



Enjoy this beautiful July weekend of amazingly nice weather!

Welcome to the 6th 2009

newsletter of nature happenings around our Sunset offices!

We welcome contributions from other staff here at Sunset office complex which includes Public Health/Nursing Center and--the new Communications building of photos and/or stories about your nature adventures at Sunset!

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# Sunflower Nature Notes

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## Spotlight on Nature

### THE WHITE COLLECTION OF BETSY'S LOVEABLE WEEDS



Protecting You and Your Environment  
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Kansas State University  
**JOHNSON COUNTY**  
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# Queen Anne's Lace

(*Daucus carota*)

Queen Anne's Lace is the white flower that is currently blooming abundantly along roadsides around the county and around our woodland edges. It is originally from Europe, but has "naturalized" well in the U.S. It is in the carrot family. The name for this family is Umbelliferae which refers to the way the flower stalks all come from a single spot, like an umbrella. Another accepted family name is Apiaceae.

From the following website:

<http://sciencera.com/biology/botany/the-story-of-queen-annes-lace/>

The origin of the name Queen Anne's lace was quite fascinating but also somewhat cloudy. The name Wild Carrot was first used by William Turner and dates back to 1548. While the name QAL is an American name, it also refers to plant in England known as cow parsley or *anthriscus sylvestris*.

Was it named after Queen Anne of Great Britain, second daughter of James II? She married Prince George of Denmark in 1683. The many florets in the flower resembled the collar often worn by Queen Anne, and the purple center represents the royalty of her majesty.

Another fable states the tiny purple dot represents finger prick of blood the queen may have lost while creating her lace collar. An English botanist, Geoffrey Grigson suggests the plant actually comes from Saint Anne, the mother of the Virgin Mary and patron saint of lace makers.

Queen Anne was quite proficient at creating lace and challenged the women of her court to produce a lace as delicate and beautiful as the flower.



Info from various sources:

Queen Anne's Lace is a biennial (sends up just leaves the first year and then blooms the next) that normally grows three to four feet tall. The flowers are white and sometimes pinkish.

The plant is also called wild carrot and indeed, our garden carrots of today were once cultivated from this plant. The roots are edible, but not tasty. And with all wild plants, you **MUST** be confident in your identification before you try your hand at eating wild plants. This plant is very similar to the very poisonous Poison Hemlock.

This plant has a long history of medicinal uses, including as a contraceptive! The earliest written reference dates back to the late 5th or 4th century B.C. appearing in a work written by Hippocrates.



Flower bud.

# Field Bindweed

(*Convolvulus arvensis*)



Field bindweed is a perennial vine native to Eurasia. Leaves are usually arrow-shaped (but can be other shapes), with flowers occurring mid-summer. Amazingly, the seeds can stay viable in the soil for decades! Yes, it is indeed a weed and great battles ensue to control it, but...it is still an attractive flower! It was likely introduced into North America as early as 1739. It is common along roadsides and other disturbed soil areas. If the flower reminds you of Morning Glory flowers...well...you are observant! This plant is in the Morning Glory family: *Convolvaceae*.

Weedy plants are often associated with disturbed areas where they play an important role in controlling soil erosion. However, since us humans disturb soils to grow things (plants or buildings!), we create the exact environment Mother Nature has developed tools to engage to protect the precious topsoil which can take centuries to form. Hence...in walk "weeds" and the beginning of our endless battles with Mother Nature. When we understand why the plants we call weeds exist, then at least we could go about controlling them without the hateful approach that is so often taken. After all...they are just doing their job! (Just not where you want them to do it!)



Weedy spurge, growing sprawling directly over the ground--protecting the otherwise bare soil.

# White Dutch Clover

(*Trifolium repens*)



While there are those who prefer a lawn with only grass, the addition of this wonderful plant does not need to be looked upon as bad. Clover is in the Legume family (pea and bean). An amazing trait of this group of plants is the wonderful symbiotic relationship that has evolved with nitrate forming bacteria. Nodules form on the roots where the bacteria live,

busily taking nitrogen gas from the atmosphere and converting it to nitrate...a very important plant nutrient. It is also the conduit for animals to get nitrogen which is a major part of protein.

Even though the atmosphere is 78% nitrogen gas, we as animals, cannot make direct use of it, nor can green plants. We all depend on the nitrate forming bacteria which live in the soil which busy themselves daily making use of the nitrogen gas, with the end result being nitrate. Plants take up nitrate, animals eat plants, animal waste products contain nitrogen compounds such as ammonia, keeping the cycle going! (Isn't that a spiffy way for a plant to get nitrogen....provide a nice home on the roots for the bacteria! Believe it or not, it is a dog-eat-dog out there in the plant world when it comes to competing for space, food, and water!)

White Dutch Clover is durable when walked upon and mowed, making it a good pathway plant. It is also a wonderful source of nectar for honeybees. And since it houses the nitrate-making bacteria...your lawn benefits from the "free" nitrate source!



# Luna Moth



Karen Sorenson, WW Department, came across this gorgeous Luna Moth while out walking today at Sunset!

*The Luna's beautiful green coloration combined with its large size, 3 to 4.5 inch wing span, makes this a spectacular moth to behold.*

*Although common throughout eastern North America, they only fly at night. The adults are short-lived, 1 to 2 weeks, and do not feed.*

*Around midnight, females start "calling" by releasing a scent that will attract a male.*

*The female lays up to 250 eggs, 8 -13 days later they hatch and then spend about 5-6 weeks feeding, growing up to 3 1/2 inches long! Up to 3 broods can emerge each year. The late summer caterpillars, form a pupa in a cocoon to stay in over the winter, emerging in early April.*

*The caterpillars feed on a variety of tree leaves including walnut, persimmon and sweet gum.*