

This information is taken from the Four Seasons Environmental Centre materials prepared in 2007. Many thanks to Ken Duncan and Kela Graphics for spearheading the project and Glen Hvenegaard, Chad Winger, Susanna Bruneau, and Kim Macklin for the research and writing on the FSEC project.

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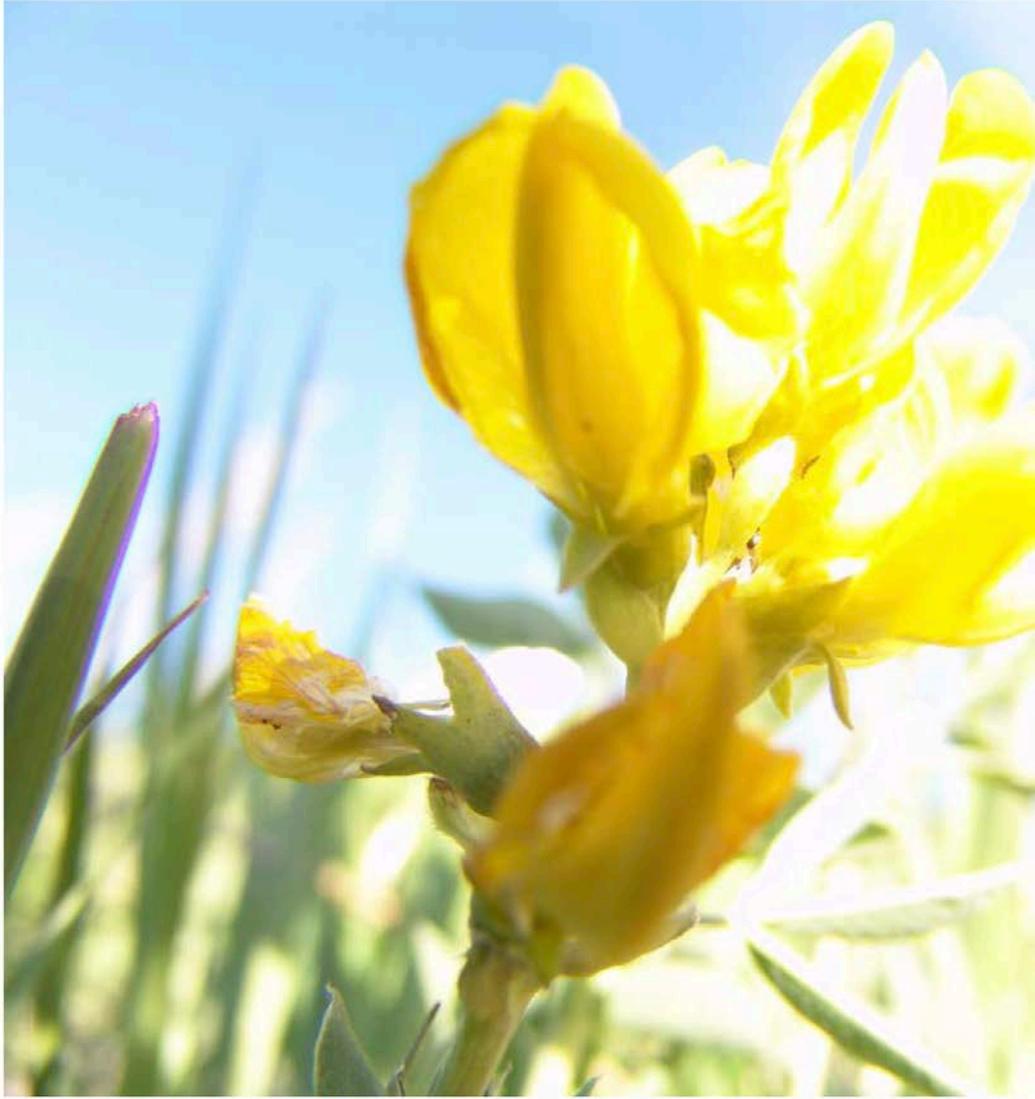
Wildflowers

Habitats

According to the Riparian Health Inventory Report of the Stoney Creek and Mirror Lake Area, by Cows and Fish, (2005) there are about 80 species of forbs, a broad leaved, non-woody plant, found in Camrose. There was also documented about 29 species of grasses and grasslikes found in the area, of which some are mentioned below. These species have been divided into the habitats, “marshes and swamps,” “cultivated fields/pastures, roadsides and disturbed areas,” “moist woods and meadows,” “streambank,” “open woods,” and “dry open areas and grassy areas”. For a complete list and abundance of the forb and grass/grasslike species found in the Camrose area see the January 2005 Riparian Health Inventory Report of the Stoney Creek and Mirror Lake Project Area by Cows and Fish. Also for more information on the identification of these species see *Plants of the Western Boreal Forest and Aspen Parkland* by Johnson et al. (1995), or *Wildflowers of Alberta* by Kathleen Wilkinson. For more information on the legends and stories associated with the plants see *Old Man’s Garden* by Annora Brown (2000).

Although there is a limited documentation of the abundance and type of plants found in the Camrose area, there is a probability that the plants found in this area are similar to the plants found in the Cooking Lake recreation region. For a complete list of the plants found in the Cooking Lake Recreation area see the *Cooking Lake-Blackfoot Recreation, Wildlife and Grazing Area Plant Checklist* brochure created by the Alberta Recreation and Parks, and the Heritage Fund.

Four Seasons Environmental Park is a project of the Camrose Rotary Club



Marshes, Swamps

Giant bur-reed
*Common cattail
Water parsnip
Water smartweed
Nodding beggarsticks
*Water hemlock
Seaside arrow grass
Common horsetail
Western dock
Arum leaved arrowhead
Marsh hedge nettle
Woolly sedge
Small bottle sedge
*Awned Sedge
*Wire rush
Water sedge
Common great bulrush
Creeping spike rush

Cultivated fields/pastures, roadsides, disturbed areas

Knotweed
*Canada thistle
Perennial sow thistle
*Red clover
Yellow sweet clover
Alsike clover
Shepherd's purse
Golden bean
White sweet clover
Common dandelion
*Goat's beard
Butter-and-eggs/ toadflax
Stinkweed
Scentless chamomile
*Common yarrow
Common plantain
Graceful cinquefoil
Prairie sagewort
Common burdock
Common horsetail

Moist woods and meadows

Canada anemone

Canada goldenrod

Fringed loosestrife

Cut leaved ragwort

Macoun s buttercup

*Yellow avens

Smooth fleabane

Heart leaved Alexanders

Common nettle Stiff goldenrod

Tufted white prairie aster

Felwort

Cow parsnip

Common horsetail

Wild strawberry

Common blue lettuce

Veiny meadow rue

*Wild mint

Common nettle

Marsh hedge nettle

Star-flowered Solomon s seal

Tufted vetch

*Red clover

Wild licorice

Silverweed

*Rough cinquefoil

Annual hawk s beard

Agrimony

Creeping Spike Rush

Water sedge

*Awned sedge

*Wire rush

Alfalfa

Pinappleweed

Gumweed saline spots

Hemp nettle

Lamb s quarters

Wormseed mustard

Fixweed

Common tansy

Common blue lettuce

Narrow leaved hawkweed

Northern bedstraw

Wild licorice



Streambanks

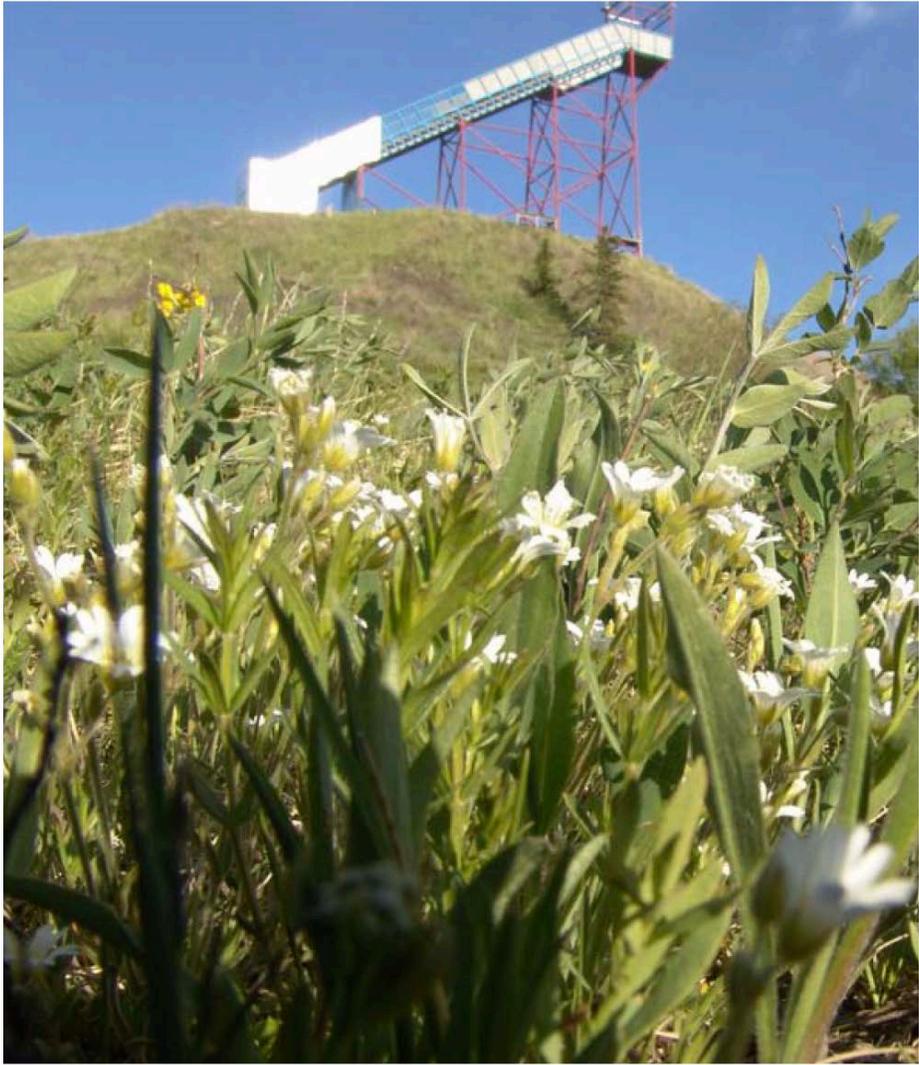
*Rough cinquefoil
Western willow aster
Wild licorice
* Silverweed
Heart-leaved Alexander s
Cow parsnip
Marsh hedge nettle
Plains wormwood
*Yellow avens
*Wild mint
Cow parsnip
Fringed looseleaf
Star flowered Solomon s seal
Absinthe wormwood
Wormseed mustard
Common nettle
Awned sedge
Small bottle sedge
*Wire rush
Water sedge
Creeping spike rush
Woolly sedge

Open woods

Narrow leaved hawkweed
Wild vetch
Northern bedstraw
*Yellow avens
Canada goldenrod
Graceful cinquefoil
*Fireweed
Tufted vetch
Many flowered yarrow
Hemp nettle

Dry open areas, grassy areas

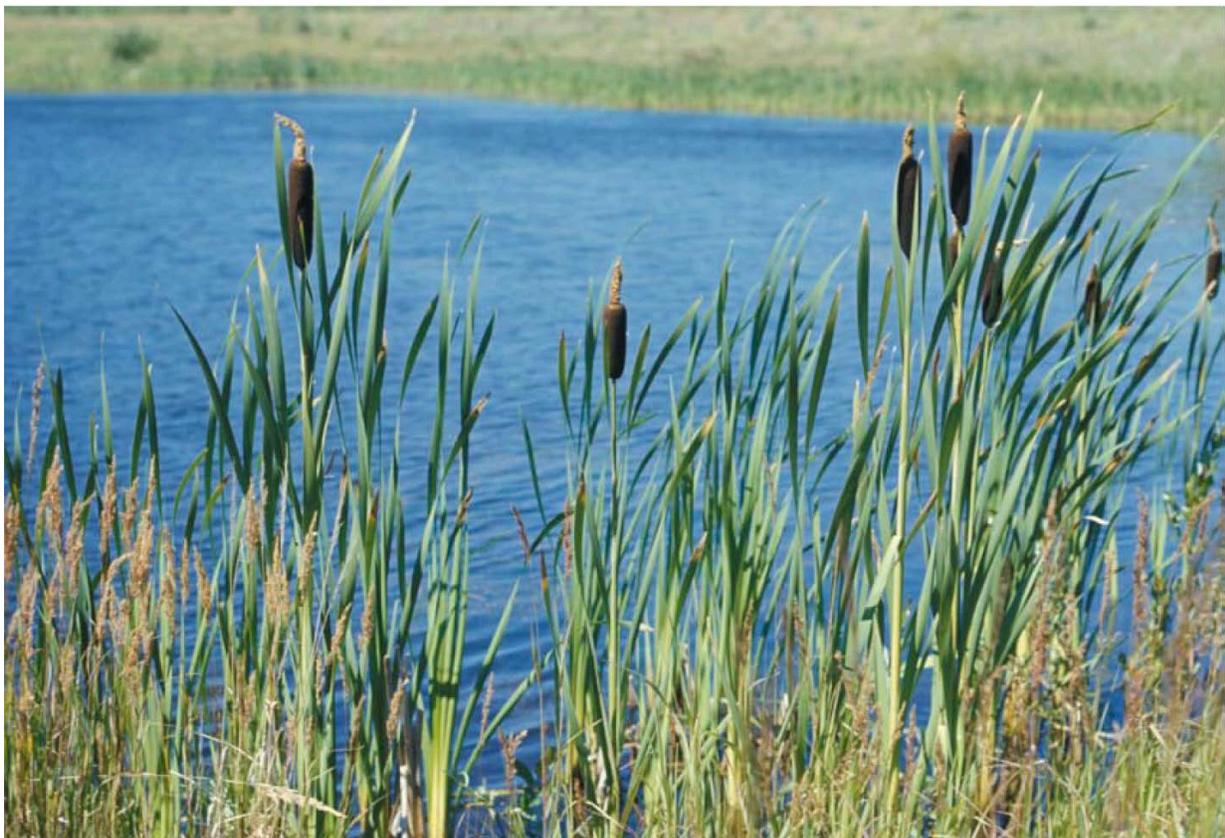
Yellow evening primrose
Golden bean
Harebell
Tufted white prairie aster
Smooth aster
Graceful cinquefoil
*Fireweed
Pasture sagewort
Prairie sagewort
*Goat s beard
Many flowered yarrow
Gumweed



Common Cattail

The common cattail can be found around the world in such habitats as marshes, ponds and wet ditches¹. It is easily identified by the brown, flower spike at the stem of the plant¹. It is from this flower spike that the plant derives its name, the resemblance of it being much like that of a house cat¹.

The cattail is an edible plant, its root stalk containing about 57% carbohydrates¹. Many natives used to dry the root stalks for flour, or would serve the root stalks roasted or raw. The pollen of the plant would also be added to enrich the flour¹. Furthermore the natives would use the broad leaves of the plant to weave platters or mats².



Canada Thistle

Despite its name the Canada thistle did not originate in Canada but rather is an import from Eurasia¹. It now can be found throughout Canada in meadows, roadsides, waste places, and cultivated fields. Its purple, sometimes white flower and the spines along the leaves, make its identification easy^{1,4}. The Canada thistle is different from other thistles in that the female and male flowers are borne in separate heads and usually are on a different plant altogether⁴.

The Canadian Thistle was used by Native Americans as a form of food in times of famine, using the stalks of thistles as greens and boiling the young leaves of the plant much like people today would boil spinach⁴. Furthermore, the Canada thistle yields a high quality honey⁴.





Water hemlock

Water hemlock is a plant that grows by streams and rivers, or within marshes, and can be identified by the umbrella like clusters of its white flowers⁵. This plant is considered one of the most poisonous plants of North America which is often reflected in some its common names; children's bane, beaver poison, death-of-man⁵.

Red Clover

Red clover is not only a wildflower but can also be an agricultural crop grown to produce animal feed, and used to fix nitrogen. In other words, red clover, as well as alsike clover and white clover, can take nitrogen from the air and transform it into compounds to enrich the soil⁵. As a result of this nitrogen fixing quality, red clover can be found in areas where soils have been disturbed.

Red clover is an edible plant with a high protein content, although large amounts of the plant eaten raw may cause indigestion⁵.

Therefore it is advised that consumption should just include an herb tea using the flowers of the plant. This was a common remedy of the Native Americans to treat coughs, gas or bad nerves⁵. Further medicinal purposes included the use of the leaves, which when crushed and placed on a cut, would stop the bleeding⁵.

Goat's beard

Goat's beard, also known as Meadow Salsify, can be found in fields, along roads and in disturbed areas⁵. It has a flower similar to that of a dandelion but the plant itself is taller than a dandelion plant⁵. Furthermore the flower of the plant is very sensitive to the elements. In the morning the blooms will all be facing towards the sun but in the intense sun of the afternoon the blooms close, waiting for the morning. If it is raining or foggy, the blooms will remain closed⁴.

Goat's beard is not a native plant of Canada but was imported from Europe by settlers as a root vegetable, which resembles that of a parsnip but tastes like oysters¹.

Despite the fact that Goat's beard is not a native plant of Canada, the Native Americans still used the plant as a form of food, using both the root and the young shoots of the plant¹. There is also a milky juice created by the plant that congeals into a gum. This gum was chewed to relieve indigestion¹.



Common Yarrow

Yarrow is a common weed that can be found in pastures or fields ⁵. It is easily identified by the strong smell of the plant, which is the result of oils contained within the soft, woolly leaves⁵.

Yarrow was used by Native Americans as an astringent on cuts, reducing the clotting time of cuts, due to an alkaloid present in the leaves⁵. Further medicinal uses included a tea that was made from the leaves and flowers which would treat stomach trouble, headache, and sore eyes. An extract from the leaves treated liver ailments, sore throats and even pain during childbirth⁵.

The scientific name of the yarrow plant, *Achillea*, originates from the Greek hero Achilles. The plant was named in honour of him when he used the plant as an ointment to heal the wounds of his soldiers during the Battle of Troy².



Wild Mint

Wild mint is an aromatic plant making its identification easy¹. Its flowers are pink to pale purple or white and grow in whorled clusters near where the leaf joins the stem¹. Wild mint is an extremely aggressive plant and once established it is almost impossible to eliminate, so although it is a legitimate garden plant it can also be considered a weed⁴. Outside of the garden, wild mint can be found along streambanks and ditches¹.

Many Native Americans used wild mint to alleviate bad breath, to cure hiccups, upset stomach, colds, relieve headaches and fevers, and to clean infected areas⁴. Today mint and spearmint alike are still being used in dental hygiene products⁴.

The name Mint originates from the greek word Minthe¹. According to an ancient Greek myth, Minthe was a beautiful water nymph who attracted the attentions of the God Hades. Unfortunately, Hades was the husband of the goddess Persephone, who in a fit of jealousy began to step on and beat Minthe⁶.

However, Minthe turned into the mint plant and with each step Persephone took, Minthe released the beautiful, aromatic smell of mint⁶.



Rough Cinquefoil

This plant can easily be identified by its pale yellow flower, which grows in dense leafy clusters¹. It is often found in moist meadows, on the shores of streams and lakes, roadsides and recently disturbed areas. It is a pioneer species on recently disturbed soils and in many cases is considered a troublesome weed as a result of this growth habit¹.

Many Native Americans used rough cinquefoil as a medicinal tea to remedy stomach cramps and sore throats. Also the plant was burned to soothe aching heads, eyes and bones¹.

Silverweed/ Silvery Cinquefoil

Silverweed can be identified by its silvery-grey leaf underside, from which it obtains its name, as well as its bright yellow flower⁵. Also the leaves are divided into five sections, from which the plant obtained the name Cinquefoil. Cinquefoil is a corruption of the French *cinque feuilles*, which means five leaves². Silverweed is often found in moist meadows, and by rivers or lakes⁵.

Silverweed is an edible plant, the root of which was eaten by natives, either boiled or roasted, or even raw⁷. The root is not very large and was often eaten in times of famine as the effort it took to dig the root did not justify the amount of food the root provided⁷.

Yellow avens

As the name of this plant indicates the flower is of a pale yellow color, which grows in leafy clusters and bends downwards¹. The leaves are hairy and toothed, grow alternate to one another, and are broadest at the tip. The stem of the plant is erect, and usually hairy throughout¹. The roots of this plant were boiled by the Woods Cree to make a medicinal tea that would relieve sore teeth or sore throats and was also used as a treatment to illnesses associated with teething¹.



Fireweed

It is from the tendency of the plant fireweed to grow from seeds and rhizomes on burned sites that it received its common name fireweed⁵. Fireweed is often found in clearings, roadsides, shaded riverine woods, disturbed areas but most often in areas that have recently had a fire⁵. It is a tall plant that has long pink flowers and which can be found growing in colonies⁵.

One Native American legend of the fireweed claims that the creation of fireweed was a result of a Native maiden's efforts to save her lover from an enemy tribe².

"To rescue her lover from an enemy tribe which was preparing to torture him, she set fire to the forest about their camp. While they fled before the flames, she lifted the wounded man and carried him off through the woods. Some of the tribe, unfortunately, saw what she was doing and followed her. With her heavy burden she could not travel fast enough to escape but wherever she touched her moccasined feet to the black ashes of the forest floor a flame sprang up in her wake and drove the enemy backward. When at last they gave up the chase, flames continued to leap about her but they took the form of a brilliant flower that blazed through the blackened skeleton of the forest long after she had passed"².



Awned Sedge

Awned sedge is a large tufted plant that resembles grass but has a reddish tinge¹. It is often found in wet meadows, by streams or in shallow ponds and ditches¹. The young shoots of awned sedge are edible once cooked. Also the lower portion of the plant, which tends to be fleshier, can be eaten raw¹.

Wire Rush

Wire Rush is a long plant that has a greenish flower cluster and is often found in wet meadows, on the banks of rivers or lakes, or in wetlands¹. When the flowers of the wire rush are chopped and boiled slowly for two hours, a pinkish dye is created. If cream of tartar is added, then the color changes from pink to a green color¹. The stems, when boiled, produce a green or brown colored dye¹.



Crocus

The lovely Prairie Crocus (which is also called “prairie smoke” and “wind flower”) is a very early flowering plant that warms parts of the prairies as early as March. The whole plant is covered with tiny white hair, purple-tinted petals and has a warm golden yellow inside. These flowers open up in the sun and close again during the evening or cloudy weather.

Its name is deceiving since the Prairie Crocus is actually not a crocus (which is in the Lily family,) but is part of the Buttercup family. It is said that it got its name from early settlers because it reminded them of crocuses found in Europe. Prairie Crocuses grow in northern latitudes more or less all around the world. In Canada, it is common in the Yukon and the Northwest Territories as well as the prairies, but its prairie population has greatly declined since pioneer days.

Prairie Crocuses are generally limited to unbroken prairie, but also grow well in a grazed habitat since the deep roots of the plant live for many years and are hardly affected by the hooves of animals. Being that it is a hairy plant, animals generally ignore it. Even though it is mildly poisonous and can cause inflammation and blistering if eaten, First Nations Peoples used the Prairie Crocus to treat muscular pains, nosebleeds and to draw out infections in cuts.

Many people enjoy the beautiful Prairie Crocus and want to have it in their own gardens, but growing this plant can be tricky. It should not be transplanted from the wild to a garden because transplantation usually fails and contributes to the loss of our biodiversity, yet it can be started from wild seeds or purchased from growers who specialize in wild plants.

Settlers were relieved when they saw the Prairie Crocus after enduring their long and harsh prairie winters because it signalled that spring was coming. Nowadays, people still see the Prairie Crocus as a sign of hope but also as a sign that a new beginning is near and with it will come better times.

