

Astragalus Species

(Continued from last issue)

By Arch C. Budd, Swift Current

- (10) *Astragalus Kentrophyta* A. Gray.
(Prickly Milk-vetch)

A very low, tufted plant from 2 to 6 inches high, with spiny-tipped stipules and stiff, linear, spiny-tipped leaflets, from 1/4 to 1/2 inch long. The yellowish-white flowers are about 1/8 inch long with a pale bluish tinge and are borne in clusters of from 1 to 4 in the leaf axils. This is a plant of sand dunes and bad lands in the south-west but is very rare.

- (11) *Astragalus lotiflorus* Hook.
(Low Milk-vetch)

A low, tufted species from 1 to 4 inches high with stems all growing from the root crown. The leaves bear from 7 to 15 oblong leaflets from 3/16 to 1/2 inch long and the flowers are yellow, about 5/16 inch long and borne in dense racemes. Not very common but occasionally found on dry hillsides in the southern parts.

- (12) *Astragalus missouriensis* Nutt.
(Missouri Milk-vetch)

This is a tufted, branching, silky haired plant from 2 to 6 inches high, the leaves bearing from 7 to 21 grayish silky-haired leaflets from 3/16 to 5/8 inch long. The inflorescence is a short loose raceme at the head of the stem bearing from 5 to 15 purple flowers. The pods are about 1 inch long, oblong and finely hairy. Very common on hillsides and roadsides in the south.

- (13) *Astragalus pectinatus* (Hook)
Dougl. (Narrow-leaved Milk-vetch)

A much branched, semi-erect plant growing from 1 to 2 feet in height with leaves bearing from 11 to 21 very narrow, linear leaflets from 3/4 to 3 inches long. The conspicuous flowers are borne in a large loose raceme of from 5 to 20 cream coloured flowers from 3/4 to 1 inch long and usually bloom early in June. The fruit are oblong-elliptical, woody pods from 1/2 to 3/4 inch long. This species also can cause selenium poisoning in stock on certain soils, but is only eaten when other forage is very scarce. It is also host to the Caragana Blister Beetle. Very common throughout the southern part of the province on dry soils where its deep coarse roots may go down as much as 6 or 7 feet into the soil for moisture.

- (14) *Astragalus Purshii* Dougl.
(Pursh's Milk-vetch)

This is a very hairy, low growing tufted plant, rarely over 2 inches high. The leaves bear from 9 to 15 silky-haired oblong leaflets and the flowers are borne on a short raceme and are cream-coloured with a tinge of purple on the keel. The ovoid pods are from 1/2 to 3/4 inch long and densely white woolly. Found very occasionally on dry hills in the south-western part of the province.

- (15) *Astragalus succulentus* Richards.
(Succulent Ground-plum)

This is a spreading, prostrate species forming mats up to 2 feet in diameter. The leaves bear from 17 to 25 elliptic leaflets from 1/4 to 1/2 inch long. The creamy-white flowers have a purple tinged keel and are from 1/2 to 3/4 inch long and borne in a loose raceme. The fruit, which is very conspicuous, is about 1/2 to 3/4 inch across, almost round and very fleshy, bright red in colour and turns brown and very hard when dry. The fruits are borne in considerable numbers and the plant seems very palatable to cattle. Found fairly frequently on drier prairie throughout most of the province.

- (16) *Astragalus tenellus* Pursh
(Loose-flowered Milk-vetch)

A slender-stemmed, spreading, erect, very branching species growing from 10 to 18 inches high, with leaves bearing from 9 to 23 linear oblong leaflets from 1/4 to 1/2 inch long. The flowers are about 1/4 inch long, yellowish-white or greenish-white in colour and borne in a very loose spike-like raceme. The pods are papery, oblong and about 1/2 inch long. Fairly common on roadsides and sheltered prairie throughout the southern part of the Province.

- (17) *Astragalus triphyllus* Pursh
(Cushion Milk-vetch)

A low, cushion-like very early flowering species from 2 to 4 inches high but sometimes as much as 12 inches across the mat, bearing numerous silky-hairy, trifoliate leaves, each with three elliptic leaflets from 1/2 to 3/4 inch long. The creamy-white flowers occasionally have purplish tinged keel and are from 1/2 to 3/4 inches long, and borne at the base of the leaf stems on the crown of the plant. The ovoid pods are about 1/4 inch long, silvery-hairy, and enclosed by the calyx. Quite common on dry hillsides and eroded banks in the southern parts of our province.