



## 2012 Annual Report

January 9, 2013



# Minnesota Wildflowers Information

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### About Minnesota Wildflowers Information

#### Our Mission

**Our mission** is to make botany accessible to the general public by providing a free, superior-quality, non-technical field guide of plants found growing wild in Minnesota, for use by people of all age groups and experience levels.

**Our goal** is to record all 2100+ plant species in Minnesota and branch into neighboring states, becoming a complete reference for the Upper Midwest.

**Our desire** is to educate Minnesotans on our native plants, raise awareness on threats like invasive species, and inspire people to explore our great state, appreciate its natural heritage, and become involved in preserving it.

#### Our Story

It all began with *Symphotrichum novae-angliae*, New England aster, in late summer, 2005.

That was when Katy Chayka caught the wildflower bug after a spot of color caught her eye as she walked through a park near her home in Ramsey County, Minnesota. "What a pretty flower, I wonder what it is?" she said to herself. The next day she took her point-and-shoot Kodak to the park and began taking digital images of every flower she saw. Frustration set in as she set about identifying them all. Disappointed with the lack of both quality and quantity of information about wild plants in Minnesota, she set out to make a better reference to serve ordinary people like herself.

www.MinnesotaWildflowers.info was thus born, launched in 2007.

About two years later she met Peter Dziuk, a long-time native plant advocate and employee of the Minnesota Department of Agriculture, while on a field trip with the Native Plant Society. By the end of 2009 Peter had donated his private collection of 50,000 plant images to the project and the two have been working on the web site together ever since.

With Peter's help promoting the project, it has gained popularity not just with ordinary people wanting to know what's that plant growing in the ditch, but also as a resource for agencies, institutions and organizations in Minnesota, nationally, and around the world.

The web site now has over 650 plant species and more than 4500 high quality images published, with more added each week. It now covers forbs and ferns, with trees & shrubs planned next.

In 2011 the decision was made to form a nonprofit, to provide some security for the web site as a free public resource into the future. Minnesota Wildflowers Information was incorporated August 8, 2011 and granted 501(c)(3) status July 29, 2012.



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info@minnesotawildflowers.info ▪ <http://www.minnesotawildflowers.info>



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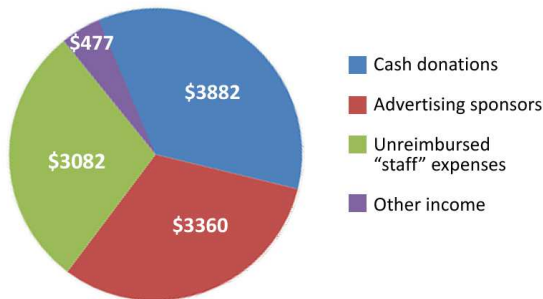
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### 2012 Financial Summary

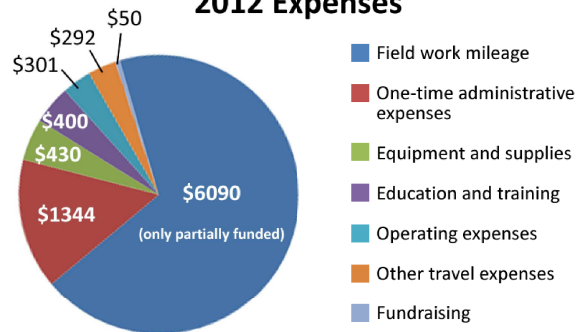
The project has so far received no significant funding from any agency, organization or institution. All work on the project to-date has been done by volunteers and a large portion of expenses paid for out-of-pocket by the unpaid volunteer "staff".

**Total cash income for fiscal year 2012: \$7,719**

**2012 Funding**



**2012 Expenses**



Note that 2012 saw some one-time administrative expenses related to forming the nonprofit organization, primarily attorney's fees and the 501(c)(3) application fee. For 2012, only .02% of unique web site users made a cash donation in support of the project. 73% of the total donations was received from just five donors. We are working to increase our funding sources for 2013 and beyond, and find ways to bring the financial support by repeat users up to at least 1%.

### Volunteer Donations

Field work: 903 hours  
 Publishing: 1220 hours  
 Web Programming: 300 hours  
**Value: \$57,060**

### Volunteers

Katy Chayka  
 Peter Dziuk  
 Cindy Hoffmann

### Photo Contributors

Katy Chayka  
 Peter Dziuk  
 Joe Fierst  
 Beth Gauper  
 Cindy Hoffmann  
 Jerry Hogeboom  
 Keir Morse  
 Torsten Muller

### 2012 Donors

#### Organization Donors

Audubon, Minneapolis Chapter  
 Network Associate Solutions  
 Seed Savers Unite

and 1 anonymous donor

#### Native Plant Sponsors

Landscape Alternatives  
 Morning Sky Greenery  
 Out Back Nursery  
 Prairie Moon Nursery  
 Prairie Restorations  
 Shooting Star Native Seeds  
 Sunrise Native Plants

#### Individual Donors

Pamela Bacon	Rebecca Kulhman
Roger Becker	Anthony Levens
Priscilla Bue	Ming-I Liu
Bill Cain	Kassa Lynch
Virginia Chayka	Daniel Maas
Steven Chesney	Nathan Marti
Dee Dee Currier	Megan McGuire
Jennifer DeJonghe	Krista Menzel
Mickey Delfelder	Arne Myrabo
Daniel Despen	Victoria Ranua
Jill Engle	Gerald Redmond
Mark & Carole Gernes	Greg Renner
Mary Goehle	Marcia Richards
David M. Griffin	Paul Seguin
Brook Haworth	Bryan Simon
Robert Held	Lisa Stanford
Doug Heupel	Richard Stich
Jerry Hogeboom	Lisa Thompson
Sandra Knolls	Edward Vasiukevicius
Steve Kraan	

### Board of Directors

Katy Chayka, President and Chair  
 Peter Dziuk, Secretary  
 Kassa Lynch  
 Richard Moses  
 Victoria Ranua, Treasurer



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### Program Achievements

#### Web Site Statistics

	2011	2012	
Unique visitors	145,294	179,473	+23%
Number of visits	219,696	264,303	+20%
Number of page views	1,299,506	1,653,412	+27%
Number of hits	8,264,617	11,108,560	+34%
Facebook fans	810	1,219	+50%

**Number of species added to the web site in 2012: 110**  
**Number of species updated: 26**

#### Web Site Updates and Upgrades

We were thrilled to have volunteer collaborator **Cindy Hoffmann** come on board this year to lend her expertise with ferns. We now have 16 fern species published and expect to increase that significantly in the coming seasons. And look for *Equisetum* (horsetail) in 2013!



Web site changes and enhancements in 2012 included:

- Added the Minnesota county look-up.
- Replaced the spring/summer/fall search with a month look-up and automated the What's Blooming pages.
- Added CAPTCHA security codes to all fill-in forms (out of necessity—too much spam!)
- Began work towards making the site more mobile-friendly, to be continued in 2013.
- Began some important security and technology updates, to be completed in 2013.

#### Public Outreach


- Held several training sessions in early spring that culminated in a three day group trip to Banning State Park with members of the Minnesota Rovers to look for native violets, locating *Viola novae-angliae* and *Viola renifolia* during the trip.
- Two wildflower walks for Washington County Parks at St. Croix Bluffs Regional Park
- Two plant surveys of Roberts Bird Sanctuary for the Minneapolis Chapter of the Audubon Society.
- Attended a science fair at Shakopee elementary school.
- Donated more than 30 images to other non-commercial projects. Requesters include Voyageurs National Park, the New England Wildflower Society, Wild Ones, Green Rock Audubon, Concordia College, the Missouri Botanical Garden, and North Dakota Parks & Rec.

We believe our outreach knowledge is under-utilized. We will continue to seek broader public forums.

#### Media Coverage

In the summer of 2011 we were very excited to film a segment for the **Minnesota Bound** television program. It first aired on September 23, 2012 and has repeated 3 times since. If you missed it, you can watch episode #632 (we start at 12:24) online at: [mnbound.com](http://mnbound.com)



The **St. Cloud Times** ran an excellent feature article about the project in their  Living section on September 9. Unfortunately, the article is no longer online and we were not able to obtain a print copy. We did manage to create a PDF archive of the article, which is available for download from the [About Us](#) page on the web site.

#### Coming up in 2013

- Look for the addition of **Trees & Shrubs**, starting with *Quercus*, the oaks.
- Look for our new **phone app**, for Android and iPhone



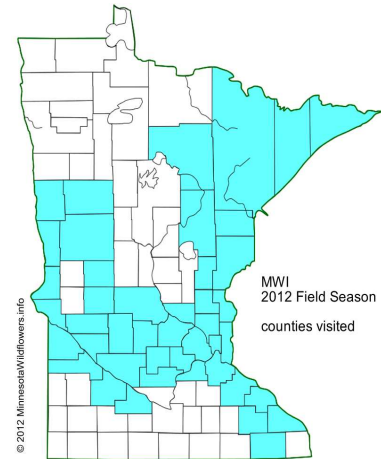
# Minnesota Wildflowers Information

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### Minnesota Wildflowers Field Activity Summary

Seasonal field work focuses on a set of selected “target” species we hope to get that year. Criteria for setting search priorities is based on rarity, availability of other needed species in the search area, and the relation to other species already published. To capture images of all the diverse plant species in this geographically and ecologically diverse state requires extensive seasonal travel. For the 2012 field season:

- 11,247 miles logged, 14,988 images captured
- Surveyed locations in 44 of Minnesota’s 87 counties and parts of North Dakota
- Image sets collected for 160 forb species and 21 fern species, though not all are complete sets
- 903 hours logged in survey and travel time
- Two thirds of these hours were spent in team survey and one third solo (by Peter)



### The Challenge of Spring in February

After a non-winter and the first snowless March on record, spring warm-up arrived a good month earlier than “normal”. Winter planning provided the locations of *where* to survey, but phenology records were of marginal help for *when* to be there. Bloom dates ran anywhere from 2-4 weeks earlier than historical records for many species for much of the year.

Skewed phenology aside, we had far more “hits” than “misses” in 2012. Our first image set collected for publication was of *Adoxa moschatellina*, taken on April 6 in Goodhue County. We were pleased to finally hunt this one down after a few failed attempts in 2011.

Many non-target species are also encountered while focusing on our priority list so we typically come back with more species than planned, or improved images for species that are already in our catalog.

The primary focus of the field guide continues to be the forbs, with such groups as trees, shrubs, grasses and sedges to be added later, though many images of these plant groups were also taken this season, including a few aquatics. We are not in a position to publish these groups yet so they are not included in the species count for 2012.

### The Misses...

For 13 of the forb species, the sets were incomplete due to growth stage or flowering period, but finding and marking their locations will help ensure their completion when we return.

Our biggest disappointment was failure to track down *Viola selkirkii*, the only one of Minnesota’s 19 native violet species not yet in our catalog. Four trips to locate it came up empty. It will be a priority for 2013.

### We need your help!

The field work required to bring you the best quality images and information comes at a cost. Peter and Katy dipped into their own savings to fund much of the 2012 field season but are unable to continue this practice. The 2013 field season will be very limited without sufficient funding up front.

Please consider a donation to help us continue the work of cataloging Minnesota’s flora!

No amount is too small.



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### And the survey says...

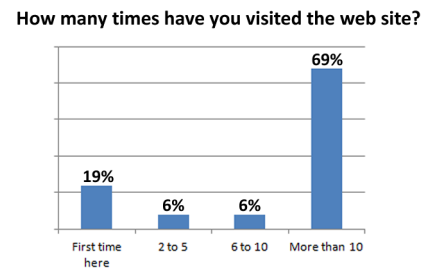
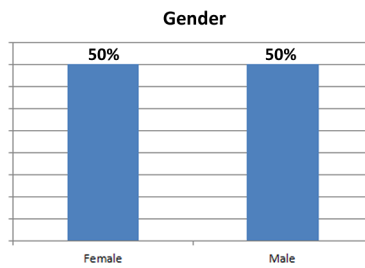
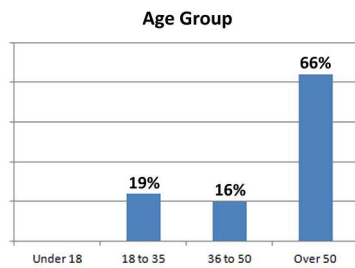
For the first two weeks of December we ran an anonymous survey on the web site to gauge how we are doing and ask for suggestions how we might improve. While we did not get as many takers as we had hoped (fewer than 50), we did get some good feedback and suggestions. The most gratifying comment was:

*“I have to say that I think this website is beyond fantastic. I use over a dozen websites to identify wildflowers, and while many of them are very helpful, minnesotawildflowers.info is head and shoulders above the others. This is where I always start. I can't thank you enough for making this resource available.”*

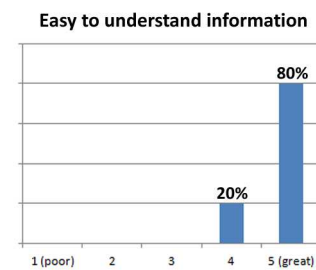
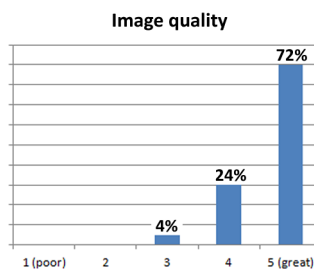
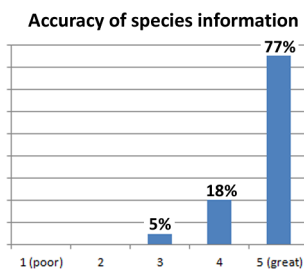
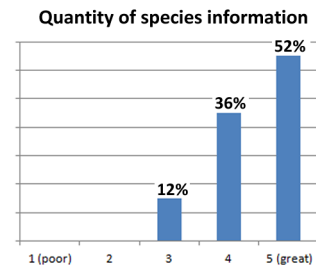
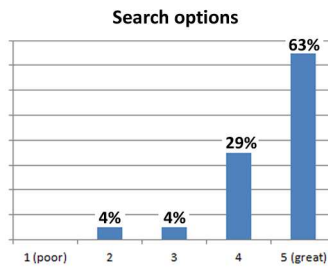
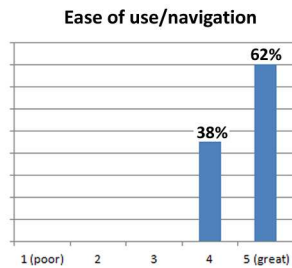
That is exactly what the web site is supposed to be!

### Demographics

38% of respondents were men over 50 years old and the vast majority of respondents were repeat visitors.



### Ratings

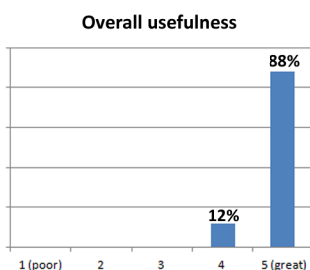




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### Survey Results (continued)



We were very pleased to rate 4 or 5 with most respondents on all questions, but the best was this last question. The web site cannot fulfill its mission if it is not deemed useful!

In addition to these questions, we solicited comments on what improvements or changes users would like to see. Some were features already present in the system, but were perhaps not as obvious as they should be. A few quick tweaks were made that hopefully improved their discoverability and usability. Other suggestions will require financing.

All of the suggestions were posted on the blog, with our responses. Check it out at <http://www.minnesotawildflowers.info/blog/>

At the end of the survey we asked the respondents to make a donation, anywhere from \$1 to \$250. This brought in \$37 total.

#### FAQ: Why can't you just get your images off the web and save yourself all that travel?

**Answer:** This is not as easy as it sounds.

We continually scour Google and other sources for existing images that:

1. Portray the necessary plant characteristics, *and*
2. Meet our quality standards

When we do find an image we would like to use, we attempt to contact the copyright holder and ask permission for its use on the web site. However, on many occasions there has been no way to contact anyone, or no response to our queries. On other occasions, the person has said "no" or asked for payment or made other demands we cannot meet.

While we are indeed able to obtain *some* images from other sources, rarely are we able to complete a set of all the identifying plant parts from others' images. We only have confidence in obtaining what we need if we go into the field ourselves.

#### FAQ: Why don't you get other people to go take photos for you?

**Answer:** This is also not as easy as it sounds.

It takes no small skill to know where to find a target species, correctly identify it, and to take quality images of all the necessary plant parts. Without sufficient skill or training it is not generally time well spent in the field.

*However*, we do seek qualified collaborators! Contact us through the web site if you can help.

### A Note From the President

2012 was our first year as a 501(c)(3) public charity. As such, we are required to receive a portion of funding from public donations and risk losing nonprofit status if we fail to receive sufficient public support. We realize we do not yet have enough history as an organization to be eligible for many grants, but hope that in a short time we will prove our fiscal frugality and financial accountability. Until then, it may be a struggle to find funding for any significant amount of field work, accelerated publishing of our backlog (several hundred species), or add features that users have asked for, such as expanded plant search criteria. Until we are financially stable these things will have to sit on the back burner.

Regardless, we believe this is an important project in many respects and we will continue its growth as best we can with the available resources.

But besides funding, we are also in need of additional board members who are willing to volunteer an hour or two a month. Most needed are those with accounting, business, grant writing or fundraising expertise. Botany skills are not required, but a belief in and commitment to the project are.

My heartfelt thanks goes to all who have already contributed to this project in some way. This really is a labor of love, and I am so grateful for your support!

**Katy Chayka**

Creator of Minnesota Wildflowers



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## What we do

**Research herbarium records**

**Map out itinerary**

**Drive, drive, drive, take photos**

**Research, research, research**

**Write species account**

**Choose & edit images**

**Draw map**

**Publish!**

**Minnesota Wildflowers**

**Dodecatheon amethystinum (Jeweled Shooting Star)**

Flowers by Color: Pink, Purple, Yellow, White, Orange, Red, Green, Other

Flowers by Name: Grasses, Sedges, Rushes, Ferns and Fern Allies, Invasive Species, Glossary

Plant Info: so known as: Amethyst Shooting Star; Family: Dodecatheon; Life cycle: perennial; Origin: native; Habitat: part shade, sun; most north-facing slopes, limestone cliffs in hardwood forests; Bloom season: April - May; Plant height: 4 to 18 inches; County distribution: [Map]

## In Conclusion

In meeting its mission in providing for public education in the identification and understanding of the flora of Minnesota, 2012 was a successful year for the Minnesota Wildflowers Info Project. The online field guide was expanded by 110 new species (including the first 16 fern species), and usage increased a substantial 23%, with nearly 34,000 more unique users than in 2011. The field season was also successful in capturing image sets for another 181 species for future publishing.

We also became organized as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit which makes us eligible for grants, protects scarce resources to be used for continued expansion of the field guide, and provides a tax incentive for potential contributors.

Though the financial support from fiscal sponsors and free will donations in 2012 were helpful, we were unable to cover even our basic field costs and there were no funds available to increase hours spent in publishing, or to make changes that would make the web site even more useful.

For 2013 we are building our list of target species and seeking additional funding opportunities to finance the field work. We do not yet know what Mother Nature will bring for 2013 but hope it will be a more "normal" season than the last. Keep your fingers crossed!

But most of all we need collaborators to help us, a public to support us, and board members to promote this work. While perhaps not all good works could or should be rewarded, few good works can grow without such support. If you find this project is useful and important, please consider making a donation of time or money to help keep it going and keep it growing.



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