildflowers of Hart’s Pass,” available at the ranger station or online at <http://www.fs.fed.us/wildflowers/regions/pacificnorthwest/HartsPass/index.shtml>. The 220 species makes Hart’s Pass one of the most popular destinations for naturalists and botanists in Washington. Hart’s Pass is the place for a digital camera and a big memory card!

**Directions:** From Western Washington, travel east on the North Cascades Scenic Highway (State Route 20) from Interstate 5. Turn off SR 20 at the Mazama and proceed toward Mazama. Continue northwest past Mazama and go up Forest Service Road 5400 to Hart’s Pass. The 35 miles from just past Mazama to the pass will take nearly an hour on the slow-going gravel road from just past Mazama to the pass. Note: trailers are not allowed on FS road 5400 to Hart’s Pass, and wider vehicles such as motor homes are highly discouraged.

### Take a Walk on the “Native Side” at The Chase Garden Dr. Brent Chapman, South Puget Sound Community College

In 1908, a ridge to the west of the Puyallup River Valley was clear-cut, leaving smaller native Douglas firs and cedars to mature. When Emmott and Lone Chase moved to their home there in 1959, they removed the debris in their woods, leaving nurse logs and stumps, and encouraged the abundant growth of native wildflowers and ground covers. Today, visitors to The Chase Garden can follow the paths into the woods to enjoy the wildflowers under a tall canopy of trees and savor a diverse collection of trilliums, fawn lilies, violets, twin-flowers, vanilla leaf and other native treasures of the Pacific Northwest forest.

Lone Chase, who passed away on April 2, 2006, at the age of 97 is quoted as saying, “The forest is my favorite part and the other natives around the edges of course. The natives – we must preserve the natives. The native dogwood by the badminton lawn is our most precious tree. I think the Oregon grape is just beautiful out there to the Southeast. Visitors would enjoy the use of natives here. It isn’t that we used them. It’s just that they were here and we’ve tried to preserve them. The trillium in the woods; they are lovely. I always appreciate those and they are increasing because we encouraged them. We weeded out around them and spread the seed and that’s the reason.”



Vanilla leaf, photo by Catherine Hovanic

## Field Trips, continued...

---

Perhaps the most impressive native wildflower display in The Chase Garden woods is the sweeping masses of vanilla leaf, *Achlys triphylla*, also known as sweet-after-death and deer foot. Vanilla leaf is widespread in both the eastern and western Cascades. In the wild it grows from low to middle elevations, and its range extends from British Columbia to Northern California. When hiking in our Northwestern woods, one may find vanilla leaf growing in shady forest glades or near the forest edge. The smooth, slender rhizomes of vanilla leaf furtively creep along, sending up intervals of single stems in early spring. The foliage sits atop a six- ten -inch stalk and is made up of three fan-shaped, blunt-toothed leaves. Some liken the appearance of the foliage to that of a deer's foot. Peeking above the foliage is the crème colored bottlebrush-like bloom.

Emmott Chase said, "My father used to bring it home to my mother. She would press the leaves to use in making. The leaves smell like vanilla...and even more so after dried."

Treat yourself and your friends to a walk through the native woodland groundcovers at The Chase Garden this spring, summer or fall. Take a moment to bend over, rub a leaf and inhale the beautiful fragrance of the woodland vanilla leaf. Self-guided tours are available on Fridays and Saturdays from April 3 through October 31. There is a tour fee of \$5.00 per visitor. Visit The Chase Garden's website at [www.chasegarden.org](http://www.chasegarden.org) for more information and driving directions, as well as a calendar of garden events for 2009.

The Chase Garden is a preservation project of The Garden Conservancy.

### More Local Attractions: Or Cheap Dates for a Botanist

**West Hylebos Wetlands Park, Federal Way.** If you have never visited the West Hylebos Wetlands, or haven't done so since the new boardwalk opened on February 11, 2008, you are missing an adventure to delight all your senses and an extraordinary cheap date for a botanist.

A visit to the West Hylebos Wetlands Park is a chance to experience a western Washington forested wetland that is very much like what existed before the Europeans arrived—a unique opportunity. The almost mile long boardwalk takes you deep into the wetland where you can view this marvelous habitat up close and personal. The walkway also provides a great walk for families with young children or those who have mobility issues.

Hidden among the park's 120 acres is a staggering diversity, as the website notes, "from the tiny — 27 species of moss, 37 species of lichen, 30 fungi, and 6 liverwort species — to the gigantic — cathedral-like Douglas firs, western hemlock, red cedars, and rare ancient Sitka spruce that began life around the time the Mayflower reached Plymouth Rock. . . More than one hundred bird species frequent the park, including gangly great blue herons, snazzy red pileated woodpeckers, orange-brown warblers, and violet green swallows."



Twinberry, photo by Bill Brookreson

A typical walk takes about ninety minutes but, unless you have no sense of wonder, give yourself more time to simply enjoy the beauty. The plant life alone will gladden your heart. Among the varied plants there are marvelous, huge lady ferns (*Athyrium felix-femina*) and the black twinberry (*Lonicera involucrata*). You'll have your own so don't forget your camera.

If you really want to challenge yourself, download the plant list for the Hylebos wetlands (<http://www.hylebos.org/west-hylebos-wetlands-park/plants-of-the-west-hylebos-wetlands>), compiled by WNPS members Fred Weinmann and Sarah Cooke, and see how many of the 94 native and 31 introduced species that Sarah and Fred identified that you can find. Tours will be offered also during of Native Plant Appreciation Week (see the article on NPAW).

Directions: From I-5, Take exit 142B into Federal Way. Head west on S. 348th Street (the address of the park is 411 S. 348th St.); turn left at 4th Ave S. (a one-lane road between the Pioneer Cabin and the Puget Sound Energy substation). The parking lot is immediately east of the road. Follow the trail west of the two cabins to the West Hylebos Wetlands trailhead. Park hours are dawn to dusk daily and admission is free.

**A Spring Visit to the South Sound Prairies**, by Dan and Pat Montague. One of the rarest ecosystems in the country, these open savannas were created by retreating glaciers 15,000 years ago, which left behind gravelly soils that dried out quickly during summer droughts. Native Americans sustained these grassy plans for thousands of years using fire to keep the encroaching forests at bay so that tribes could harvest the prairie's bounty of wildflowers and bulbs. Today conservationists maintain our prairies through active management and restoration.

## Field Trips, continued...

---

Spring, when many native wildflowers are in bloom, is a special time to visit the South Puget Sound Prairies. Scatter Creek Wildlife Area and Mima Mounds are two prairies that are open daily to the public. Wildflowers you might see during Native Plant Appreciation Week, May 3 –May 9 include *Camassia quamash*, *Dodecatheon hendersonii*, *Viola adunca*, *Viola nuttallii* var. *praemorsa*, *Aquilegia formosa*, *Lomatium utriculatum*, *Fritillaria affinis*, *Trillium parviflorum*, and *Eriophyllum lanatum*. Go to [http://www.wnps.org/plant\\_lists/counties/thurston/thurston\\_county.html](http://www.wnps.org/plant_lists/counties/thurston/thurston_county.html) for a plant list. Note that in this web page, “North Unit Swale” refers to Scatter Creek, North Unit.

**Scatter Creek Wildlife Area.** Scatter Creek Wildlife Area has two different sections to visit. They include open prairie, oak and conifer woodlands, and riparian areas. A Vehicle Access Permit from the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife is required for parking (<https://fishhunt.dfw.wa.gov/wdfw/vup.html>). Scatter Creek is used for other activities such as horseback riding, dog training and bird watching. For more information, go to [http://wdfw.wa.gov/lands/wildlife\\_areas/scatter\\_creek/](http://wdfw.wa.gov/lands/wildlife_areas/scatter_creek/).

For a nice loop walk at Scatter Creek South Unit, walk west from the Main Parking Lot along the faint footpath, the red barn will be on your right. Continue northwest around the central oak cluster, then on north and back along the road toward the barn. Near the barn, a side trail leads to Scatter Creek. At the Middle Parking Lot, walk about 300 meters west to the central swale for the best plant diversity in the North Unit.

**Directions:** Exit I-5 at Littlerock. Drive west one block, then turn south on Case Road. For the North Unit, go 4 miles to the North Parking Lot on the right. Go another 0.4 miles down Case Road to the Middle Parking Lot. For the South Unit, go another 0.8 miles down Case Road and then take a right onto 180th Avenue. The Main Parking Lot of the South Unit is 0.4 miles down 180th Avenue.

*Field trips concluded on Page 10*



West Hylebos wetlands, featured on pages 7, 8 and 9

*Note: We are now using a minimum of 35% post consumer paper for the Acorn.*

---

---

## **One More Field Trip (concluded from page 8)**

**Mima Mounds.** Mima Mounds Natural Area Preserve contains the best remaining examples of the unique Mima Mounds. Many theories have been proposed, but there is no widely accepted explanation for the origin of the mysterious, regularly spaced six- to eight-foot tall mounds. A paved interpretive trail, which is suitable for the disabled, meanders through the mounds. Longer walks are available. Mima Mounds is administered by the Washington Department of Natural Resources.

**Directions:** Exit I-5 at Littlerock. Drive west through Littlerock and continue on 128th Avenue SW until it ends at an intersection with Waddell Creek Road. Turn right on Waddell Creek Road. The Mima Mounds entrance is on the left in 0.8 mile; the sign is on the right.