

SASKATCHEWAN FLOWERS AND INSECTS

In order that the BLUE JAY will be a more balanced Nature magazine, we invite more comment in connection with our wild flowers and insects. With the exception of Mr. Budd's splendid contributions this section has been sadly neglected by our members at large. Frankly we are disappointed, because of all phases of nature we, personally, like the wild flowers the best of all. Now that spring is coming, there will be a splendid opportunity to become better acquainted with our lovely prairie flowers and of the many insects which visit them, illustrating so well the value of mutual helpfulness. Let us hear from you. Editor.

PAINTED LADIES

By Elizabeth Baker, Regina.

Just a few lines inspired by Mrs. Bilsbury's mention of the Painted Lady. These lovely butterflies are known at my home as "Rain Butterflies" from their habit of appearing in numbers and playing with each other on the open ground around the door, immediately preceeding a shower. Another added virtue of them is their habit of living so close to man's domains. While the 'Blues' and 'Fritillaries' have to be sought for chiefly around puddles, Camberwell Beauties and Mourning Cloaks among trees, Swallow-tails and Tigers as they flash by and fade away, yet one may look around almost anywhere and there are the Painted Ladies, ever playful, ever bright.

I was quite pleased last summer on going to my garden, bent on only pulling up dozens of Canada Thistle plants, to find that most of them were the homes of one or more Painted Lady larvae, at that time pretty well grown. Needless to say, this find stayed the execution of the thistles to a later date.

ANOTHER TWO-HEADED FLOWER

By C. Lorne McNair, Pelly.

Last summer Elizabeth Hunter, of Grenfell, reported finding a wild sunflower freak with two heads, one growing through the centre of the other. I found a wild flower with the same form. I cannot correctly name the plant, but have always called it wild mint. It is a fluffy purple flower with long rolled petals. (Mint-leaved Bergamot - Ed.) The second flower was on a stem about two inches long, protruding directly from the centre of the first one.

THE DOGBANES OF SASKATCHEWAN

Archie Budd

The dogbanes (Apocynaceae) are perennial herbs with opposite, entire leaves and an acrid, milky sap. They have long, coarse, horizontal rootstocks and small, bell-shaped flowers, each with five lobes on the united sepals and petals. The fruit are follicles, long slender pods, borne in pairs and containing numerous seeds, each of which bears a tuft of hairs to assist in dissemination. The dogbanes are closely related to the milkweeds, which also have a milky acrid sap, leaves generally opposite, and tufted seeds borne in follicles. The milkweeds, however, have stout follicles, and generally only one of the pair contains seeds, the other being atrophied and small.

Dogbanes derive both their common and scientific names from the ancient idea that the plants keep dogs away -- Greek, apo- away from, and kunos - dogs. While generally considered to be poisonous to stock by reason of the milky sap, no animals are likely to take more than one nip at these plants, and their presence cannot be considered dangerous.

DOGBANES (Cont'd.)

In Saskatchewan we find two species of dogbane and the following key may aid in separating our species:

Petals at least twice as long as the sepals; pinkish in colour; stem leaves drooping or spreading.....A. androsaemifolium

Petals not twice as long as the sepals, greenish-white in colour; stem leaves ascending.....A. sibiricum

Apocynum androsaemifolium L. (Spreading Dogbane)

This is a bush plant growing from one to four feet high, and is generally found in colonies by reason of new shoots arising from the horizontal rootstocks. The leaves are ovate or oval in shape, from one to three inches long, paler and somewhat fine hairy on the undersides. The pink and white flowers are from 1/4 to 1/3 inch in length and the petal lobes are generally spreading and curved downwards. They are borne very plentifully in clusters at the ends of the stems and in the axils of the leaves. When in blossom, a patch of spreading dogbane is a very pretty sight. The numerous fruit are pairs of long narrow pods, sometimes up to four inches long, but very narrow, turning brown when near maturity. Each follicle contains numerous reddish-brown seeds, about 1/16 inch long, tipped with a tuft of white, silky hairs. This is a somewhat local plant, quite common on sandy soils around woodlands, but not found on the open prairie areas.

Apocynum sibiricum Jacq. (Clasping-leaved Dogbane)

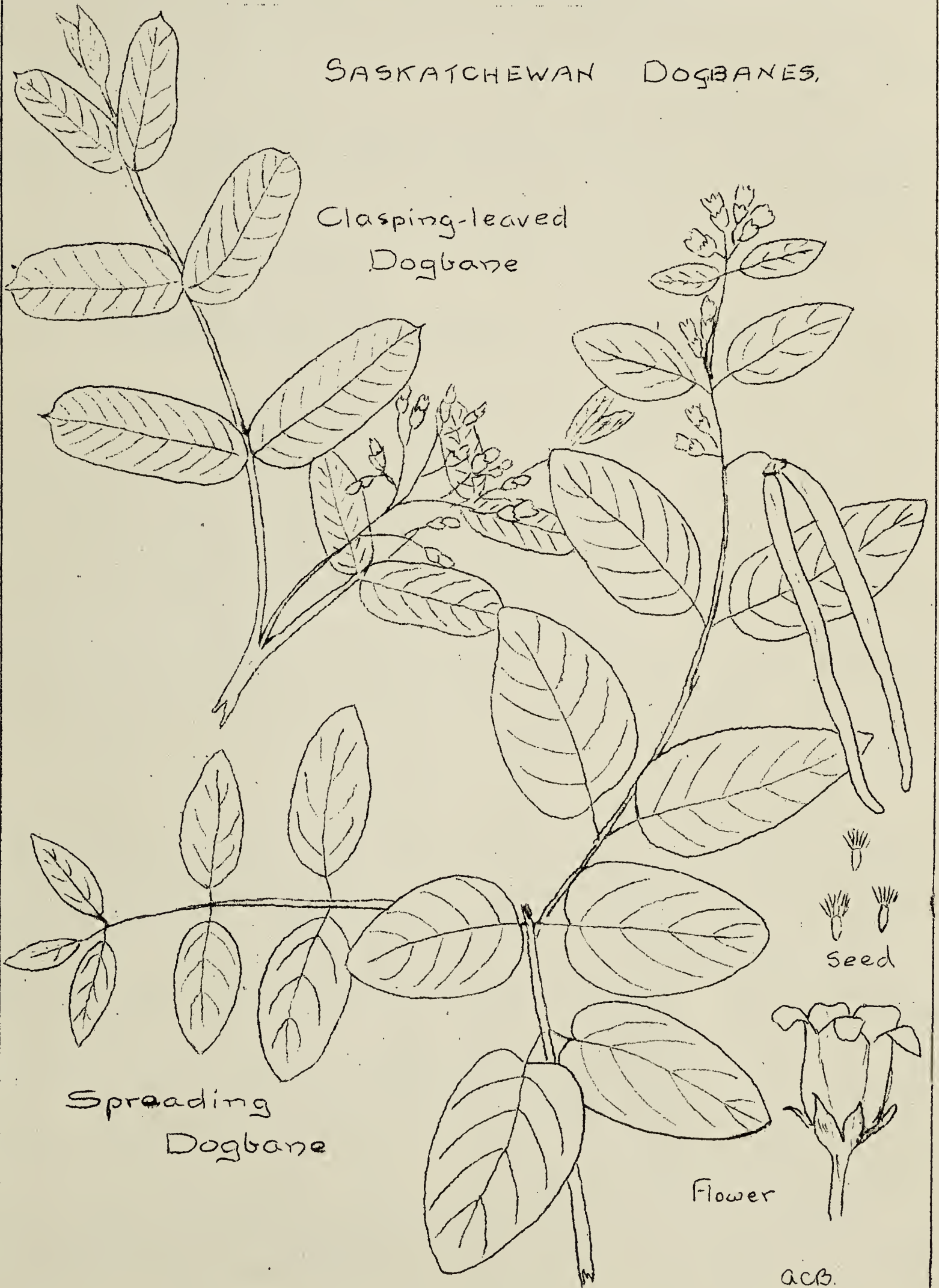
This is an erect plant from very tough rootstocks and grows from one to two feet in height. The leaves are generally oblong, blunt at the base and at the apex but with a small point at the apex. They are from one to three inches long, pale green in colour and smooth, often clasping the stem, but sometimes with very short stalks. The flowers are about 1/4 inch long, greenish-white in colour and borne at the ends of the branches, not in the leaf axils. The fruit are characteristic follicles, similar to those of the spreading dogbane, but are not so plentiful, as this species spreads much more by its running rootstocks than by its seed.

This is more a species of the southern open prairie areas than the more wooded parts and is very plentiful on sandy banks of creeks through those areas. It makes a very persistent weed in riverside gardens and the tough roots are very difficult to dig through or to pull out, and send up their pinkish shoots at every opportunity.

The Indians used fibres of this, or a very closely related species, as twine for sewing: the eastern form is known as Indian Hemp (Apocynum cannabinum). Authorities appear to be uncertain whether or not the two are separate species, and some call our plant A. cannabinum var. hypericifolium, but the writer will conceal his ignorance by not venturing an opinion.

SASKATCHEWAN DOGBANES,

Clasping-leaved
Dogbane



Spreading
Dogbane

Seed

Flower

ACB.