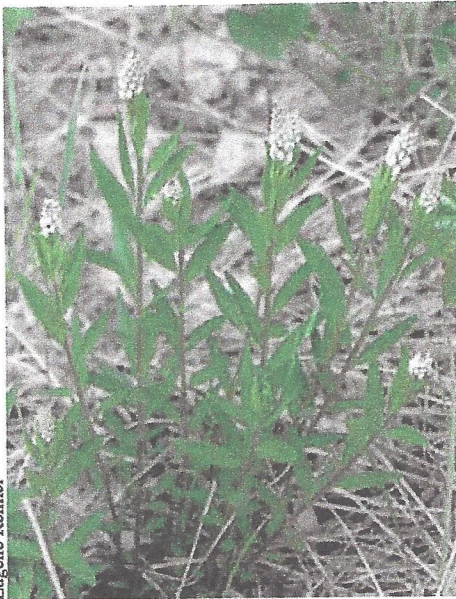


Native Orchid News:

The Newsletter of Native Orchid Conservation Inc.

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Annual General Meeting
Friday, February 24, 2006
1212 Dakota Street

Plant of the Month
Seneca Root
(*Polygala senega*)

2005 Members' Night Report

by Peggy Bainard Acheson, Members' Night Committee

NOCI's fifth annual Members' Night was held Friday, October 28, 2005 at the Dakota Lawn Bowls Club at 1212 Dakota Street in Winnipeg. Approximately 52 members and guests of NOCI came out to enjoy the presentations and displays. John Neufeld acted as MC for the evening.

The featured speaker, Dr. Jim Teller, Professor of Geology at the University of Manitoba, presented the topic "Glacial Lake Agassiz, Global Change, Noah's Flood". The presentation was a fascinating overview of Manitoba's geological pre-history and judging by the many questions posed by members following Dr. Teller's talk, it was very well received. A copy of our book, *Orchids of Manitoba*, was presented to Dr. Teller in appreciation.

I would like to thank those who donated prizes for the raffle and door prize. Following the draws refreshments were served, and everyone had an opportunity to mix and enjoy the displays and various sale items. At the membership table four memberships were renewed and seven new memberships were sold. Thanks to the members who brought guests and shamed them into joining!

Thanks to the board and all the volunteers who helped to make this year's Members' Night a lot of fun!

President's Report

Doris Ames

This year was a very successful year for Native Orchid Conservation Inc. We were on hand in June to see Premier Doer declare a large portion of the Brokenhead Wetlands an ecological reserve. This was a project that our organization had worked on since its beginning in 1998 and in fact was the reason for starting this organization. Following that, in July, we published our long awaited field guide "Orchids of Manitoba". We led the field trips for the Native Orchid Conference annual meeting held in Winnipeg this summer and enjoyed showing off Manitoba's beautiful orchids to people from all over North America and Europe. At the same time we worked on our educational video project and now have an interesting DVD called "Zoom In On Native Orchids" to help us increase public awareness of the need for orchid conservation. We are working with the Brokenhead Ojibway Nation and The Manitoba Model Forest on a plan that would see interpretive trails and boardwalks installed in a portion of these wetlands.

This is the time to renew your membership if you have not already done so. Your membership and donations are very important because they allow us to carry on with our conservation work. A tax receipt will be issued for donations of \$10.00 or more. We appreciate your support in the past and hope we can continue to count on you. We are planning to have our Annual General Meeting take place on Friday, February 24, 2006 and hope to have another Silent Auction. If you have items you wish to donate please let Peggy know at 261-9179.

The board members worked especially hard this year and the results speak for themselves. I would like to thank them all. Members' Night was a resounding success. My thanks to all who worked on it, especially Peggy. Ellen Johannesen did a wonderful job as secretary over the past year but she is leaving us to attend university in Denmark starting February 1st. Thanks, Ellen, we'll miss you.

Elections to the board will take place at the A.G.M. **Please let us know if you would be willing to serve as a director.** It's a lot of fun and a very rewarding experience for almost everyone. It gives one a chance to make a difference and to improve the quality of life for everyone in this province. It is important for you to understand that NOCI is no different than any other volunteer organization and we have many of the same problems. Problems common to all non-profit organizations are a lack of sufficient members to support the organization and allow it to carry out its mission, a lack of sufficient funding, **and difficulties in getting enough people to serve on the board of directors.** Young members are especially important to ensure the continuity of an organization and its ability to carry out its mission. Recently some of the board members took a workshop on board governance and these problems were discussed. It was suggested that the members should be asked to provide feedback on what they see as solutions to these problems. **You will see a feedback form along with this newsletter and I am asking you to please take the time to give us your advice and ideas as to how we might deal with these problems and also what you see as NOCI's role in the future. It is very important for the directors and the membership to plan for the future and to deal with any problems before they threaten the existence of the organization itself. Please send us your answers by January 10, 2006 so that we have time to look them over and prepare a report for discussion at the A.G.M.**

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

Plant of the Month

Seneca Root (*Polygala senega*)

By Doris Ames

This interesting member of the Milkwort Family is a Manitoba perennial that is known all over the world. Mentioned throughout our historical records, it was admired by Aborigines and Europeans alike for its medicinal properties.

The genus name "polygala" means "much milk" because the ancient Greek physicians believed plants in this family would increase lactation. In North America it had other uses and "senega" refers to the Seneca Indians who chewed the root and applied the paste as a cure for rattlesnake bites many years ago. These days the juice from the chewed roots is used as an expectorant in the treatment of colds. Some traditional healers use it for the treatment of diabetes and heart problems in combination with other herbs.

The plant consists of a circle of erect shoots 10-50cm high arising from a large purplish-brown branching root. The small greenish-white flowers appear in spikes in early June and gradually turn pinkish with age. The lance-shaped leaves are alternate and have a prominent mid-vein. The lower leaves are small and scale-like, gradually getting larger towards the top of the shoot. Seed capsules form in July and each one contains two black, hairy seeds.

Seneca Root is usually found growing in moist prairies, in gravel pits and at the edges of aspen forests. The plant prefers limestone-based gravelly or sandy soil and will grow in full sun or partial shade.

This plant is prized for its medicinal properties and is often used to treat coughs, colds and asthma. The plants are dug in late June (its easier to find them when part of the flower spike remains) and the roots have a distinctive sweet smell and a very bad taste. The roots are dried indoors on racks and eventually sold to makers of patent medicines who grind them into a powder, which is then used in cough and cold preparations.

Manitoba plants, especially those from the Interlake, have always been especially prized because of their large roots. 75% of the world's supply is grown here. Up until the 1960's Seneca Root collection was a thriving industry but after the development of synthetics the market slowed down. Then in the 1980's there was a renewal of interest in natural herbal preparations and in 1987, 11 tons of the dried root were brought to Winnipeg for sale. So much is being dug, and so much of its habitat destroyed by development, that the plant is becoming rather uncommon now in its usual range. Prices have fluctuated over the years. In 1907 the dried root sold for 70 cents per pound and in 2002 a collector told me he was getting \$12 per pound from Sidney I. Robinson stores in Winnipeg. The roots lose weight in drying and it takes many fresh roots to make a pound of dried Seneca Root depending on the size of the plants. Collectors usually leave a piece of the root from each plant in the soil to ensure next year's crop. Research is being done on the cultivation of Seneca Root as an economically viable crop and if successful this should relieve the strain on the wild population.

A Great Gift Idea

Our field guide, *Orchids of Manitoba*, is a great gift for any occasion.

Native Orchid Conservation Inc.

The purpose of this questionnaire is to gain feedback, reactions, and opinions from NOCI members regarding the current status and future direction of the organization. Please answer the following questions by adding your thoughts in the space provided, on a separate piece of paper, or in an email. Please return your responses by January 10, 2006 to either:

Native Orchid Conservation Inc.

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or

adames@mts.net

1.) What is your level of satisfaction with how NOCI is doing in terms of achieving its mandate?

2.) What do you see as the strengths of the organization?

3.) Do you have any thoughts or suggestions for improvement?

4.) What strategies should NOCI use to recruit more members?

5.) If you would be interested in taking part in a workshop to discuss the future direction of the organization, please provide your name and contact information.
