

Elephant Rocks S.P.

November 11, 2024

	BOTANICAL NAME (with genus pronunciation)	FAMILY [CC] = Coefficient of Conservatism	COMMON NAME
<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Acalypha monococca</i> (ack-uh-LY-fuh)	Euphorbiaceae [CC3]	Slender One-Seeded Mercury / Copperleaf
<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Amelanchier arborea</i> (am-uh-LAN-kee-er)	Rosaceae [CC6]	Serviceberry
<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Andropogon virginicus</i> (an-dro-PO-gon)	Poaceae (Panicoideae subfamily) [CC2]	Broomsedge
<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Aristida dichotoma</i> () (uh-RISS-tih-duh)	Poaceae (Aristidoideae Subfamily) [CC3]	Churchmouse Three-awn Grass
<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Celtis tenuifolia</i> (SELL-tiss)	Cannabaceae / Rosales [CC6]	Dwarf Hackberry
<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Danthonia spicata</i> () (dan-THO-nee-uh)	Poaceae [CC3]	Poverty Grass
<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Dichanthelium linearifolium</i> (dy-kan-THEE-lee-um)	Poaceae [CC5]	Slimleaf Panicgrass
<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Erechtites hieraciifolius</i> (ayr-ik-TY-teez)	Asteraceae (Senecioneae tribe) [CC1]	Burnweed
<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Euonymus alatus</i> (yoo-ONN-i-mus)	Celastraceae [introduced]	Burning Bush / Winged Euonymus /
<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Eupatorium serotinum</i> (yoo-puh-TOR-ee-um)	Asteraceae (Eupatorieae tribe) [CC1]	Late Boneset
<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Helenium amarum</i> (heh-LEE-nee-um)	Asteraceae (Helenieae tribe) [introduced]	Bitter Sneezeweed
<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Heuchera richardsonii</i> (HYOO-kr-ah)	Saxifragaceae [CC6]	Prairie Alumroot
<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Hypericum gentianoides</i> (hy-PAYR-i-kum)	Hypericaceae [CC5]	Orangegrass
<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Lespedeza capitata</i> (less-peh-DEE-zuh)	Fabaceae (Faboideae subfamily) [CC6]	Round-Headed Bush-Clover
<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Lonicera sempervirens</i> (lo-NISS-r-uh)	Caprifoliaceae [CC]	Coral Honeysuckle
<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Platanus occidentalis</i> (PLATT-tuh-nuss)	Platanaceae [CC3]	Sycamore
<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Prunus serotina</i> (PROO-nus)	Rosaceae [CC2]	Black Cherry
<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Quercus marilandica</i> (KWERK-us)	Fagaceae [CC4]	Blackjack Oak
<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Rhus aromatica</i> (ROOS)	Anacardiaceae [CC4]	Fragrant Sumac
<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Rhus copallinum</i> (ROOS)	Anacardiaceae [CC2]	Winged Sumac
<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Sambucus canadensis</i> (sam-BOO-kuss)	Adoxaceae [CC2]	Black Elderberry
<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Sassafras albidum</i> (SASS-uh-frass)	Lauraceae [CC2]	Sassafras
<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Smilax glauca</i> (SMY-lax)	Smilacaceae [CC4]	Cat Greenbriar
<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Solidago buckleyi</i> (so-lid-DAY-go)	Asteraceae (Astereae tribe) [CC8]	Buckley's Goldenrod
<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Solidago nemoralis</i> (so-lid-DAY-go)	Asteraceae (Astereae tribe) [CC2]	Gray Goldenrod / Old Field Goldenrod
<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Solidago ulmifolia</i> (so-lid-DAY-go)	Asteraceae (Astereae tribe) [CC4]	Elmleaf Goldenrod
<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Symphoricarpos orbiculatus</i> (SIMM-for-ee-KARR-pos)	Caprifoliaceae [CC1]	Coralberry
<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Symphyotrichum anomalum</i> (SIMM-fee-o-TRY-kum)	Asteraceae (Astereae tribe) [CC6]	Manyray Aster
<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Symphyotrichum urophyllum</i> (SIMM-fee-o-TRY-kum)	Asteraceae (Astereae tribe) [CC4]	Arrowleaf Aster

<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Trichostema brachiatum</i> (try-ko-STEE-muh)	Lamiaceae [CC4]	Fluxweed / False Pennyroyal
<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Vaccinium arboreum</i> (vack-SINN-ee-um)	Ericaceae [CC6]	Farkleberry
<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Vaccinium pallidum</i> (vack-SINN-ee-um)	Ericaceae [CC4]	Lowbush Blueberry
<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Verbascum thapsus</i> (vr-BASS-kum)	Scrophulariaceae [introduced]	Mullein
<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Viburnum rufidulum</i> (vy-BURR-num)	Adoxaceae [CC4]	Rusty Blackhaw
<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Woodsia obtusa</i> () (WOOD-see-uh)	Woodsiaceae [CC5]	Bluntlobe Cliff Fern

NOTES

WHERE WE WALKED: Everywhere. There are 2 main trails in this iconic park: the “Braille Trail” and the “Engine House Ruins Trail”. We walked them both! Like tourists, we made it a point to visit the Quarry Pond, the old Engine House, and of course the famous Elephant Rocks.

HACKSAW LOOKALIKES:

Today we found 4 plants whose leaves looked confusingly similar. The leaves were simple (not compound) with finely-toothed (hacksaw-like) margins. Those 4 plants were *Viburnum*, *Celastrus*, *Amelanchier*, and *Prunus*. To make things even trickier, the *Celastrus* (Bittersweet Vine) had climbed-up and mixed-in with the *Viburnum*.

“Hacksaw margins” are probably not on many of our radars. But if we could turn-on that radar, identification of these rather uncommon plants will be faster and easier the next time we come here.

VACCINIUM:

In the past (at Pickle Springs) we’d sometimes find all 3 of our native blueberry plants next to each other. John used to joke by pointing to the smallest bush and say: “This little one is good enough for me. I’ll let the rest of you have the larger ones.” Everybody would laugh because it’s the little bush with its little berries that has the most flavorful fruit. Today that joke wouldn’t have worked. Although we did find some of those small “Lowbush Blueberry” plants (*Vaccinium pallidum*), they had no fruit on them at all. As for the large *Vaccinium arboreum* (Farkleberry) plants that we found, they were full of large plump fruit with a pleasant flavor!

SMILAX GLAUCA:

It’s hard to know ahead-of-time which plants are going to be the stars of our show. Farkleberry was certainly one of our stars – probably our top star. But *Smilax glauca*, the “Glaucous-Leaved Greenbriar” also caught our attention. It must have been its mottled, “water-stained” leaves that caught our eye. With that mottling, calling it a “Bona Nox Greenbriar” would be forgivable (though calling it a “Waterleaf” [*Hydrophyllum*] would be less forgivable). John reminded us that the *Smilax bona-nox* leaf shape is different – it tends to be more hastate with lobing at its base. Our *Smilax glauca* has a more plain, less distinctive ovate-lanceolate shape with a simple rounded base. Then John turned the leaf over and showed us the whitened underside – its “*glauca*” namesake. That was the clincher.

In general, the *Smilax* genus gets points for being dioecious, for being a monocot, and for having snackable stem tips. But most species lose all or most of those points for being so prickly. However this species should regain its points and be awarded even more because (according to Kathy Bildner) it is one of the *Smilax* species whose large roots (technically rhizomes) can be used to make the root-beer flavored soft drink called “Sarsaparilla”.

SHORT OBSERVATIONS:

- **TOR:** This should be our Word-of-the-Day. We’ve been climbing around a “tor” all morning. A “tor” is a large, free-standing rock formation that rises from a rounded hill. Usually they are granite. The internet shows photos of many famous rounded granite tors from different parts of the world (see [HERE](#) and [HERE](#) and [HERE](#)). But none of them look as elephanty as our Elephant Rocks!

- OPEN SKY: the sky really looked huge when we were standing high above the horizon with the elephants. Kathy Thiele said that she's never seen a sky so blue (and then joked about having once said this not realizing that she was wearing sunglasses). HD said that one summer she saw the Perseid Meteor Shower up here. When asked how this was possible at night, she explained that the Park was opened to the public as a special event. (That was in August of 2021. This year [2024] it was Washington State Park's turn to hold a special evening program for Perseid viewing.)
- PHOTOS: Kathy Bildner is sharing her Elephant Rock photographs with us on her Google Drive page [HERE](#).
- MISSOURI RED: This is the name of the granite mined here. Jerry mentioned that buying a tombstone in this area is cheaper than buying it in St. Louis. Much of early St. Louis (the business district, the riverfront streets, and the levee) was paved with millions of shoebox-sized blocks of this granite mined from here. Back then it was hammers and chisels, but today granite is cut industrially using diamond-coated wires (video [HERE](#)). John told us that the granite was formed 1.5 billion years ago. He then stopped to correct himself, remembering that the dating had been done 40 years ago. That means the actual age was more like 1,500,000,040 years ago. (Maybe lots of eyerolls, but nobody laughed out loud at this one because we knew it was coming.)
- VACATION: Although we did identify a lot of plants, this outing felt more like a vacation. After all, it was Veterans Day, we were at a vacation destination, the weather was perfect, we were able to reunite with our esteemed naturalist friend Alan Brant, and our intrepid, brilliant friend HD Key was back from her studies in Spain to tell us of her adventures. It was a happy day.

PARTICIPANTS:

There were 14 of us botanists today, who are (in alphabetical order):

Renee Benage, Kathy Bildner, Alan Brant (with his two friends Ann and Bill), Jerry Castillon, Wayne Clark, HD Key, Michael Laschober, Burt Noll, John Oliver, David Steinmeyer, Kathy Thiele, and George Van Brunt.