

Summary of the Botanical Features of the Quimper Wildlife Corridor

Ann and Fred Weinmann--May, 2008

(Note: In the following summary colloquial names are used to refer to plant species. Scientific names can be found in the Cappy's Trails plant list.)

Introduction

The Quimper Wildlife Corridor extends from Chinese Gardens at Fort Worden State Park to the bluffs of the Middlepoint/DNR area. Chinese Gardens, at the eastern end of the Corridor and at the bottom of the watershed, is within the fertile Kah Tai valley which derives its name from the farmers that worked it. Because of salt water intrusion the pond in the center of the area harbors some specialized plants adapted for life in salt water. These include pickleweed (*Salicornia virginica*), saltgrass (*Distichlis spicata*), salt marsh bulrush (*Scirpus maritimus*), and orache (*Atriplex* sp.) Surrounding the pond are a variety of mostly non-native turf grasses.

The heart of the Quimper Wildlife Corridor is a 264 acre wetland and forested area called Cappy's Trails and Woods. These wildlands are a superb example of the **Wilderness Within** i.e. wildlands within easy reach of population centers (the expression "Wilderness Within" was coined by Harvey Manning in 1993). They are not quite wilderness, but are full of wild plants and animals in easy reach by a bus ride, a walk, a bicycle ride, by canoe, by kayak or a short drive. They can nurture our minds and exercise our bodies. They deserve our protection, care and stewardship.

Cappy's Woods provides habitat for over 100 species of native plants. The non-native species that occur at the site are largely limited to the edges and access trails. If one ventures just a few feet off trail, they will be surrounded by plant species native to the Pacific Northwest. While most of the area is forested, there is a series of wetlands that have distinctive plant communities. In general, the trees, shrubs, and understory typify our location within western Washington and in the shadow of the Olympic mountains.

Wetlands

The two largest wetlands in CW are the Winona wetland and the Levinski wetland. Common herbaceous species include slough sedge, common cattail, and the invasive non-native species, reed canary grass. Trees and shrubs include three willow species: Pacific willow, sitka willow, and scouler's willow, as well as salmonberry, serviceberry, and swamp gooseberry. At the Levinski wetlands is a grove of quaking aspen an uncommon species in western Washington.

Forests

In general, the forest of Cappy's Woods are young (less than 100 years of age) second or third growth and the entire area has been subjected to various disturbance factors over the last century. The most conspicuous trees of the canopy layer include Douglas fir, western redcedar and western hemlock. This is typical for western Washington, although in the long term Douglas fir would not be able to regenerate in the shady forest. Grand fir is also a common evergreen tree. Common deciduous species include red alder, black cottonwood,

Pacific madrone, and bitter cherry. Also, this is the only place in the Port Townsend or the Quimper Peninsula area where one can see all three of our native maple species: bigleaf maple, Douglas maple, and vine maple. It is worth looking for small trees of cascara. Much of our original cascara in the Pacific Northwest was killed in the early part of this century when the bark was stripped for extraction of the laxative, Cascara sagrada (sacred bark in Spanish).

Shrubs

Beneath the dense forest canopy are the shrubs and saplings that can tolerate low light conditions. Many of the prevalent species are evergreens. This allows them to photosynthesize during our mild winters in order to produce enough nutrition to survive. Tree saplings, representing the next generation of the forest canopy, are mostly western hemlock and western redcedar. Perhaps the most spectacular of the shrubs is our Washington State flower, the Pacific rhododendron. Another attractive pink flowering shrub is the red flowering currant. The bright or pale pink flowers arrive in early spring. This plant was introduced from Washington to England in the early 1800s and continues to be a sought after landscape plant in Great Britain. Soapberry or soopolallie is one of the more unusual shrubs characteristic of our rains hadow climate. This is an important medicinal plant for native Americans and the berries can be whipped into a froth to form "ice cream". Two species of huckleberry are common in Cappy's Woods, the deciduous red huckleberry and the evergreen huckleberry. The shiny deep green foliage of this latter species is easily recognizable. Snowberry is abundant as well as Ocean spray. Other evergreen species common here and throughout the Pacific Northwest include Cascade Oregon grape and salal. These species as well as evergreen huckleberry and sword fern are in demand by the florist trade for inclusion in flower arrangements.

Groundcover/herbaceous plants

The groundcover (and other low growing plants) in Cappy's Trails includes many species which occur throughout the Quimper Peninsula. Some of the most common include twin flower, fringe cup, and the woodland starflower as well as two honeysuckle species, the orange honeysuckle and hairy honeysuckle. One of the more showy plants of spring is the large white western trillium. Three species of orchids have been seen in Cappy's Woods. The most spectacular is the fairy slipper orchid. More common is rattlesnake plantain named for the pattern on its leaves which is present in all seasons. A third orchid, elegant rein orchid, grows in the drier woods. The Pacific Northwest is well known for its ferns. In Cappy's Woods there are six species: lady, wood, deer, bracken, sword and licorice.

Because the forest canopy is so dense and light conditions so low on the forest floor, plants that can survive in low light have an advantage. In the extreme case, these plants simply rely on stealing nutrients from other plants and become parasites, completely lacking in chlorophyll. They can be white, red, pink, brown, or cream-colored. Two parasitic plants have been reported to date in Cappy's Woods: Hooker's groundcone which is listed as rare in Washington State and spotted coralroot. Other parasitic species that are likely to occur are Indian pipe and pinesap. Keep an eye out for them!

Plant Species of Particular Note

--Quaking aspen: Quaking aspen groves are uncommon in western Washington. This is the only such aspen stand in Port Townsend and the Quimper Peninsula that is fully

protected by virtue of its public ownership and the buffers provided by Cappy's Woods.

--Fairy slipper orchids: While the fairy slipper orchids are not officially considered a rare species in Washington, many people consider it a rare treat to see them. In fact, in April and May each year, people venture from Seattle to the Port Townsend area for the specific purpose of seeing these orchids in flower. Cappy's Woods along with the adjacent Fort Worden State Park are the only protected lands in the city of Port Townsend where the orchids occur.

--Hooker's Ground Cone: Hooker's ground cone is listed as a rare plant by the Washington Natural Heritage Program. It has been recently discovered within Cappy's Woods.

Weeds

Over 50 species of plants that grow wild in Cappy's Woods are not native to our state. They have arrived here from Europe, Asia and other parts of the world. Most of them are along the major trails and access roads where they have been introduced by people and pets and are not causing serious harm to the ecology of the area. However, a few species are listed as noxious weeds by the Jefferson County weed board. The most widespread of the noxious weeds are herb Robert, aka stinky Bob or Robert's geranium and English ivy. Stinky Bob arrived rather recently and is spread by seeds attached to the boots, clothes and hair of people and pets. It spreads rapidly after becoming established partially because its roots produce a chemical that is toxic to neighboring plants. English ivy is spread by birds which devour the berries and then fly to the park to poop them out. Also spurge laurel occurs in Cappy's Woods and is listed as noxious in several Washington counties. There is one small population of yellow archangel which should be removed. Another weed that is not listed as noxious, but should be removed is English holly which is also spread by fruit-eating birds. Cappy's Woods is also famous (or perhaps infamous) as the place where the first North American record for the garden escape, *Cotoneaster atropurpureus*, has been documented. Two other species of cotoneaster are also found in Cappy's Woods. These are mentioned because they are well adapted to our climate, they are widely used in horticultural settings, and they have potential for becoming a nuisance in our native woodlands.

Plant Identification References

Plants of the Pacific Northwest Coast by Pojar and MacKinnon

Flora of the Olympic Peninsula by Nelsa Buckingham

Flora of the Pacific Northwest by C. Leo Hitchcock and Arthur Cronquist

Plants of Western Washington and British Columbia by Eugene Kozloff

Wildflowers of the Pacific Northwest by Mark Turner and Phyllis Gustafson

Wild Plants of the Seattle Area by Arthur Jacobson

Plant Ecology

The Natural History of Puget Sound Country by Arthur Kruckeberg

Natural Vegetation of Oregon and Washington by Jerry Franklin and C.T. Dyrness

Common and/or unusual Plants with peak flowering times

Evergreen Trees

Douglas fir
Grand fir
Pacific madrone - May
Red cedar
Western hemlock

Deciduous Trees

Bigleaf maple - May
Bitter cherry - May
Black cottonwood
Douglas maple
Pacific willow
Quaking aspen
Scouler's willow
Sitka willow
Vine maple

Shrubs

Baldhip rose - May
Douglas hawthorne-May
Evergreen huckleberry - May
Indian plum - March
Nootka rose - May
Oceanspray - June
Pacific rhododendron - May
Red huckleberry - April
Salal - May
Salmonberry - April
Soapberry
Snowberry-June

Ferns

Bracken fern
Lady fern
Licorice fern
Sword fern
Wood fern

Flowers and Groundcover

Calypso orchid - April
Starflower - June
Stinging nettle
Sweet cicely
Twinflower - June
Western trillium - May
Woodland strawberry - May
Yerba Buena