

The Signs of September

at the
Community Nature Center of Prescott



Bird-bill Dayflower

1980 Williamson Valley Road
Prescott, AZ

Welcome to the Community Nature Center!

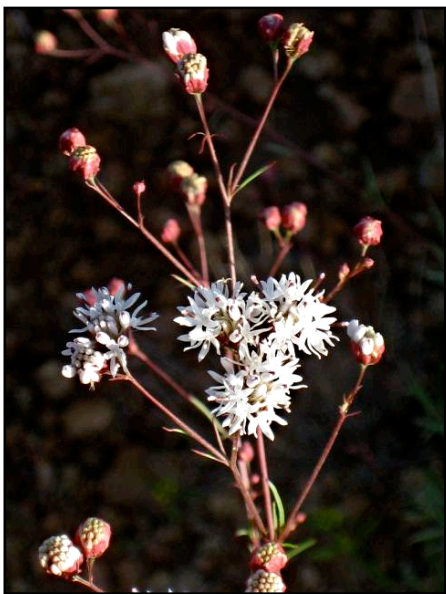
We hope you'll enjoy observing & contemplating the many wonders of this natural environment. To help us preserve this special place, **please stay on the trails**, and please leave plants and animals undisturbed. Footprints made on the fragile grassland & trail-sides do not heal quickly in our dry environment! We also ask that you **keep dogs leashed at all times** and remember to pick up pet waste.

Prairie Clover

Enjoy your visit and look for a new ***Signs*** in October.

HAVE YOU SEEN ...

... the lush response of our Nature Center to the monsoon rains? Many grasses and wildflowers stay dormant until the combination of warmth and increased humidity begin in July each year. By September it is often hard to believe our climate is dry! See how many different species you can find which have come up in response to this fantastic time of year.



... the **Prairie Clover** ? This is actually not a clover, but a white-flowered *Dalea*. Look for a rocket-shaped flower head that grows on long stems. Notice that the head is composed of numerous small white flowers. Can you tell whether the flowers are opening from the top of the head to the bottom or from the bottom to the top?

... the **Wright's Bee Flower**? These plants also hold a collection of tiny white flowers, but the Bee Flower is in the Sunflower Family; Prairie Clover is a Legume. Look closely to find the individual flowers and notice their differences!

Wright's Bee Flower

... the **Morning Glories**? Watch for both the scarlet and purple species. Some of the purple Morning Glories are invasive and can become very dominant, but all red-flowered Morning Glories are native to the Central Arizona Highlands.

These delicate vines use the structure of other plants (and fences) to climb high whenever possible. Without investing in woody structure, climbing to this elevated position allows their flowers to be more accessible to hummingbirds and other pollinators.



Scarlet Morning Glory

HAVE YOU SEEN ...

...the **Side-oats Grama Grass** preparing to set seed? Look for a tall native perennial grass with tiny flowers and seed heads that are primarily positioned on one side of the stalk. If you look at them carefully, or with a hand lens, you will see the pollen-bearing anthers hanging out of the tiny flowers of the grass on long, thread-like filaments. This delicate stalk facilitates easy movement to distribute pollen in the wind.



Side-oats Grama



Blue Grama

... the **Blue Grama Grass**? Look for a grass with a seed head that looks like an old-fashioned hand-held razor. Turn the seed head (or spikelet) upside down and look at the beautiful symmetry of the flower parts.

Gramas are important species and are representative of the Great Plains Grassland ecosystem. Our tiny “grassland” at the Nature Center is especially beautiful in late August and September -- blooming in response to the warm-season rains. These grasses will become dormant as winter approaches; the seed produced is very important to birds. Grama grasses are also food source for a number of butterfly caterpillars including Elissa Skipper & Ridings’ Satyr.

... the quick flash of a **Cliff Chipmunk**, or have you heard its high pitched, sharp bark? Cliff chipmunks live in rocky areas or cliffs located in pine forests, woodlands, or in the interior chaparral found here at the Community Nature Center.

Important members of our food web, they disperse seed of many of the plants at the Center such as the oaks, Manzanita, native grasses and forbs. In turn, cliff chipmunks are food for many predators that live here, including coyotes, foxes and hawks.



Cliff Chipmunk

HAVE YOU SEEN ...

...the flowers of the blue **Bird-bill Dayflower**? Look for plants that are 6"-15" tall with small blue flowers. They are found in many locations within the Nature Center and in large numbers in area woodlands after our summer rain. Notice how the uppermost leaves fold (making a spathe) and enclose the developing flowers.

This lovely perennial wildflower is a member of the Spiderwort family. Look carefully, how many petals do the flowers have? What other flower parts do you notice?



Bird-bill Dayflower

Dayflowers have an interesting pollination strategy. Fertile pollen is blue to white in color. However, flowers also produce some yellow pollen on different anthers; the yellow is not fertile. This is a flower trick for insects like bees that collect pollen for food. The white is not attractive, but when the insect visits for the yellow pollen, the white sticks on for a ride to the next flower. This helps assure pollination and a next generation of Dayflowers!



For more information on the City of Prescott's Open Space and trails go to <http://cityofprescott.net/services/parks/trails/>

This guide was created in September 2013 by Nichole Trushell for the *Community Nature Center of Prescott*. Photos with permission, or by Nichole Trushell.

Signs of the Month are available to use (and return) at the Community Nature Center. This on-line version has been reformatted for ease in printing – **you are welcome to print a personal copy.**