

More Plants



Purple Prairie Clover

Dalea purpurea

Horsetail or scouring rush was used to scrub pots and pans. The stems contain high amounts of silica. Early settlers looked for the plant to aid them in finding ground water. They drilled a well where the plant was found.



Horsetail-Scouring Rush

Equisetum spp.



Prickly Pear Cactus

Opuntia spp.

Purple prairie clover is a prairie legume. Crush the leaves of this plant, and it smells like citrus. The leaves were made into a tea and the roots were chewed as gum.

During periods of drought, the prickly pear cactus can be found thriving on the North Dakota landscape. Prickly pear cactus had several uses. The thorns were removed from the pads and the inside eaten to relieve thirst. The roots were boiled and the concoction drank for helping urinary problems.

Late Summer and Fall Flowers



False Gromwell

Onosmodium occidentale

The Maximilian sunflower can be found blooming in late fall. Since the plant is tall and stands above deep snow, it is a good food source for game birds. The seeds were picked and eaten or beat into a powder. Oil was extracted from the seeds to make a skin lotion.



Cattails

Typha latifolia



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Nicknamed western marbleseed, false gromwell grows in a clump, has thick velvety leaves, and is gray green in color. The small, hard white seeds were harvested and put into dried gourds to make ceremonial rattles. The tea made from this plant was used to treat diarrhea.



Maximilian Sunflower

Helianthus maximilianii

Cattails aid in water purification. The plant provides good wildlife habitat. Native Americans dried the roots and beat them into flour. The young shoots were eaten as a stir-fried vegetable and the mature seed head cotton-like material was used in diapers and cradles. The long leaves were woven into baskets.

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Refer to the books: Edible & Medicinal Plants of the West

Lewis & Clark's Green World

North Dakota Wildflowers and their Medicinal Uses



Helping People Help the Land



Photos and brochure by Sheryl Smith, NRCS

Early Spring Flowers



Pasque Flower or Crocus
Anemone nuttalliana

The pasque flower is the first flower to show itself in early spring. Native Americans crushed the leaves making an antihistamine. When the plant is ingested it is said to slow the heart beat.

The prairie smoke is nicknamed old man's whiskers or the torch flower. The plant parts were used to rub on the eyes for soreness. The root was boiled into a tea and used as a mouthwash to relieve the pain of canker sores and a sore throat.



Prairie Smoke
Geum triflorum



Hoary Puccoon
Lithospermum canescens

Hoary puccoon is sometimes called honeysuckle because of its awesome fragrance. The hoary puccoon roots were boiled to make a tea and to produce a reddish color dye.

Western yarrow is readily found. The leaves were rubbed on the skin as an insect repellent. A leaf poultice was made to stop the bleeding of wounds and reduce the itch of spider bites.



Western Yarrow
Achillea millefolium

Early Summer Flowers



Ground Plum Milkvetch
Astragalus crassicaeus

Showy milkweed provides the perfect habitat for the monarch butterfly. The blossoms, containing high sugar, were boiled, mixed with flour, eaten or made into syrup by Native Americans. Young shoots were added to stews and soups. The plant should be boiled to reduce toxicity.



Wild Onion
Allium textile

Leadplant is nicknamed the shoestring plant. This legume has roots that reach 5 to 6 feet underground. The leaves were boiled into a tea which treated rheumatism. The stems were used in religious ceremonies prior to a buffalo hunt.

Ground plum milkvetch or buffalo plum was one of the first 30 plants collected on the Lewis and Clark expedition. The white to purple blossoms make the plant quite showy. The fruit tastes like a crisp, cool garden pea, enjoyed by both man and his horse. The plums help quench thirst.



Showy Milkweed
Asclepias speciosa

Wild onions have been used for food or medicine for centuries. When abundant, Native Americans traded them for goods. Onions were put in soups and stews, or a raw slice applied to a bee or wasp sting.



Leadplant
Amorpha canescens

Summer Flowers



Scarlet Gaura
Gaura coccinea

North Dakota's prairie rose is our state flower. The petals and roots were used to make a tea. The rosehips were added to soups, stews, and used to make tea which is an excellent source of vitamin C. Rosehip tea can be purchased today in stores.



North Dakota Prairie Rose
Rosa arkansana woodsii



Wild Bergamot
Monarda fistulosa

Today, echinacea is sold in stores as an immune system booster. Native Americans used the prickly seed head for a hairbrush. They chewed the immature seeds or a piece of root to relieve the pain of sore throats, toothaches or canker sores. The plant helped quench thirst.



Purple Coneflower
Echinacea angustifolia

Scarlet gaura produces dainty little flowers that are showy and delicate. The plant doesn't have any known medicinal uses. Native American women would rub the plant in their hands to attract and catch horses.

Wild bergamot, also known as horsemint or beebalm, are two nicknames given to this plant. Wild bergamot was picked and placed in with clothing to make it smell good. Tea was made from the stem and flowers for sore throats, fevers and colds. Its compounds are used as an antiseptic in today's mouthwashes.