

Bittersweet Ski Trails Fieldtrip - Native Orchid Conservation Inc.
June 8, 2013

The Bittersweet cross-country ski trails are the inspiration of Hartley and Margaret Woodward. Maintained by the Woodward and McMaster families with the support of the Bittersweet Ski Club, the system includes approximately 21 km of classic and 10.5 km of skating trails that traverse prairie, woodland and river forest, a 0.4 km terrain park loop, a Nordic Centre day lodge, and a backcountry ski hut. The ski club is grateful to the following landowners and organizations who have extended the trails across their properties:

Hartley and Margaret Woodward

David and Jennifer Henry

Don and Ardythe McMaster

Roland and Carol Deleurme

Agricultural Crown Lands

Whitemud Watershed Wildlife Management Area

Don McMaster, artist, naturalist and outdoorsman, lives in the landscape he loves to paint. His work, his recreation and his major interests all revolve around the prairie provinces where he lives, and northwestern Ontario where he maintains a summer studio. A well-known advocate for wildlife and habitat preservation, Don has worked for many organizations dedicated to those purposes. Since moving from Winnipeg in the mid-1990s, Don and his wife Ardythe work at maintaining the native mixed grass prairie on their property overlooking the Assiniboine Valley southwest of Portage la Prairie. Winter finds them skiing the Bittersweet trails.

The big Bittersweet vine (*Celastrus scandens*) is in this area, hence the name. The plant has orange berries that likes to strangle other trees, often poplars. Don said the "Old Portage Trail" used to go through the property at the turn of the century, from Portage La Prairie west. (No info found on the internet yet.)

Species list from scouting trip

Ski trails

Hoary Puccoon

Saskatoon

Oak

Hazelnut

Meadowrue

Chokecherry

Wild Lily of the Valley

Pincherry / plum?

Prairie buttercup

Bedstraw

Yarrow (leaves)

False Solomon's Seal

Sand cherry

Commandra

Dwarf juniper

Crocus

Pussy toes

Three-flowered avens (pretty much done)

Possible Twisted stalk (*Streptopus amplexifolius*)

Poison Ivy (lots) and with leaves just starting, but last year's berries.

Porcupine Run Trail (by McMaster house)

Manitoba Maple

Yellow violet

Early blue violet

Nodding Trillium - in bloom and some with buds - many with flower on top of leaves

Bloodroot - many still in bloom

Sarsaparilla



Nodding trillium



Hoary puccoon



Early blue violet



Lily of the valley



Commandra



Bloodroot

(Pix taken by Doris Ames and Eugene Reimer.)