



Winter Treasure Hunt for Native Plants

By Nancy Goulden, Board Member

Watch native plant enthusiasts on an outing in June, and you will soon realize that they are involved in a treasure-hunt-game. They move around, heads down, searching for blooming plants, calling out to colleagues—“What’s this?” “I think I’ve found X.” They seem to be awarding themselves points in this game for finding and identifying plants before anyone else can. There may even be bonus points for a new plant on one’s life list, spotting an endangered species or knowing the Latin name of a plant. There is a special kind of adrenalin rush and a warm feeling of self-satisfaction that comes from wildflower hunting. But what is the searcher to do during the long dull season (about six months in Kansas) when there are no blooms?

The answer is: get out there while you’re waiting for the first Wild Parsley and Ground Plums to show up and look for last year’s remnants of old plant friends. You may have to walk farther and look longer, but you can still play the treasure-hunt-game in the winter even without our favorite, and often easiest,



Bittersweet



Purple Coneflower

plant fan has to depend on clues such as fruits, seed heads, pods, and dormant leaves and stems. Studying plants in their winter guise is an excellent way to extend knowledge and appreciation for our native plants, and the same thrill of discovery and problem solving occurs when you succeed at adding a plant to your winter life list. You can even give yourself bonus points.

Colorful fruits serve as an excellent substitute for flowers in capturing the walker’s attention and aiding in identification. In northeast Kansas, some plant with colorful fruits that are visible during winter excursions are: Prairie Wild Rose (*Rosa arkansana*); Buckbrush-Coralberry (*Symphoricarpos orbiculatus*); Bittersweet, (*Celastrus scandens*); Carolina Horse-nettle (*Solanum carolinense*) and Buffalo gourd (*Cucurbita foetidissima*).

The bright red of **Prairie Wild Rose** hips can be spotted in grassy areas, especially on upper slopes or hilltops. They seem to be especially abundant this year. Each crimson globe-shaped hip, on top of the familiar prickly rose stem, has a cluster of dried brownish sepals on the top. The compound leaves may or may not still be present. Within the durable red fleshy, outer covering (the hip) are the true fruits, the hard, hairy achenes.

Birds and a variety of mammals eat rose hips. Some native American tribes used them for emergency food (for an extensive

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Whorled Milkweed



Coralberry



Kansas Native Plant Society

The Kansas Native Plant Society is dedicated to developing an awareness of the beauty of Kansas Wildflowers, the value of their use in landscaping public areas and their place in our ecology.

Wildflower Wanderings

by Valerie Wright, President, KWS

A brand new year and a brand new name! The Kansas Native Plant Society is different from the Kansas Wildflower Society only in that it looks to the future and those important issues we must face as an organization for the enlightenment and education of our membership. Two issues that will loom large in the 21st century are the loss of native species and native habitat and the increase of invasive, non-native plants (and animals) that threaten all the ecosystems of the world. That may sound rather like an overlarge statement, but all indications point toward the growth of these threats. Conservation of our native plants for future generations will be an even more pressing task with each passing year.

We now have a Plant Resources Committee that holds the responsibility for developing materials and finding information about native plants, seed sources and gardening and horticultural centers that provide legitimate services and resources. Our efforts should also include encouraging local businesses to promote and sell native plants and seeds. If any of you have great ideas about how to carry this out, let me know or the Plant Resources Committee (Chair Cindy Ford, members Brad Guhr, Gary

Weisenberger, Michael Heffron, Craig Freeman or Lorrie Parish). Right now this committee is preparing some fact sheets, including a native plant resource list, basic prairie management guidelines and native plant landscaping tips. Hopefully there will be many more in the future.

The Kansas Native Plant Society is considering the possibility of having more than one membership meeting per year. We could simply have another meeting



Canada Wild Rye

in the spring as well as the fall. Or we

could organize smaller regional meetings or subject oriented meetings that would bring only part of our membership together. Please let us hear from you. Would you attend more than one KNPS meeting a year? What kind of meeting would you attend? Thanks to all of you who attended the Annual Fall Meeting. Let us hear from you at kansaswildflowers@yahoo.com.

And thanks for allowing me to be your president for another year. To keep our society thriving, I am requesting yet again that you help us find new members by sending in a name or two of people who might have interest in joining. There is a box inserted in this newsletter where you can fill in the name and address of a potential member. Send it to our address and that's all you have to do. Each potential member will receive a very nice packet of information and goodies from KWS. They can decide whether they want to become members after receiving the packet. In the past year your Board participated 100% in this membership drive by proposing names of colleagues, family, friends and neighbors. Please consider doing the same. Many thanks to all who participate.

I hope that you will enjoy this newsletter. Please write to us or send e-mails to our new address (kansaswildflowers@yahoo.com) with your comments.

Board of Directors for Kansas Native Plant Society

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Meet Three New Board Members

Interview by Jeff Hansen

Allison Hamm

Where are you from, where do you live, what you do for a living?

Allison: I Spent the first 4 years of my life in Kansas (Humboldt and Leawood) then grew up in Pittsburgh, PA. Since then I've lived in Washington, DC, Michigan and Massachusetts, returning to Kansas (Wichita) with my family in 1999. I practiced law for about 15 years before coming to Kansas but am not licensed to practice in Kansas. I completed a Masters Degree in Environmental Studies at Friends University in Wichita and currently consider my field to be Environmental Planning. My master's project was to provide recommendations to the Dyck Arboretum concerning possible land protection options for the properties bordering their land ~ focusing on prairie ecosystem restoration. I am writing grants for the Dyck Arboretum of the Plains in Hesston and the Great Plains Nature Center in Wichita.

How did you become interested in wildflowers and other native plants?

Allison: When I moved to Wichita from Worcester, Massachusetts, I found that the plants that I loved and was used to having around me in my garden really wouldn't grow here very well. I kept looking for plants that would ~ and with the help of my friends at the Dyck Arboretum found that those plants most likely would be natives. I have come to learn a lot about natives and with knowledge came love. I expect that my concern with preservation of native plants and prairie ecosystems is what brings me to this organization.

What are some of your favorite native plants and why?

Allison: It's really too hard to pick. I love the native grasses, the showy wildflowers such as penstemons, and the delicate plants such as the Fremont clematis. Why? The way the grasses blow in the wind, the way the penstemons splash their color and the way the clematis shows how delicate nature can be.

What is your favorite natural area in the state and why?

Allison: I am ashamed to say I haven't explored a lot of different kinds of natural areas yet, especially the western areas, but every time I come across something approaching the prairie ecosystem that once prevailed on our landscape, I love it.

What do you like best about the organization?

Allison: The enthusiasm for exploring, preserving and promoting native plants we all share.

Where do you see room for improvement?

Allison: I think we're all doing what we can as an all-volunteer organization with the busy lives we all lead. Perhaps if we met as a board a little more often and developed a set of action steps to guide us when our other obligations distract us from our goals, we could accomplish more in a year.

Phyllis and Larry Scherich

Where are you from, where do you live, what you do for a living?

Phyllis: My husband, Larry, more often called Dee, and I manage and live on the Merrill Ranch in the Red Hills of Comanche County. Dee manages a cowherd of about 1000 Hereford/Angus cattle. We are in the process of converting about 1800 acres of farm ground back to grassland. Dee grew up here - I grew up in McPherson. We met at Ottawa University where we were both students. Dee received a BA from Ottawa, and later a MA from Ball State University - both in biology. I received a BS from McPherson College in home economics, with a strong English minor. Dee taught the sciences in Troy HS, then Inman HS, for 14 years. I taught for 3 years, and have done substitute teaching intermittently.

How did you become interested in wildflowers and other native plants?

Phyllis: We have both always enjoyed the out-of-doors. Living in this area and having an opportunity to be "among" the native plants on a daily basis, it would be difficult to ignore them. Since the plants growing in the pastures "tell the story" of the pasture conditions, it is even more important to know about them. Dee had a fairly good botany background in college - I had none. Perhaps the desire to know the names of the wildflowers around us was climaxed one spring weekend when Lorene Kaufman called and asked if she and Dr. Kaufman could come for a visit to the ranch to view the wildflowers. (When we lived in Inman, Dr. Kaufman, was our family doctor.) We chuckled a little as we watched the enthusiasm of Lorene as she "discovered"

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Meet Three New Board Members — continued

many wildflowers that she knew, but had never seen blooming in her area, and several that were new to her. She came prepared with small vials filled with water in a carton into which she placed specimens of plants she needed more time to identify. She shared "info" on the names of the ones she knew. By the time they left she had quite a collection - and work ahead of pressing and identifying her "treasures." Well, enthusiasm like that is catching!

I enrolled in a field identification class led by Dr. Bob Nicholson of Fort Hays State. We spent four Saturdays through the summer learning about the plants on walking tours. We were also required to make a collection of 50 blooming wildflowers in our area, mount them, and identify them. It sounded daunting, but my required 50 turned into about 100 that summer - there was nowhere to stop - and still there were so many others! Dee worked with me on this project, and we learned together. This led to our continuing "game" we play as we drive - you know, the 65 mph wildflower ID Game! We took a tour with Phil Arnold near Ashland, another with Fred Meyer, Jr. near Dodge City, and the Barber County Wildflower Tour. We were "hooked."

Another impetus was a chance meeting with Craig Freeman in our south pasture in August of 1991. He was here with Stan Roth doing some work with the bats in one of our caves. When Stan introduced Craig, I asked, "Are you THE Craig Freeman?" He replied, "That depends on what you mean?" I asked, "Are you the one with the new wildflower book that I happen to have in the pickup with us today?" Craig was surprised as the book had hardly appeared in the bookstores at that time - Stan had just mailed us his book a week or two prior to this chance meeting

What are some of your favorite native plants and why?

Phyllis: We have many favorites - depending on the time of the year and the particular conditions that year! The Easter daisy is the first we look for in the spring - we know it is time to look when the first bladderpods start to show. The rapid succession of the early spring flowers soon follows with the wonderful variety of colors. Ratany, globe mallow, the many species of evening primroses, the penstemons, the colonies of gaillardia interspersed with the lazy daisies, catgut, Englemann's daisy, flameflower, white flower ipomopsis, and the list goes on. We continue to look for the "first" bloom of the year from each particular species as the season progresses - each with delight. Perhaps our favorites now are the ones that are somewhat unique to our area of Kansas such as the Oklahoma phlox, the western indigo, and fiddleplant, or the ones that we notice interesting color variations in such as the solid yellow - both disk and ray flowers - of gaillardia, and the clumps of orange and yellow butterfly milkweed blooming side-by-side.

What is your favorite natural area in the state and why?

Phyllis: We enjoy many areas of the state because each has its uniqueness. We were thrilled to get to see the downy gentians and lady's tresses and Leavenworth eryngo at Sedan. We also think the area around St. Francis is special. But we feel we live in a special area where we have the opportunity to view a wide variety of species, and we take advantage having them "out our back door," literally.

What do you like best about the organization?

Phyllis: We enjoy the opportunity to share and learn from others on the informal wildflower tours. We learn more that way than any classroom or book can teach. We also enjoy getting to know others who share a common interest with us. It gives us an opportunity to become familiar with the wildflowers and other plants growing in other areas of the state. We are looking forward to another "Annual" Tour with the organization.

Where do you see room for improvement?

Phyllis: We feel the changes being made currently are positive. We hope the organization continues to "cater to" the novice viewer, as we feel that is the direction that will attract the most new members. We always look for the featured wildflower in each issue of the newsletter. We enjoy the "expanded information" presented.

Next Newsletter—meet two more new board members: Carl Paulie and Krista Dahlinger

New members, December 19, 2004

Lois Blakemore - Hays
Lynn Byczynski - Lawrence
Saul Hallagin - ElDorado
J. Robert Hamm - Wichita
Mary Haynes - Chanute
Ted & Anne Heim - Topeka

LeBaron Holliman - Goddard
Logan Houk - Girard
Carol Jones - Lawrence
J.L. Kennedy - Soldier
Jan M. Kenton - Bonner Springs
Beverly Lyons - Fulton

Arleeta Marchel - Caldwell
Judith Pease - Ottawa
Susan K. Reimer - McPherson
Alex & Jerry Slater - Lawrence
Chuck Tabor - Augusta

Welcome!

2004-2005 Kansas Area Wildflower & Native Plant Events

Information provided by Kansas Wildflower Society, R.L.McGregor Herbarium, 2045 Constant Ave., Lawrence, KS 66047-3729.

Online: [www.cs.Hesston.edu/kws] Email: <kansaswildflowers@yahoo.com> Phone: (785) 864-3453.

Please share this information with other interested folks and contact us with information on other events to note. Thank you!

February 13: Work with Kansas Sierra Club to remove invasive honeysuckle that threatens the native plants at Hidden Valley Preservation, Kansas City, MO. Doris Sherrick <dsherrick@missouri.sierraclub.org> (816) 779-6708

February 17: Grow Native! Connecting the Heartland Conference: Ecology, Culture, Economics, Blue Springs, MO. Full day for native landscape professionals and enthusiasts! Keynote by Darrel Morrison, FASLA, nationally recognized for his unique native landscape designs, followed by three distinct tracks of interactive breakout sessions. [www.grownative.org] Contact Barbara Fairchild in Jefferson City, MO (573) 522-4115 ext. 3833

February 19, March 19, and April 16: Volunteers are needed for prairie maintenance and preservation projects. Assist the Grassland Heritage Foundation Groundhogs, 3rd Saturday every month except December. Wear appropriate clothing. No special skills or tools needed. For details, please contact Mike Campbell <shamsoup@yahoo.com> (785) 542-3885.

February 27: Long Johns & Loppers: Kansas City WildLands Ecological Restoration Workday, 1-4pm. What: Lopping down and treating exotic and invasive woody growth that threatens these delicate ecosystems. Three Locations:

- Blue River Glades, Kansas City, Missouri, owned by Jackson County Parks and Recreation
- Ogg Road Prairie (Shawnee Mission Park remnant prairie), managed by Johnson County (Kansas) Parks and Recreation
- Rocky Point Glades in Swope Park, Kansas City, Missouri, owned by Kansas City Missouri Parks and Recreation

Please dress appropriately for workdays! Long pants, sturdy shoes (no sandals) and a hat are strongly recommended. Insect repellent, gloves and drinking water are supplied. Contact Linda Lehrbaum for more information or to register for a site. <linda@bridgingthegap.org> (816) 561-1061 x116

March 5: Come experience the subtle beauty of quiet streams, woods and native Kansas prairie at the Prairie Center, Olathe, KS. Hike hosted by Kansas Sierra Club. Contact Anne McDonald <anne.mcdonald@kansas.sierraclub.org> (913) 384-6645.

March 6: Work with Kansas Sierra Club to remove more of the invasive honeysuckle that threatens the native plants at Hidden Valley Preservation, Kansas City, MO. Doris Sherrick <dsherrick@missouri.sierraclub.org> (816) 779-6708

March 10: Prairie Inventory and Natural Areas of Douglas County, KS, 7:30pm. Presenter: Dr. Kelly Kindscher, plant ecologist with the Kansas Biological Survey. Program sponsored by the Jayhawk Audubon Society. Location: Douglas County Senior Center (Lawrence, KS). Questions: Pam Chaffee <pchaffee@mindspring.com> (785) 887-6868.

April 2: Wild Edible Class along Little Blue Trace, Independence, MO. Enjoy this leisurely stroll as we learn about wild edibles and holistic health practices. This event is hosted by the Kansas Sierra Club. Contact Patty Brown (816) 737-2804.

 **April 9:** Dr. Woody Holland's Wildflower Tour of Neosho County, KS. Kansas Native Plant Society Board Member Carl Paulie will lead the tour. We will be looking for Dutchman's-breeches, Cut-leaf Toothwort, and Service-berry among others. Meet Carl in front of the courthouse on Main St. in Erie, KS at 1pm. The tour will begin at 1:30pm sharp. Questions: (620) 449-2028

April 23rd & 30th: Missouri Prairie Foundation Spring Plant Sales 7am - noon. Location: City Market, 5th & Walnut, Kansas City, MO. [http://www.moprairie.org] (888) 843-6739

Winter Treasure Hunt for Native Plants - continued

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account, look in Kelly Kinchscher's *Edible Wild Plants of the Prairie*. Several sources recommend the preparation of rose hip tea as an excellent source of Vitamin C. Jan Phillips goes much further in *Wild Edibles of Missouri* and gives instructions for rose hip jam and jelly, in addition to suggesting the use of dried rose hips in baking, soup, and hot and cold drinks.

Another fruit that grabs the hiker's attention through bright color is **Buckbrush** or **Coralberry**. In my opinion, the color of the small, berry-like fruits, usually found in clusters along the flexible branches of this woody shrub, is not coral but a *red-violet*. The 2-5 foot tall bushes are often seen along the margins of woods, but can also grow in impressive patches or thickets in open grasslands.

Some sources report that birds eat the fruits; others say they do not. I have broken the fruit open with my fingernail and noted that there is not a juicy substance, but instead it is somewhat hard, dry, and starchy looking. Jan Phillips in researching *Wild Edibles of Missouri* tried eating the berries and emphatically declares they are "very distasteful," al-

though no illness or bad effects ensued. On a positive note, the berries of Buckbrush maintain their color and form for months, even when taken into the house as a decoration.

Both Prairie Wild Rose and Buckbrush are found fairly close to the ground, but the plant treasure-hunter needs to look up to find **Bittersweet** fruits (also known as **American Bittersweet** and **Climbing Bittersweet**). The bright red-orange clusters of berry-like fruits dangle from the twisting, climbing vines that cling to bushes and small trees, especially along the edge of woods. Many people are familiar with Bittersweet because of the popularity of using cut branches for decorations in the fall and winter. It is a different (and I would claim a better) experience to see the plant in its native habitat where the berries add highlights of color to the background grays and browns. Careful observers get a color double-feature with Bittersweet. In early fall, the fruits appears as a dull orange sphere. Later this hard outer coat splits into three parts that pull back and expose the deeper red of the fleshy covering of the seeds. I have not been able to find information about the palatability of these fruits for birds, animals, or humans. I also do not know the origin of the common name, although it certainly would

seem to be related to taste.

The next of the plants with colorful fruits, **Carolina Horse-nettle** (from the same genus as the tomato, potato, and nightshades), is a forb rather than a woody plant. In the growing season, Carolina Horse-nettle is characterized by its yellowish prickles and whitish/purple star-shaped flowers. It is usually found in waste places, fields and pastures. In the fall and winter, the small yellow (about the shade of French's mustard on a hotdog) tomato-like fruits, filled with juicy pulp and seeds, are found along the flower stems. Where the fruit attaches to the stem, the five-pointed greenish calyx is still present. As the cold season progresses, the formerly smooth fruits become wrinkled, but still persist.

According the Ada George in *Manual of Weeds* (1920), the only grazing animals that eat Carolina Horse-nettle are sheep, and they eat only the fruits. Jan Phillips in *Wild Edibles of Missouri* claims the seeds are poisonous. Kelly Kindscher in *Medicinal Wild Plants of the Prairie* has an interesting section on the medicinal use of the fruit of Carolina Horse-nettle.

Another forb with an obvious fruit is

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Know someone who may be interested in joining Kansas Native Plant Society?

Send us their names and addresses and they will be sent an information kit. Better yet, give a gift membership.

Name	Street	City	State	Zip

Prairie Patch Award

By Anita Smith, Board Member

Four Wilson County students, Felicia Edson, Jillian Johnson, Howard and Katherine Mahan, recently received the Kansas Native Plant Society's Prairie Patch Award.

Requirements for the Prairie Patch Award were met while attending the Wildflower Fun class sponsored by the Fredonia Arts Council during the 2004 Summer Art Program. The class was taught by Anita Smith, Wilson County Conservation District, assisted by Sue Steanson, Middle School Science Instructor. Eight hours of class and field work in addition to further study on their own, was completed by the chil-

dren and included: learning the parts of a flower, how to study and use wildflower field guides, identification of native plants, study of plant habitat, learning how to write a description of a plant, and conservation of native plants.

Each student adopted two plants as a basis for in-depth exploration. They learned to be good observers by using their ears, nose, hands, and minds to look at wildflowers. They photographed their adopted plants, made pencil drawings of them, researched historical and modern day uses, and learned an appreciation for each of the selected plants.

Notebooks were created by each student and were reviewed by the education com-

mittee of the Kansas Wildflower Society at their annual meeting held October 1 and 2 at Red Buffalo Ranch in Chautauqua County. Notification was received by Dr. Valerie Wright, Konza Prairie, Manhattan, President of the Kansas Wildflower Society, that the four students were qualified to receive the Prairie Patch. Their notebooks will be documented and archived at the R.L. McGregor Herbarium at the University of Kansas

Anita Smith, District Manager
Wilson County Conservation District
930 North 2nd Street
Fredonia, KS 66736-2105
620-378-2866

KNPS Members Email Group

By Jeff Hansen, President elect

Kansas Native Plant Society now has an email group. An email group is an easy way for all of us to communicate on the internet using email. Maybe you recently found out about an event, and want to pass it along to the rest of the membership. Maybe you have a question about a plant. To join, go to <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/KNPS-members> and click the "Join This

Group!" button. You will need to set up a Yahoo ID if you don't already have one. Once you are a yahoo member, you can pick any email address where you want to receive emails. Your personal settings allow emails to be delivered individually (every message is delivered by itself), daily (all messages per day are delivered as one email, or not at all (you must logon to the yahoo group to see messages). You don't have to be signed

onto the yahoo group to send a message - just email a message to KNPS-members@yahoo.com. But if you are signed into the yahoo group, you can chat with other members, upload and share files, upload and share photos, share internet links, create a database, poll the membership, or display all members of the group. This group is for all members of KNPS. Use it freely, but please only use it for KNPS.

Winter Treasure Hunt for Native Plants - continued

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Buffalo gourd. This massive vine with its spherical yellow (think French's mustard again) fruits is found sprawled on the ground in waste areas or climbing on fences. The fruit, about the size of an orange, has green and light yellow stripes in late summer and early fall, but by winter the hard, smooth rind has changed to yellow with only the shadow of the stripes remaining. The gourds continue to cling to the vine, and may be tucked in behind the dried leaves. Last year's gourds, faded to a pale tan color, can be found on the

ground. It is generally agreed that although not dangerous to eat, the fruit is very bitter. The pulpy interior of the fruit, which contains saponin, can be crushed to make soap.

Although the fruits are the most obvious means of finding and identifying native



Carolina Horse-nettle

plants during the winter, there are other helpful clues such as the seed structures, the overall plant forms, winter twigs and buds, stems and blades of grasses, and basal leaves that some plants put out to get a head start on spring. The "starter list" of plants covered here is meant to be a reminder that "treasures" are to be found in our states' natural areas during all seasons. Winter can be just as good a time as summer to turn to your companions on an outing and say "What's this?" or "I think I've found X."

KANSAS NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

R.L. McGregor Herbarium
University of Kansas
2045 Constant Ave
Lawrence, KS 66047-3729

Phone: (785)864-3453

Email: ccfree@ku.edu



**Kansas
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We are on the Web
www.cs.hesston.edu/kws

Membership Information



**Kansas
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MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION AND RENEWAL

Annual dues are for a 12-month period from January 1-December 31. Dues paid after December 1 are applied to the next year.

Name:	
Address:	
City/State:	
Zipcode:	
Phone:	
E-Mail:	

Check membership category desired:

- | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------|----------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Student | \$5.00 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Individual | \$15.00 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Family | \$20.00 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Organization | \$20.00 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Contributing | \$100.00 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Lifetime | \$500.00 |

Check membership category desired:

Please complete this form or a photocopy of it. Send the completed form and a check payable to the Kansas Wildflower Society to:

Kansas Wildflower Society
R.L. McGregor Herbarium
2045 Constant Avenue
Lawrence, KS 66047-3729

A membership in the Kansas Wildflower Society makes a great gift for friends and family members. Recipients of gift memberships will receive notification of your gift membership within two weeks of receipt of your check by the KWS Administrative Office.