

# BUR OAK, NANNYBERRY, SANDCHERRY AND OTHER INTERESTING PLANTS IN EAST- CENTRAL SASKATCHEWAN

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A few years ago I heard about native Bur Oak (*Quercus macrocarpa*) present at a place near Porcupine Plain, Saskatchewan, but thought there must have been some mistake, as the only oak I was aware of around here was a row of trees planted north of Somme in 1933 by Ernie Geddes. Last spring when I again heard of the oak near Porcupine Plain, I decided to investigate. At the old George Love homestead, seven miles northeast of Porcupine Plain, there were five oak trees in the old yard. I was told by the Love family that these had been transplanted there from the wild in the early days, and that there had been a number of native oak trees growing along the nearby lake when George Love first came there in the 1930's. Scattered along the north shore of the lake up to one-quarter mile from the yard, I found six, apparently native, oak trees, and two more near another lake east to the south. The trees were all old, mostly with a clump-form, looking more like willows than oak trees (this would seem the reason that "Bur Oak" is often called "Scrub Oak" in the more northern part of its range). It was here on high, well drained, poplar ground among hazelnut, Chokecherry, Pincherry and Saskatoon bushes, that the oak was growing on a southern slope.

I wrote about these trees to Dr. Vernon L. Harms (Curator of the W. P. Fraser Herbarium at the University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon), and he was quite interested, replying that he did not

know of any verified scientific records of the native Bur Oak in Saskatchewan from north of the Qu'Appelle valley (where it is found only as far west as Round Lake). This surprised me as my brother Ron, while collecting insects for the Provincial Museum over ten years ago, had seen oak in two places farther north in Saskatchewan; these were along the north bank of the Assiniboine River valley near Togo, and on the southwest slope of Thunder Hill, north of Arran. We did not realize that these native oak localities were either unsubstantiated by scientific collections or unknown to botanists.

When Vern Harms came to our place on June 19, 1980, I with Les Baker, a friend of mine who is interested in plants, took him to the oak site near the Porcupine Plain where habitat information and voucher specimens were obtained to document the locality record. He agreed there seemed no reason to question their native status here, based on the historical information and the fully natural-wooded habitat of the plants. We followed this by several days of botanizing in the Pasquia Hills mainly along the Waskwei and Pasquia Rivers, where we helped, and tried to learn from, Vern Harms as he collected plants for the Fraser Herbarium. Some of the interesting plant records that we found high in the Pasquia Hills were Lady-fern (*Athyrium filix-femina*) and Alpine Bistort (*Polygonum viviparum*). Also collected here were some rarities



*Bur Oak*

*Ken Lumbis*



*Nannyberry*

*G. J. Smith*

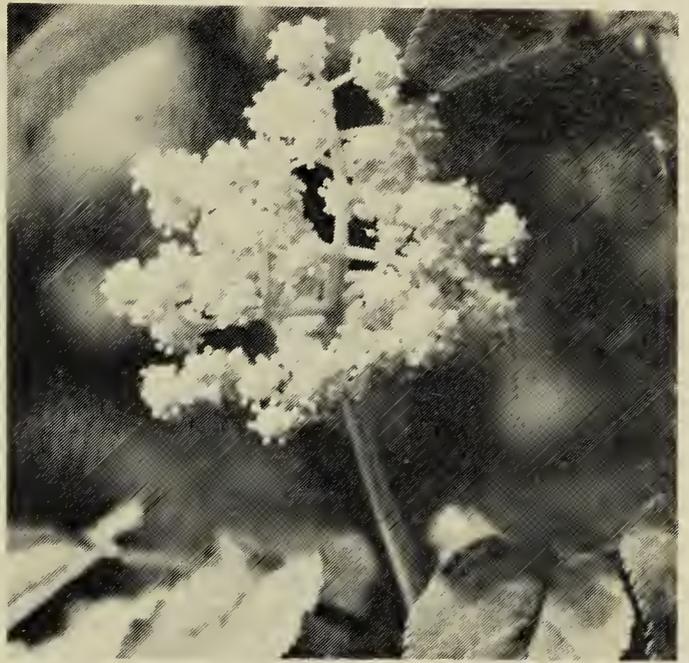


*Sandcherry*

*Wayne C. Harrison*

previously found elsewhere in the Pasquia Hills mostly along the Fir River Road, north-northwest of Hudson Bay. These plants included Western Purple Virgin's-bower (*Clematis occidentalis* var. *grosseserrata*), Red-berried Elder (*Sambucus racemosa* ssp. *pubens*), and Red Alpine Bearberry (*Arctostaphylos rubra*). Also of interest were some plants that, although fairly common here, are quite restricted in Saskatchewan to the east-central region only. Among the latter were Bush Honeysuckle (*Diervilla lonicera*), Mountain Ash (*Sorbus decora*), and Mountain Maple (*Acer spicatum*).

On June 24, we rediscovered the rare native Sand Cherry (*Prunus pumila*) at Hudson Bay where it had previously been reported and represented the only native site north of the Lower Du'Appelle River Valley in Saskatchewan. But this stand has now been almost totally eradicated, with only a few low sprouts remaining, as a result of land developments just south of the present Hudson Bay Regional Park. Perhaps other native sites of the Sand Cherry may still be present in the general region and should be looked for, especially in sandy regions along the Red Deer River. Such sites, if found, would hopefully be protected from destruction.



Red-berried Elder

Wayne C. Harris

On June 24, we went to collect and make an inventory of the plants on Thunder Hill, north of Arran. Vern Harms will be preparing a complete checklist of the plants there. We learned from local farmers that the oak observed a decade ago on the southwest slope had been put in the brush-pile a few years previously. However, we did find some oak in two other places, high up on the southern slope of Thunder Hill on the Saskatchewan side, about one-half and one mile west of the Manitoba border respectively. The Bur Oak was also found on the eastern slopes of Thunder Hill in Manitoba, where it was more abundant and was growing at lower elevations. Interestingly, botanists from the University of Manitoba also collected native oak samples from the Manitoba side of Thunder Hill, for the first time last summer. This I learned through correspondence with G. M. Keleher of the University of Manitoba. She also said that they have a specimen of Bur Oak in the herbarium there from the Kettle Hills, near Swan Lake where they are growing on sandy ridges among Jack Pine (collected by G. M. Keleher, 1974).

Before we went up on Thunder Hill, I wondered what the light-green patch was about three-quarters of the way up



Bush Honeysuckle

Wayne C. Harris

the southern slope. Upon reaching it, we found quite an extensive natural grove of Nannyberry (*Viburnum lentago*). This was a good discovery, as Nannyberry is a rare species in Saskatchewan known from only four other sites and it had not previously been recorded from north of Tantallon, in the Qu'Appelle Valley. This is also beyond Manitoba's apparent northernmost record at Duck Mountain (Scoggan, H. G. 1950 *Flora of Manitoba*, p. 503).

Some other interesting plant discoveries made on Thunder Hill were Wake-Robin (*Trillium cernuum*) and Inland Wood Anemone (*Anemone quinquefolia* var. *interior*), the latter adding a fourth Saskatchewan locality record for this rare species to those known previously from Somme, Hudson Bay and Armit.

Voucher specimens of all the plants collected last summer in the Pasquia Hills, the Porcupine Plains and Hills, and at Thunder Hill are now filed in the Fraser Herbarium, University of Saskatchewan, at Saskatoon (SASK).



Mountain Maple

Wayne C. Harris

It is hoped that the northern outposts of Bur Oak and Nannyberry in Saskatchewan will be protected and not destroyed. Perhaps at least the oak can be found in other suitable localities, in east-central Saskatchewan. The oak at Thunder Hill is growing on a south-facing slope at about the 1700 foot level. The plants near Togo and Porcupine Plain are on a southern slope, but at an altitude of about 1500 feet. We did not revisit the latter site to collect samples but understand (pers. corr., V. L. Harms) that this Togo locality record has now been substantiated by a voucher collection made last summer by Lawrence Townley-Smith, a plant ecologist working with the Saskatchewan Environment Department, and to be filed in the Fraser Herbarium.

### Acknowledgement

Appreciation is expressed to Dr. V. L. Harms for his interest in making a trip into this area to study the local flora. He also read the manuscript, offering helpful suggestions and additional information.



Mountain Ash

Wayne C. Harris