

Colorado's North and Middle Parks are home to a wide and exciting range of plants.

Colorado's four "parks" North, Middle, South and the San Luis Valley are really four large broad valleys stretching through the middle of the Colorado Rockies from North to South. The word park was bestowed on these grassy and sage covered valleys by early trappers grazing down on the open treeless areas from the mountains above. North Park, South Park and the San Luis Valley are east of the Continental Divide and Middle Park is the sole park west of the Divide. North Park and Middle Park represent the northern largest valleys in the Colorado Rockies and house a special endemic flora along with more common steppe flora found throughout the western states.

North Park is higher than Middle Park and has a less diverse set of substrates, however it is home to no less than 3 endemic plants. Several more endemics are found in North Park and immediate areas. *Corisperma navicula* is endemic to sand dunes found along the eastern edge of the park. While *Phacelia formosula* is endemic to the Coalmont foundation. Scattered through the various well drained substrates are the North Park Penstemon (*Penstemon cyanthophorus*). This penstemon once thought to be endemic to just North Park has been found in Middle Park and across the Wyoming border. Despite having a less diverse array of substrates than Middle Park, North Park has fens (mineral rich seeps with peat accumulations) which house several regionally rare taxa normally found much farther north. Middle Park's fens are not as well developed or common. Additional species of wildflowers and penstemon are found across the gravelly hills and moist meadows of the park, including *Penstemon secundiflorus*, *Penstemon virgatus*, *Penstemon radicosus*, *Penstemon procerus*, *Penstemon rydbergii*, *Penstemon saxosorum*, *Penstemon strictus*, *Penstemon glaber* and *Penstemon virens*.

Middle Park has a more diverse array of substrates and houses at least three endemic plants. All three are listed as endangered species. *Penstemon penlandii* is one along with *Astragalus osterhoutteii* and *Phacelia gina-glenneae*. All three of these are found on the troublesome formation which is rich in selenium. Additional penstemon species found in Middle Park include *Penstemon caespitosus* (by the boat load), *Penstemon strictus*, *Penstemon watsonii*, *Penstemon harringtonii*, *Penstemon strictus* and *Penstemon osterhoutteii*

Saturday and Sunday's field trips will take in some of the sights and plants of both North and Middle parks showing both a wide array of park endemics, and regional endemics. There will be unique opportunities to access private land and visit some little known locations for special flora. Come enjoy the part of Colorado that many speed through to get to other destinations and see some of Colorado's most unique and special flora.

Speakers

Bryan Fischer

A native of Fort Collins Colorado, Bryan's family settled North Park in the early 1900's and has maintained ties to the area for over 100 years. Bryan has a B.S. in Horticulture from Colorado State University and has worked with both the alpine and native collections at Denver Botanic Gardens, as

well as at the Gardens on Spring Creek in Fort Collins. A regular visitor of North Park since a very young age with an eye for the native flora of the region, Bryan knows the area well and has been instrumental in vegetation surveys on his family's ranch through Denver Botanic Gardens Kathryn Kalmbach Herbarium. Bryan will speak about the region's history, its flora, and what makes North Park and the surrounding mountains unique botanically.

Mike Bone

Also a native of Colorado, Mike Bone is the curator of Steppe Collections at Denver Botanic Gardens where he has been instrumental in developing the new Steppe garden and living collections from the 4 major steppes of the world. Mike has traveled to three of the four steppes and has conducted research in Asia, South Africa and throughout Western North America. In addition to being a curator Mike is an excellent propagator and has worked on protocols for many difficult western and steppe dwelling plants. He will speak to us about propagating Penstemon including seeds and cuttings.

Michelle DePringer-Levin

Michelle has been a Research Assistant with Denver Botanic Gardens since 2002. She works in the Research and Conservation Department with Colorado's rare and endangered plants. Michelle studies applied plant conservation. She conducts field research on plant population dynamics and models species distributions, population level genetic structure, and response to climate change. Michelle is currently working on a PhD at University of Colorado Denver. She will be speaking about some of the work DBG is doing with Colorado's rare and endangered Penstemon.