A Pocket Guide to *Kansas Red Hills Wildflowers*

By Ken Brunson, Phyllis Scherich, Chris Berens, and Carl Jarboe

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Table of Contents

- **Introduction** • **2**

Blue/Purple

- *Oklahoma Phlox* • **6**
- *Twist-flower* • **7**
- *Blue Funnel-lily* • **8**
- *Purple Poppy Mallow* • **9**
- *Prairie Spiderwort* • **10**
- *Purple Ground Cherry* • **11**
- *Purple Locoweed* • **12**
- *Stevens' Nama* • **13**
- *Woolly Locoweed* • **14**
- *Wedge-leaf Frog Fruit* • **15**
- *Silver-leaf Nightshade* • **16**
- *Prairie Gentian* • **17**
- *Woolly Verbena* • **18**
- *Stout Scorpion-weed* • **19**

Easter Daisy
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Cover Photo: Bush Morning-glory
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Pink/Red

- *Rayless Gaillardia* • **20**
- *Velvety Gaura* • **21**
- *Western Indigo* • **22**
- *Pincushion Cactus* • **23**
- *Scarlet Gaura* • **24**
- *Bush Morning-glory* • **25**
- *Indian Blanket Flower* • **26**
- *Clammy-weed* • **27**
- *Goat's Rue* • **28**

White/Cream

- □ *Easter Daisy* • **29**
- □ *Old Plainsman* • **30**
- □ *White Aster* • **31**
- □ *Western Spotted Beebalm* • **32**
- □ *Lazy Daisy* • **33**
- □ *Prickly Poppy* • **34**
- □ *White Beardtongue* • **35**

- *Yucca* • **36**
- *White Flower Ipomopsis* • **37**
- *Stenosiphon* • **38**
- *White Milkwort* • **39**
- *Annual Eriogonum* • **40**
- *Devil's Claw* • **41**
- *Ten-petal Mentzelia* • **42**

Yellow/Orange

- *Slender Fumewort* • **43**
- *Bladderpod* • **44**
- *Stiffstem Flax* • **45**
- *Lemon Paintbrush* • **46**
- *Hartweg Evening Primrose* • **47**
- *Prairie Coneflower* • **48**
- *Rocky Mountain Zinnia* • **49**
- *Slender Greenthread* • **50**
- *Plains Hymenoxys* • **51**
- *Goat's Beard* • **52**
- *Paper Flower* • **53**
- *Scarlet Globe Mallow* • **54**
- *Engelmann's Daisy* • **55**
- *Serrate-leaf Evening Primrose* • **56**
- *Plains Prickly Pear* • **57**
- *Buffalo Gourd* • **58**
- *Showy Partridge Pea* • **59**
- *Silktop Dalea* • **60**
- *Broadleaf Milkweed* • **61**
- *Cocklebur* • **62**
- *Camphor Weed* • **63**
- *Prairie Blanket Flower* • **64**
- *Broom Snakeweed* • **65**

- **References** • **66**
- **Authors** • **66**
- **Acknowledgements** • **67**
- **Pocket Guides** • **68**

Indian Blanket Flower
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Prairie Blanket Flower
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Introduction

The purpose of this pocket guide is to highlight wildflower species found in the Red Hills or predominately in south-central or western portions of Kansas. It is intended to provide Red Hills' visitors and residents with a small, convenient, and quick reference to the region's wildflower beauty. Hopefully, one will take away an even greater understanding and appreciation for the natural history, the biological diversity, and the overall beauty of this unique landscape of Kansas.

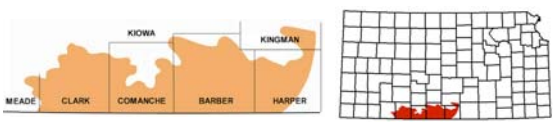
The Red Hills physiographic region of Kansas includes all or parts of seven counties in the south-central portion of the state. Also known as the Gyp Hills, the area gets its names from the iron-rich red soils and gypsum rock outcrops and subsurface layers. The broader Red Hills boundary represented by the map is taken from Frank Wilson's "Kansas landscapes: a geological diary." A more confined geographical representation from the article, "Ecoregions of the United States," by James Omernik published in the Annals of the

A young botanist explores Stout Scorpion-weed

© Scott Sharp

American Association of Geographers in 2005, categorizes about 2 million acres as Southwestern Tablelands. The region contains one of two large tracts of untilled landscapes in Kansas and is representative of the mixed-grass prairie ecosystem. Included in this are sand prairie and sand-sage prairie habitats dissected by intermittent and permanent flowing streams. The Red Hills is one of the most biologically diverse regions of Kansas.

According to Craig Freeman, Senior Curator for the R. L. McGregor Herbarium at the University of Kansas, there are roughly 540 native and 90 non-native plant species in the Red Hills. The karst topography from limestone and gypsum formations is not only beautiful but creates unique caves and sinkholes. These features harbor small fern species at cave entrances as well as habitats for porcupines, wood rats, bats, salamanders, and snakes. Several animals on Kansas' sensitive species lists rely on these special places, including Townsend's Big-eared Bat and Pallid Bat. Red-spotted Toad and Checkered Garter Snake, state threatened species, depend on the small streams and lower prairies. Long-nosed Snake and New Mexico Blind Snake (New Mexico Threadsnake), state threatened species, can be found in some upland areas. The Arkansas Darter, a federal



candidate fish species that is also on the state threatened list, occurs in most of the small streams. Lesser Prairie-chicken, currently under consideration for federal threatened status, occurs in open prairies in the northwestern and western portions of the Red Hills.

Major threats to these and other native species include poor range health, encroachment of invasive species, such as Eastern Red Cedar and Old World Bluestem grass, and landscape fragmentation from energy development and ranch subdivision. Although cedars are native to the area, the suppression of wildfire has resulted in major encroachment by this evergreen into upland grasslands and riparian zones. Besides squeezing out native species of plants and animals, cedars prevent rainfall from reaching the soil and use significant amounts of water in transpiration. Resulting losses of alluvial and soil moisture reduces stream flow contributing to dewatered upper segments of formerly permanent flowing streams.

Several programs, agencies, and organizations are striving to improve rangelands by controlling cedars through brush management and prescribed fire. The challenge is daunting, but strides are being made to improve ranching viability while also protecting native flora and fauna. The

Indian Blanket Flower and Lazy Daisies

following selections highlight some of the most interesting and distinctive plants, as well as those that best reflect the uniqueness of the region. For some, such as Stout Scorpion-weed, Twist-flower, and Stevens' Nama, the Kansas distribution is mostly restricted to the Red Hills. Nearly all represented species are native; Goat's Beard being the exception. While some are known to be poisonous to livestock, some are favored for grazing. Accounts are organized by flower colors, then by general season of bloom. Each account follows an outline depicting the most recently accepted common name, followed by alternatives; then scientific name. Nomenclature follows Michael Haddock's website for "Kansas Wildflowers and Grasses" which is updated from his 2005 book with the similar name. Simple descriptors include the family classification, plant longevity, typical height, and Kansas distribution. Abbreviated description of plant morphology is organized by general plant form, leaves, flowering stalk and parts, fruits, and seeds. Interesting facts on distribution, biology, and published uses of the plant are included in the comments section. Months of typical blooming time are presented at the end of each account.

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■ *Oklahoma Phlox*

Oklahoma Phlox

Phlox oklahomensis

Family: Phlox **Height:** 3-6 inches

Longevity: Perennial

Kansas Distribution: Comanche, Cowley, Elk, Butler, and Chautauqua counties

Description: Tufted with woody stems at the base that produce shoots. Forms colonies. Leaves narrowly oblong to lance-shaped, edges hairy. Flowers borne in few to several hairy terminal clusters, each a long, slender, slightly curved tube with 5 white, sometimes pale blue, pink, or lilac notched petals. Fruits capsules.

Comments: Upon drying, the capsule quickly separates along three joints and catapults its seed outward, sometimes up to 2 yards. As it splits, the sound is similar to a kernel of corn popping. The flowers have a delicate fragrance. This rather rare plant is limited to a few counties in Kansas, northeast Oklahoma, and Dallas County, Texas.

Bloom Period: Mar | Apr | May

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■ *Twist-flower*

Twist-flower

(Smooth Twist-flower, Jewelflower)

Streptanthus hyacinthoides

Family: Mustard **Height:** To 40 inches

Longevity: Annual

Kansas Distribution: Barber and Comanche counties

Description: Stems erect, usually unbranched, smooth, often purplish. Leaves curling downward, alternate, smooth, tip pointed, short-stalked. Flowers 10-30 in elongate, terminal clusters, each flower drooping on short stalks, petals fiddle-shaped, wavy-edged, from lavender to dark purple, filaments distinct. Fruits ascending, smooth, straight or slightly curved inward, flattened. Seeds circular, flattened, smooth, brown.

Comments: The name comes from Greek *streptos* "twisted" and *anthos* "flower" for the wavy margins of the petals. As with most members of the mustard family, flowers have 4 petals. By the time it blooms, the basal leaves have often turned yellow to brown. The soil surrounding it is usually bare. It grows on sand dunes and is more common in Oklahoma, Texas, Arkansas, and Louisiana.

Bloom Period: Apr | May | Jun

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Blue Funnel-lily

Androstephium coeruleum

Family: Lily **Height:** 4-10 inches
Longevity: Perennial
Kansas Distribution: Central and south-central
Description: Stemless. Smooth, gray-green, leafless, flowering stalk rises from a corm 3 inches below ground. Leaves basal, smooth, grass-like, somewhat folded. Flowers light blue to blue, sometimes white, 1 inch across, tubular below, funnel-shaped in upper half with 6 spreading lobes. Central tube from partially united filaments, three-parted stigma (female part). Fruits three-angled capsules. Seeds large, black, flattened, wrinkled.
Comments: The diminutive Blue Funnel-lily can be hard to find among the old foliage of the previous year. At time of blooming the bulb consists of an upper and lower segment, the lower producing a ring of roots, the upper bearing the leaves and flowers. A beautiful representative of the Red Hills, it grows in grasslands and rocky slopes. This flower has a wonderful fragrance.
Bloom Period: Apr | May

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■ *Purple Poppy Mallow*

Purple Poppy Mallow

(Poppy Mallow, Prairie Winecup, Cowboy Rose, Low Poppy Mallow)

Callirhoe involucrata

Family: Mallow **Height:** 2-12 inches

Longevity: Perennial

Kansas Distribution: Statewide

Description: Multi-branched, often hairy, trailing stems extending to 30 inches. Leaves alternate, heart-shaped, deeply lobed. Flowers cup-shaped with 5 bright purplish-pink, white-based, overlapping petals. Center flower parts form a pompom. Fruits rings of kidney-shaped segments. Seeds brown, nearly round in outline.

Comments: *Callirhoe* is from the Greek meaning "beautiful." Purple Poppy Mallow has a deep taproot (comparable to a very large carrot) that helps it survive drought. It is frequently seen on roadsides and prairies in western Kansas. Mowing may stimulate the production of numerous stems and masses of flowers. The root is edible, tastes similar to turnips and sweet potatoes, and was used by Native Americans medicinally and for food.

Bloom Period: Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug

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■ *Prairie Spiderwort*

Prairie Spiderwort

(Cow-slobbers)

Tradescantia occidentalis

Family: Spiderwort **Height:** 8-20 inches

Longevity: Perennial

Kansas Distribution: West ¾

Description: Plants covered with whitish, waxy substance that rubs off, giving it a lighter green color. Stems occurring singly, slender, upright, much-branched, some slender, others thick and fleshy. Leaves linear, to ½ inch wide, alternate, waxy, often folded, recurved, surrounding the stem at the nodes. Flowers three-parted, egg-shaped, solitary and terminal or with another one on the stalk of a flower cluster from an upper node. Fruits round to oblong capsules containing 2-6 seeds.

Comments: Flower color varies from bluish-violet to magenta. When a stem is broken, the mucilaginous sap emerges. It can be drawn out in a long, thin thread similar to spider's silk and lends to the other common name, Cow-slobbers. The petals are delicate, lasting but one day. Rather than shriveling and falling from the plant, the petals are dissolved by enzymes and liquify. Prairie spiderwort is one of four spiderworts that occur in Kansas. Lakota Indians made a jelly-like blue paint from the flowers.

Bloom Period: Apr | May

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■ *Purple Ground Cherry*

Purple Ground Cherry

(Plains Chinese Lantern)

Quincula lobata

Family: Nightshade **Height:** 2-6 inches

Longevity: Perennial

Kansas Distribution: West ½

Description: Multi-branched, leafy, prostrate stems. Leaves alternate, simple, spatula-shaped, up to 4 inches long. Flowers about 1 inch, flat, disk-like, round to angular with 5 united petals displaying light purple with 5 darker purple radiations from the center. Stamens 5, yellow anthers. Fruits small, spherical, yellow-green berries enclosed in the inflated, papery, lantern-like structure.

Comments: *Quincula* loosely translated means "a group of five," while *lobata* refers to "lobes," hence the name. It forms a compact ground cover spread by rhizomes and is especially showy when growing with Scarlet Globe Mallow. It is extremely drought-resistant. The name Plains Chinese Lantern comes from the shape of the seedpod. Native Americans made jelly from the berries, but be careful as similar-looking species in the same genus are toxic.

Bloom Period: Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep

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■ *Purple Locoweed*

Purple Locoweed

(Lambert Crazyweed)

Oxytropis lambertii

Family: Bean **Height:** To 20 inches

Longevity: Perennial

Kansas Distribution: West ¾

Description: Spreading, appearing stemless. Leaves basal, odd-pinnately compound, to 7 inches long, with 7-19 linear to narrowly oblong leaflets, each leaflet to 1½ inches long, with smooth edges, pointed tips, and covered in whitish hairs. Flowers in elongate clusters to 4 inches long with up to 25 lavender flowers. Fruits pods, cylindric, to 1 inch long, with dense hairs. Seeds smooth, brown.

Comments: This plant is poisonous to livestock. If grazing conditions are poor, cattle may eat it and become addicted to it leading to dazed behavior and lack of muscle control. In extreme cases, death will occur. The Navajo people used the plant to treat constipation and also ate it as a mush. Purple Locoweed's upright flowering stalk helps distinguish it from the similar-appearing Missouri Milk-vetch.

Bloom Period: May | Jun | Jul | Aug

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■ *Stevens' Nama*

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Stevens' Nama

(Stevens' Fiddleleaf)

Nama stevensii

Family: Waterleaf **Height:** To 10 inches

Longevity: Annual

Kansas Distribution: Barber, Clark, and Comanche counties

Description: Stems erect, widely branching, with stiff hairs. Leaves alternate, simple, linear to lance-shaped, to 1¼ inches long and less than ⅛ inch wide, hairy with smooth edges, rolling under and pointed. Flowers solitary or in terminal, flat-topped clusters. Petals lavender, five-parted, funnel to bell-shaped, about ¼ inch long. Fruits capsules containing up to 50 small seeds.

Comments: Another splendid representative of the Red Hills, this plant grows in gypsum soils. It is named after George Stevens, an early 20th century teacher and botanical explorer in Oklahoma.

Bloom Period: May | Jun | Jul

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■ *Woolly Locoweed*

Woolly Locoweed

Astragalus mollissimus

Family: Bean **Height:** 4-16 inches
Longevity: Perennial
Kansas Distribution: West ½
Description: Stems several, stout, upright early but becoming prostrate as pods develop, ½ - 5 ½ inches long, covered in dense hair. Leaves alternate, arching, 3-10 inches long, each with 15-33 leaflets that are oval, to 1 inch long, and covered in hairs. Flowers pink-purple, fading to light blue as they age, the upper petal or "banner" of each flower with a pronounced backward flare at the tip. Fleshy, plump pods in boat-shaped clusters, about 1 inch long.
Comments: This perennial is toxic to livestock. Under conditions of average or above average precipitation, livestock will seek better quality forbs and grasses. Consumption of this forb, especially during drought, can cause livestock to get hooked on it, grazing it in preference to more nutritious grasses and forbs, hence the name "locoweed." *Astragalus* means "ankle bone" in Greek, perhaps in reference to the shape of the seeds; *mollissimus* is Latin for "very soft."
Bloom Period: May | Jun

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Wedge-leaf Frog Fruit

(Fog Fruit)

Lippia cuneifolia

Family: Vervain **Height:** To 3 feet

Longevity: Perennial

Kansas Distribution: West ¾

Description: Stems woody at base, prostrate, often growing in dense colonies. Leaves opposite, simple, stalkless, lance-shaped to wedge-shaped, to 2 inches long and ½ inch wide. Flowers in dome-like heads to ½ inch wide on stalks to 2½ inches long and arising from leaf axils. Flowers four-parted. Fruits two nutlets, each containing one seed.

Comments: There are three species of frog fruit in Kansas. The more common one is represented here; however, *Lippia incisa*, is a small representative known from about six Kansas counties including Barber County. *L. lanceolata* is more common in eastern Kansas. It is an excellent nectar plant for butterflies.

Bloom Period: May | Jun | Jul | Aug

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Silver-leaf Nightshade

(White Nightshade)

Solanum elaeagnifolium

Family: Nightshade **Height:** To 2 feet

Longevity: Perennial

Kansas Distribution: South ¾

Description: Stems erect, often branched, few to many. Leaves alternate, simple, short-stalked, narrowly lance-shaped to egg-shaped, with entire, wavy, or toothed edges. Stems and lower leaf surfaces covered with tiny, star-shaped hairs and short, yellowish prickles. Flowers in clusters of 1-7, stalked. Petals 5, light to dark blue or violet and rarely white, united below but with separate tips. Stamens 5, prominent, yellow. Fruits yellowish berries eventually turning black. Seeds brown.

Comments: The color combinations of this plant are striking, with greenish-silvery foliage, purple petals, golden anthers, and green, purple, yellow, and black fruits. It grows in disturbed sites, including over-grazed pastures, fields, roadsides, and waste areas. This plant may be toxic to cattle when consumed in large quantities. "Nightshade" refers to the medicinal use of *Solanum* species to induce sleep.

Bloom period: May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep

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■ *Prairie Gentian*

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Prairie Gentian

(Showy Prairie Gentian, Texas Bluebell, Downy Gentian)

Eustoma exaltatum

Family: Gentian **Height:** 1-2 feet

Longevity: Perennial

Kansas Distribution: West ½

Description: Stems stout, erect, single to several, blue-green, and waxy. Leaves opposite, somewhat clasping the stem, simple, longer than wide, widest at middle and narrowing to rounded or pointed ends, ½-3 inches long. Flowers 2-6, in terminal clusters on stout stalks. Petals showy, five-lobed, bell-shaped, deeply cleft, bluish-purple, pink, or white in color. Fruits are oblong, pointed capsules with numerous, small, pitted seeds.

Comments: The large, showy, lavender-purple, sometimes white, Prairie Gentian flowers often persist until the first hard frost of fall. This plant grows in meadows and prairies with moist sandy to sandy loam soils.

Bloom Period: Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep

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■ *Woolly Verbena*

Woolly Verbena

(Hoary Vervain)

Verbena stricta

Family: Vervain **Height:** 1-5 feet

Longevity: Perennial

Kansas Distribution: Statewide

Description: Stems erect, stout, typically densely hairy, simple or branched above. Leaves opposite, numerous, without a stalk, blades spear-shaped to egg-shaped with coarsely toothed to doubly toothed edges, densely hairy, conspicuously veined underneath. Flowers in slender spears at the end of narrow, erect stalks borne singly or several together. Petals united at base, but five-lobed, purple, blue, or occasionally white. Fruits nutlets, covered with tiny bumps, grayish brown, each nutlet one-seeded.

Comments: This is the sturdiest and mostly widely distributed of all Kansas verbenas. It is one of the most frequent invaders of abused or drought-stricken pastures. The plant's secretions are bitter, and cattle will refuse to graze it even if forage is lacking.

Bloom Period: Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep

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■ *Stout Scorpion-weed*

Stout Scorpion-weed

(Gypsum Blue-eyes)

Phacelia integrifolia

Family: Waterleaf **Height:** 1-3 feet

Longevity: Annual or biennial

Kansas Distribution: Red Hills

Description: Stems erect, stout, and sticky. Leaves alternate, thick, velvety, with rounded, toothed lobes. Flowers tiny, pinkish to lavender, united, trumpet-shaped, grow in coils like a scorpion's tail on protruding stems. Stamens 5, purple, protruding. Fruits egg-shaped. Seeds black.

Comments: This plant of arid areas is most often found on gypsum outcrops. Upon discovery, local opinion characterized it as "ugly weed." It has an unpleasant odor. As it matures the leaves dry and turn brown from the bottom up. By fall, the entire plant turns brown and scraggly. It is not a showy plant because of its very small flowers; but up-close, it is beautiful when in bloom. It can be seen growing in the road ditch on the north side of US Hwy 160 between mile-markers 210 and 214.

Bloom Period: Jun | Jul | Aug

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■ *Rayless Gaillardia*

Rayless Gaillardia

(Fragrant Gaillardia, Pincushion Daisy)

Gaillardia suavis

Family: Sunflower **Height:** 1-3 feet

Longevity: Perennial

Kansas Distribution: North-central and south-central

Description: Stem erect. Flower stalk slender, leafless, and hairy. Leaves simple, variable, broadly spear-shaped, 2-6 inches long, loosely hairy at base of plant. Leaf margins smooth to toothed or deeply cleft. Flowers solitary, borne at the end of the flowering stalk, spherical, ¾-1 inch wide. Ray florets absent or few, inconspicuous, and brownish. Disk florets reddish-brown, interspersed with numerous bristles. Fruits small, long, hairy, each containing a small seed.

Comments: Rayless Gaillardia is often found on dry, rocky sites in sand or gypsum soils. It has an enticing, sweet fragrance lending to its other common name, Fragrant Gaillardia. It provides an irresistible aroma when added to a wildflower garden.

Bloom Period: Apr | May | Jun

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■ *Velvety Gaura*

Velvety Gaura

(Small-flowered Gaura)

Gaura mollis

Family: Evening Primrose **Height:** 1-9 feet
Longevity: Perennial
Kansas Distribution: Statewide
Description: Erect, usually solitary, unbranched below flowers, densely hairy. Leaves alternate, simple, egg-shaped, 1-5 inches long, ½-2 inches wide, soft-hairy, tips tapered to points, margins wavy. Lower leaves usually absent at flowering. Flowers in spikes 2-20 inches long. Petals, pink to rose, less than ¼ inch long. Fruits nut-like capsules, ¼-½ inch long. Seeds 3-4, tiny, reddish brown.
Comments: Velvety Gaura is found on dry, rocky hillsides, pastures, old fields, open woodlands, waste areas, and roadsides. Native Americans are said to have used a liquid made from the roots to treat snakebites, burns, and inflammation. The leaves feel soft and damp before the plant blooms.
Bloom Period: May | Jun | Jul | Aug

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■ *Western Indigo*

Western Indigo

(Scarlet Pea, Texas Indigo)

Indigofera miniata

Family: Bean **Height:** 3-12 inches

Longevity: Perennial

Kansas Distribution: Comanche, Barber, Clark, and Pratt counties

Description: Low-growing with several, much-branched, sprawling or trailing, grayish-green hairy stems. Leaves alternate, small, soft-hairy, short-stalked, with blades divided into 5-9 leaflets, the terminal one unpaired. Flowers in terminal clusters of 7-10, striking salmon-pink. Pods long, narrow, straight or angled averaging 10 square seeds.

Comments: Look closely for the unique flower color, which is rare among members of the bean family. While not a consistent bloomer, the flowers are very showy. This plant has a deep root system, is drought tolerant, and flourishes in sandy, well-drained soil. It is relished by deer, grazed by livestock, and often is recommended in range seeding and pasture plantings. It is caterpillar host for at least six species of butterflies.

Bloom Period: May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep

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■ *Pincushion Cactus*

Pincushion Cactus

Escobaria vivipara

Family: Cactus **Height:** 1-4 inches

Longevity: Perennial

Kansas Distribution: West ¾

Description: Stems usually more than ½ above ground, spherical, dark green, and covered with spirally arranged projections called "tubercles." Tubercles grooved on the upperside with round, cushion-like spots at the tips. Spines bright white to reddish-brown, with darker tips. Flowers funnel-shaped, situated at the base of the upper side of tubercles, petals magenta to pale pink, outer ones conspicuously fringed. Fruits green, fleshy, oblong berries not appearing until about 2 months after flowering. Seeds oblong, ½-¾ inch in diameter, fleshy, yellowish to reddish-brown.

Comments: This is a small, solitary or colonial cactus. It is densely covered in a mat of star-shaped rows of spines. The Pincushion Cactus grows on dry, sandy, or rocky prairies and shows good resistance to freeze damage. Its showy flowers usually don't open until mid- to late-afternoon and close in the evening. A similar cactus in the Red Hills is the Nipple Cactus, which has greenish to pale yellow flowers and bright red fruits. Some Native Americans used the ripe fruits of both species as food.

Bloom Period: May | Jun | Jul | Aug

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■ *Scarlet Gaura*

Scarlet Gaura
(Waving Butterfly)
Gaura coccinea

Family: Evening Primrose **Height:** 8-24 inches
Longevity: Perennial
Kansas Distribution: West ¾
Description: Stems erect to ascending, several to many, slender, branched at base, densely short-hairy or nearly smooth. Leaves alternate, simple, attached to stem, mostly lance-shaped, ¼-2 inches long, less than ½ inch wide, minutely hairy, margins smooth to shallow-toothed, tip pointed or blunt. Flowers stalkless. Petals 4, initially white, pink, or red, to ½ inch long, clawed at base. Stamens 8, anthers yellow to red; stigma (female part) deeply lobed. Fruits nut-like capsules, cylindric, narrow above. Seeds 1-4, tiny, reddish-brown.
Comments: Scarlet Gaura is sometimes called "Waving Butterfly" because the petals are twisted and move like wings in the wind, and the anthers and stamens resemble insect antennae. Grazing seems to have little effect on the abundance of this plant.
Bloom Period: May | Jun | Jul | Aug

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■ *Bush Morning-glory*

Bush Morning-glory

(Big-root Morning-glory)

Ipomoea leptophylla

Family: Morning-glory **Height:** 1-4 feet

Longevity: Perennial

Kansas Distribution: West ¾

Description: Shrublike with many bushy, branching, smooth stems. Leaves simple, alternate, short-stalked, ascending, linear to narrowly spear-shaped, 2-6 inches long with tips that taper to a point. Flowers conspicuous, 2-3½ inches long, funnel-shaped, pinkish-lavender to purplish-red with darker throat. Fruits capsule-like, egg-shaped, long, pointed, smooth. Seeds 1-4, densely hairy, brown.

Comments: Bush Morning-glory belongs to the same family as sweet potato. It is found in dry prairies, disturbed sites, and on sandy and gravelly soils. The above-ground portion can grow to several feet in diameter. The taproot can be up to 8 inches in diameter and 6 feet long with lateral roots branching out 10-15 feet. Due to the large root system, this plant is highly drought resistant. Native Americans utilized the large taproot as food.

Bloom Period: May | Jun | Jul

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■ *Indian Blanket Flower*

Indian Blanket Flower

(Rose-ring Gaillardia, Showy Gaillardia, Cowboy Daisy)

Gaillardia pulchella

Family: Sunflower **Height:** 4-24 inches

Longevity: Perennial

Kansas Distribution: West ¾

Description: Stems erect, simple, or freely branched from near the base, rough, hairy. Leaves alternate, simple, attached directly to stem, broadly spear-shaped or oblong, to 3 inches long, coarsely hairy, margins entire to weakly toothed or wavy. Flowers one to few, spherical, 1-3 inches wide, borne at the end of a flowering stalk. Ray florets 10-20, red or purplish (sometimes yellow) bases, yellow near three-lobed tips, ½-1 inch long, ¼ inch wide. Disk florets reddish-brown, interspersed with numerous bristles. Fruits small, long, hairy, enclosing a small seed.

Comments: Indian Blanket Flower is often found on dry, sandy soils and along roadsides and disturbed areas. It can form dense, colorful, highly visible stands. This species is the state wildflower of Oklahoma.

Bloom Period: May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep

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■ *Clammy-weed*

Clammy-weed

Polanisia dodecandra

Family: Caper **Height:** 8-32 inches

Longevity: Annual

Kansas Distribution: Statewide, more common in West ½

Description: Stems erect, much-branched, sticky-hairy. Leaves sticky-hairy, alternate, on a stalk with 3 lance-shaped leaflets. Flowers borne in a cluster of about 20 that continue to elongate during the flowering season. Petals 4, white, sometimes tinged pink or purple, heart-shaped with a long, narrow base. Stamens 8-12, reddish-purple, about twice as long as the petals. Fruits pea-pod-shaped capsules, 1-3 inches long. Seeds rust-brown or dark brown, round, flattened.

Comments: Clammy-weed has a strong, unpleasant odor. Its common name alludes to the sticky foliage. At the base of each flower is a gland that secretes a conspicuous drop of bright red fluid. Clammy-weed grows on sandy or rocky areas, often along roadsides, and has a long blooming period.

Bloom Period: May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct

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Goat's Rue

(Catgut)

Tephrosia virginiana

Family: Bean **Height:** 3-28 inches

Longevity: Perennial

Kansas Distribution: East ¾

Description: Stems in a cluster arising from a branched or unbranched woodstock, sparsely to densely hairy, few to many. Leaves alternate, short-stalked, with leaflets arranged alternately on both sides of leaf stalk, 2-6 inches long. Leaflets 7-31, oval, tapering at both ends, nearly smooth above, while silky-hairy below. Flowers pea-shaped, in terminal, compact, pyramidal bunches. Flowers five-parted, each flower with a prominent, erect, pale yellow upper petal, the other petals pink to dark pink or rose. Fruits 1-2 inches long, flattened, hairy, light grey, resembling a skinny green bean and containing 3-8 dark, mottled seeds.

Comments: This plant is highly nutritious to livestock and its seeds are eaten by bobwhite quail and wild turkey. Its name derives from its resemblance to an Old World species that was fed to goats to increase milk production.

Bloom Period: Jun | Jul

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□ *Easter Daisy*

Easter Daisy

Townsendia exscapa

Family: Sunflower **Height:** 1-4 inches
Longevity: Perennial
Kansas Distribution: West ¾
Description: Stemless or nearly so, from a branched rootstock and a woody taproot. Low, somewhat tufted, and hairy. Leaves are simple, basal, 1-3 inches long, narrowly lance-shaped, and smooth-edged. Heads numerous, to 1½ inches wide, stalkless. Ray florets 20-40, white to pinkish, sometimes appearing waxy. Disk florets numerous and yellow. Seed heads similar to dandelions but smaller and denser. Fruits one-seeded, smooth, with finely barbed bristles.
Comments: This delightful composite is one of the earliest blooming wildflowers, flowering around Easter. It is not uncommon, but finding it is challenging because it is close to the ground and not brightly colored. It will often be found on dry, rocky, gypsum slopes with little vegetation surrounding it. The ray florets curl under at night, spreading again in the morning.
Bloom Period: Mar | Apr | May

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□ *Old Plainsman*

Old Plainsman

(White-bract Hymenopappus)

Hymenopappus scabiosaeus

Family: Sunflower **Height:** 1-3 feet
Longevity: Biennial
Kansas Distribution: East ¾
Description: Stems erect, branched above, smooth below, woolly above. Leaves in basal rosettes, alternate, stalked to nearly stalkless, 2-6 inches long, to 3 inches wide, deeply divided below, less divided above, white-woolly below, smooth above. Flower heads 40-100, in terminal and flattened groups. Only disk flowers present, white to cream-colored. Fruits small, nutlike, four-angled. Seeds small.
Comments: Old Plainsman is an early bloomer and often forms prominent, expansive stands in pastures. A close look at each flower reveals a beautiful pattern, often with purplish to pinkish colors along with the dominating white. The name, Old Plainsman, cues us to the fact that this plant is an old resident of dry, open prairies.
Bloom Period: Apr | May | Jun

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□ *White Aster*

White Aster

(Baby-white Aster, Rose Heath Aster)

Chaetopappa ericoides

Family: Sunflower **Height:** 2-8 inches
Longevity: Perennial
Kansas Distribution: West ½
Description: Stems erect or spreading, numerous, loosely clustered, and hairy. Leaves simple, unbranched, alternate 3-5 inches long, less than ¼ inch wide, grayish-green, often fringed with hairs and somewhat glandular or sticky. Flowers borne on short, solitary stems. Heads ½-¾ inch wide. Ray florets 12-24, often curling downward toward evening but straightening by morning. Disk florets yellow. Seeds flattened, hairy, tipped with numerous, hair-like bristles.
Comments: This diminutive aster grows in open, sandy, and gravelly locations and on eroded hillsides. It may form large clusters but normally will be in small, scattered groups of plants. Native Americans used this plant to treat snakebites, nose ailments, toothaches, rheumatism, and swelling.
Bloom Period: May | Jun | Jul

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□ *Western Spotted Beebalm*

Western Spotted Beebalm

(Dotted Beebalm, Horsemint)

Monarda punctata

Family: Mint **Height:** 6-20 inches

Longevity: Annual or short-lived perennial

Kansas Distribution: West ¾

Description: Stems square, as with most mints, erect, branching. Leaves simple, opposite, short-stalked, lance-shaped to elliptic, to 2 inches long and ½ inch wide, margins shallowly toothed, both surfaces highly glandular and sometimes hairy. Flowers in spikes, whorls of flowers to 1½ inches wide. Petals yellowish or whitish with purple spots, ¾ inch long. Seeds small.

Comments: This species occurs widely in the western part of the state. It can occur in thick stands in sandy soils. Parts of this plant were known since the early 1880s as a source of thymol, which has been used to treat typhoid fever, rheumatism, and other ailments. Oil from the genus *Monarda* was also reported as being used to prevent vomiting and to relieve gas.

Bloom Period: Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep

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□ *Lazy Daisy*

Lazy Daisy

Aphanostephus skirrhobasis

Family: Sunflower **Height:** 4-20 inches
Longevity: Annual
Kansas Distribution: South-central
Description: Stems erect or spreading, branched, soft, gray, hairy. Leaves simple, opposite, soft, gray, hairy. Leaves 1-4 inches long, about ¾ inch wide. Flowers solitary, on long stalks, ¾-1½ inches wide. Ray florets 20-44, lower surface reddish-purple to rose-colored, upper surface white. Disk florets numerous, yellow.
Comments: Lazy Daisy is found in many locations including roadsides, dry sandy soils, prairies, and open woods in south-central Kansas. The name comes from this forb's habit of keeping its flowers closed until late-morning. Lazy Daisy is sometimes cultivated and may be available at local garden centers or nurseries.
Bloom Period: May | Jun | Jul

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□ *Prickly Poppy*

Prickly Poppy

(White Prickly Poppy)

Argemone polyanthemos

Family: Poppy **Height:** 1-5 feet

Longevity: Annual

Kansas Distribution: Statewide

Description: Stems erect, mostly solitary, somewhat prickly, waxy. Leaves 3-10 inches long, 1-4 inches wide, bluish-green, deeply lobed, prickly mainly at tips and on veins, margins wavy. Flowers showy, white, six-petaled, 2-4 inches wide. Stamens numerous, yellow, surrounding a purple stigma (female part). Fruits capsules 1-1½ inches long, ½ inch wide, covered in yellow spines.

Comments: The waxy, blue-green color of stems and leaves, large, poppy-like flowers, and yellow sap allow easy identification of this species. Native Americans used this sap as a dye, and the seeds were crushed to treat burns and cuts. Seen commonly along roadsides and disturbed areas, large stands of Prickly Poppy can indicate over-grazing.

Bloom Period: Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep

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□ *White Beardtongue*

White Beardtongue

(White Penstemon)

Penstemon albidus

Family: Figwort **Height:** To 20 inches

Longevity: Perennial

Kansas Distribution: West ½

Description: Stem erect, unbranched. Leaves simple, opposite, stalked below, clasping stem above, lance-shaped, to 4 inches long, nearly smooth. Flowers in elongate clusters to nearly 12 inches long with lower flowers opening first. Petals white with red lines within, sticky, funnel-shaped, with 2 lobes above and 3 lobes below. Fruits egg-shaped capsules. Seeds many small, black, angular.

Comments: White Beardtongue is the most common of four *Penstemons* in the Red Hills. It grows in sandy soils and on slopes, and is able to out-compete other plants in challenging environments. "Beardtongue" refers to the hairy, sterile stamen in the throat of the flowers. Beardtongues were used extensively by Native Americans for a wide variety of ailments, as well as for tea. This plant is easily recognized in winter with its persistent, four-part seed pods.

Bloom Period: May | Jun | Jul

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□ *Yucca*

Yucca

(Small Soapweed)

Yucca glauca

Family: Agave **Height:** 3-6 feet
Longevity: Perennial
Kansas Distribution: West ¾
Description: Stemless. Elongate, vertical, stout rootstock bears a rosette of many stiffly ascending, bayonet-shaped leaves. Rootstock with horizontal branches of several feet. Flowers borne on a tall stalk with younger flowers toward the top, 15-50, whitish, with 3 sepals (modified leaves) and 3 petals. Fruits capsules, woody, oblong, six-sided.
Comments: The leaves bear a waxy film that helps keep them from drying. Small Soapweed is dependent on the yucca moth for pollination, and the yucca plant provides the moth with food and shelter that it needs to complete its life cycle. When soaked or rubbed in water, the roots lather and can be used as a soap substitute, hence the other common name. The flowers and fruit pods were eaten raw or cooked by Native Americans, and the leaf fibers were used to make cords, baskets, and sandals.
Bloom Period: May | Jun

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□ *White Flower Ipomopsis*

White Flower Ipomopsis

(White-flowered Gilia)

Ipomopsis longiflora

Family: Phlox **Height:** 6-24 inches

Longevity: Annual or biennial

Kansas Distribution: West ½

Description: Stems erect to spreading. Leaves inconspicuous, alternate, mostly stalkless, to 2 inches long, pinnate with 3-5 long and narrow segments. Flowers trumpet-shaped, few-to-many, white to light bluish-violet, to 2 inches long, in terminal clusters. Fruits small capsules. Seeds small, elongate, angular.

Comments: Larger specimens of this plant are showy when in bloom. White Flower Ipomopsis typically occurs in low densities in sandy to rocky soils in the Red Hills. Its long flower is suited to the long proboscises of butterflies, moths, and hummingbirds.

Bloom Period: May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct

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□ *Stenosiphon*

Stenosiphon

(False Gaura)

Stenosiphon linifolius

Family: Evening Primrose **Height:** 2-9 feet
Longevity: Biennial or short-lived perennial
Kansas Distribution: Statewide
Description: Stems, erect, wiry-branched, brittle, smooth, waxy, with a woody taproot. Leaves alternate, linear to lance-shaped, ½-2 inches long and to ½ inch wide. Flowers dainty, white, borne in spikes. Petals 4, stamens 8, unequal, style threadlike, as long as or longer than the stamens, stigma (female part) four-lobed. Fruits capsules, nut-like, oval, ribbed, hairy, one-seeded. Seeds small, whitish yellow.
Comments: During droughts, this plant drops its leaves and conducts photosynthesis in the stem. A rosette appears the first year, and the stem arises in the second year. Its flowers resemble those of Velvety Gaura, and the leaves are similar to those of flax plants. The flower head is said to resemble plumed pens often used for wedding guest books. In Greek, *steno* means "narrow" and *siphon* means "tube," alluding to the flowers.
Bloom Period: May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep

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☐ *White Milkwort*

White Milkwort

(White Polygala)

Polygala alba

Family: Milkwort **Height:** To 16 inches

Longevity: Perennial

Kansas Distribution: West ½

Description: Stems erect, usually several, smooth. Leaves simple, alternate, stalked below or clasping stem above, to 4 inches long, ½-1 inch wide, margins smooth. Flower head a spike, tapering to the tip, to 3 inches, maturing from bottom to top. Flowers white with green centers, ¼ inch long. Fruits capsules with dark, hairy seeds.

Comments: This small plant with dainty flowers is found primarily on dry, rocky, or sandy soils. When describing plants, "wort" means "weed." The name milkwort originates from an old belief that plants could stimulate lactation in nursing mothers. The Sioux used the boiled roots to treat earache. It was apparently important enough as a natural medicine to be used as barter by Native Americans.

Bloom Period: May | Jun | Jul

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□ *Annual Eriogonum*

Annual Eriogonum

(Umbrella Plant)

Eriogonum annuum

Family: Buckwheat **Height:** 1-3 feet

Longevity: Annual

Kansas Distribution: West ¾

Description: Plants densely woolly with a silvery-whitish appearance. Stems erect, single to branched above. Basal leaves gone by flowering time, stem leaves alternate, 1-3 inches long and less than ¼ inch wide. Flower heads terminal, flat-topped clusters. Flowers tiny, creamy-white to pinkish, drying brown. Petals 6 in two series, united at base. Fruits smooth, pointed, one-seeded.

Comments: Dense stands of this plant sometimes are found in dry, open prairie slopes, waste areas, and roadsides on sandy or rocky soils. The few, reduced leaves and dense hairs help this plant tolerate droughts, leading it to be quite prominent during dry periods. Livestock rarely eat Annual Eriogonum. This plant is often used in dried flower arrangements.

Bloom Period: Jul | Aug | Sep

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□ *Devil's Claw*

Devil's Claw

(Unicorn Plant)

Proboscidea louisianica

Family: Unicorn-plant **Height:** To 3 feet
Longevity: Annual
Kansas Distribution: Primarily western ¾
Description: Stems erect or spreading, usually branched, hairy. Leaves mostly alternate, heart-shaped, to 9 inches long and 10 inches wide, with smooth, wavy edges and rounded or pointed tips. Up to 30 flowers, showy, two-lipped with 3 spreading lower lobes and 2 erect upper lobes, pale lavender to pink or white, throat lined with yellow stripes and reddish spots. Fruits woody capsules splitting on maturity with curved claws at the tips, to 4 inches long. Seeds many, mostly flat, round, black.
Comments: The name means "hook plant." The dried capsules attach to the legs of animals, which help spread the seeds. Occasionally they will catch on the back of one's shoe or boot like a cowboy's spur. The leaves and stem emit a strong, musky odor. Native Americans and pioneers used the green pods and seeds for food; other parts were used to make baskets.
Bloom Period: Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct

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□ *Ten-petal Mentzelia*

Ten-petal Mentzelia

(Chalk Lily, Candleflower, Evening Starflower)

Mentzelia decapetala

Family: Stickleaf **Height:** 1-3 feet
Longevity: Biennial
Kansas Distribution: West ½
Description: Stems erect, stout, branching above. Leaves simple, short-stalked below, stalkless above, coarsely toothed, spear-shaped, 2-6 inches long, ½ inch wide, pointed with toothed, wavy edges. Flowers star-shaped, fragrant, terminal to 6 inches diameter, petals white, stamens yellow. Fruits capsules cylindric, to 2 inches long. Seeds numerous.
Comments: There are four species of *Mentzelia* in Kansas, three of which occur in the Red Hills. The Sand Lily, *Mentzelia nuda*, (see inset) closely resembles Ten-petal Mentzelia, but there are differences in the flowers of the two species. Most notably, Ten-petal Mentzelia can exhibit prominent yellow stamens which do not extend to the end of its petals; Sand Lily typically has longer, white stamens. The *Mentzelias* have "sticky" leaves that cling to clothing. The delicate-looking flowers open in the afternoon, yielding a beautiful evening floral display against the red soil and rocks of the Red Hills. These plants accumulate selenium and are slightly poisonous to livestock.
Bloom Period: Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct

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■ *Slender Fumewort*

Slender Fumewort

(Scrambled Eggs)

Corydalis micrantha

Family: Fumewort **Height:** 4-12 inches

Longevity: Annual

Kansas Distribution: East ¾

Description: Stems several, erect, simple, or sparingly branched, smooth, without hairs. Leaves alternate, stalkless above, pinnately compound with segments 2-3½ inches long, sticky and often waxy. Flowers bright yellow, long-spurred, about ½ inch long, resembling a cluster of tiny bananas. Fruits small capsules. Seeds numerous, shiny, black.

Comments: These annuals germinate in the fall and stay green all winter, blooming and fruiting in the spring to complete their life cycle. Slender Fumewort may be found growing in many different habitats, including roadsides, waste ground, and open woods in sandy soils. It has been used to treat dysentery and diarrhea. More common in eastern Kansas, it is one of the earliest blooming plants in the Red Hills. The common name, Scrambled Eggs, alludes to the appearance of the flower.

Bloom Period: Mar | Apr | May

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Bladderpod

(Gordon's Bladderpod, Popweed)

Lesquerella gordonii

Family: Mustard **Height:** 2-9 inches
Longevity: Annual
Kansas Distribution: Southwest ¼
Description: Stems erect or ascending, branched from the base. Lower leaves with stalks, upper leaves variable, oval to lance-shaped or spoon-shaped, about 1 inch long, margins not toothed or lobed, gray-green, usually with rounded tips. Flowers yellow, petals 4, less than ½ inch long. Fruits spherical. Seeds small, orange-brown, oval to nearly round with one side notched.
Comments: Under good conditions in early spring, Bladderpod forms striking, yellow carpets above the red soils of the Red Hills. Its flowers display the typical four-petal arrangement seen in most mustards. There are two other species of bladderpods in Kansas: Oval-leaved Bladderpod and Slender Bladderpod. The common name alludes to the small pods that pop when crushed.
Bloom Period: Mar | Apr | May | Jun

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Stiffstem Flax

Stiffstem Flax

(Stiff Flax, Yellow Flax, Rigid Flax)

Linum rigidum

Family: Flax **Height:** 2-20 inches

Longevity: Annual

Kansas Distribution: West ¾

Description: Stems erect, stiff, with ascending branches near the top. Leaves alternate, linear, 1½ inches long, hardly noticeable on upper branches of plant as they are nearly clasping stem, smooth. Flowers in branched, terminal clusters. Petals 5, yellow with orangish bases. Fruits straw-colored capsules. Seeds small, flattened, reddish-brown.

Comments: Stiffstem Flax is the most common flax in the Red Hills. Others found here are Grooved Flax, which does not have the orangish color at the base of the petals, and Norton's Flax, with blue flowers. Farther west in the state, Berlandier's Flax is a shorter variety with brick-red pigment at the base of its petals. Petals are short-lived, typically lasting only a day or two, and are easily dislodged by wind or other disturbance.

Bloom Period: May | Jun | Jul

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Lemon Paintbrush

Lemon Paintbrush

(Citron Paintbrush)

Castilleja purpurea

Family: Figwort **Height:** 4-16 inches

Longevity: Perennial

Kansas Distribution: Southwest ¼

Description: Stems erect, typically several growing from one base, covered with woolly hair. Leaves alternate, simple, 1¼ -2½ inches long. Flowers in spikes, bright yellow to greenish-yellow, in some cases with an orange tint or even pink. Seeds egg-shaped, small, angular.

Comments: Look for Lemon Paintbrush on dry rocky or sandy hillsides. When you find one of these plants you may notice the immediate surrounding ground is bare of vegetation. This plant is parasitic, obtaining water from the roots of other plants growing close by, mainly grasses. This eliminates competition from other plants for nutrients and water. The woody seed pods persist long after leaves and flowers have fallen.

Bloom Period: Apr | May | Jun

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Hartweg Evening Primrose

(Hartweg's Sundrop, Fendler Evening Primrose)

Calylophus hartwegii

Family: Evening Primrose **Height:** 2-16 inches
Longevity: Perennial
Kansas Distribution: South part of southwest ¼
Description: Stems bushy, one to several, usually branched, prostrate or ascending. Leaves alternate, simple, to 2 inches long, less than ½ inch wide, smooth, tips pointed, margins smooth or serrate. Flowers with 4 petals, pale yellow, fading to pinkish or orange as they age. Fruits capsules cylindric, ribbed, ¼-1½ inches long.
Comments: Look for this plant in dry rocky or sandy hillsides and upland sites. It is conspicuous along roadsides of US Hwy 160 west of Medicine Lodge. As the family name suggests, the flowers of this plant open in the late afternoon. This plant looks similar to Missouri Evening Primrose, which is prominent east of the Red Hills, but the fruit of Hartweg Evening Primrose is cylindric in cross-section; in Missouri Evening Primrose it is cross-shaped. Some Native American tribes supposedly used this plant to treat internal bleeding.
Bloom Period: Apr | May | Jun | Jul

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Prairie Coneflower

Prairie Coneflower

Ratibida columnifera

Family: Sunflower **Height:** 6-36 inches
Longevity: Perennial
Kansas Distribution: Statewide
Description: Stems erect, slender, grooved, single or clustered, often branched. Leaves deeply divided, decreasing in size toward the end of stem. Flowers borne on leafless stalks to 10 inches long, ray florets 7-12, yellow, drooping, surrounding a long, central disk, disk florets initially gray.
Comments: The foliage has a strong odor that repels deer. Plants are easy to grow from seed, are drought resistant, and grow aggressively and may push out other, weaker species. Indians used Prairie Coneflower for making tea, and to treat poison ivy, rattlesnake bites, headaches, and stomachaches. Some plants of this species have rich, brown-purple ray flowers.
Bloom Period: Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep

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Rocky Mountain Zinnia

Rocky Mountain Zinnia

(Plains Zinnia)

Zinnia grandiflora

Family: Sunflower **Height:** 4-8 inches

Longevity: Perennial

Kansas Distribution: Southwest ½

Description: Stems several, branched above a woody rootstock, greenish, hairs flattened. Leaves opposite, simple, mostly lance-shaped to linear, ½-1¼ inches long, ¼ inch wide, covered with small glands. Flowers numerous, terminal, to 1½ inches wide. Ray florets 3–6, pale to deep yellow, papery, disk florets, many, brownish-yellow to reddish-orange. Fruits small, angular, one-seeded.

Comments: This plant grows on open, dry areas, often on limestone soils. In the Red Hills, it occurs on dry, gypsum-covered hillsides. It sometimes grows with Black-footed Daisies in Clark County, Kansas. The flowers were used by Native Americans to make yellow dye for wool and were ground into paste to make red body paint.

Bloom Period: May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep

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■ *Slender Greenthread*

Slender Greenthread

(Rayless Thelesperma)

Thelesperma megapotamicum

Family: Sunflower **Height:** 1-3 feet

Longevity: Perennial

Kansas Distribution: West ¾, infrequent in East ¼

Description: Stems erect, 1-2, branched above, smooth, bluish-green. Leaves opposite, short-stalked, simple to deeply divided with narrow segments, evenly but sparsely distributed along the stem, mostly on lower half. Flowers about ¾ inch wide, borne on 3-9 inch long stalks. Ray flowers absent. Disk florets dull orangish-yellow. Modified leaves (bracts) at base of flowers egg-shaped and united at base. Fruits one-seeded, dark brown, tipped with 2 triangular, barbed bristles.

Comments: The name, Slender Greenthread, aptly describes the appearance of this tall and gangly plant. The flowers yield rust-colored dye while the roots yield a yellowish-orange dye. Plants are well-adapted to dry soils and climates, with taproot to about 3 feet deep. Native Americans used this plant to make tea.

Bloom Period: May | Jun | Jul | Aug

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Plains Hymenoxys

(Plains Yellow Daisy, Four-nerve Daisy)

Tetraneuris scaposa

Family: Sunflower **Height:** 4-12 inches
Longevity: Perennial
Kansas Distribution: West ½
Description: Stems not obvious. Flowering stalk leafless, silky. Leaves basal, numerous, narrow, silvery-green, sometimes branched near base, smooth to sparsely hairy, gland-dotted, smooth-edged. New leaves not tightly clustered. Flowers solitary on terminal stalks, 3-4 inches above the leaves, bright yellow, 1-50 per plant, tip of each ray floret three-toothed with 4 veins leading into the teeth, disk florets numerous, darker yellow. Fruits small, one-seeded.
Comments: This is one of the most common, and one of the most beautiful, early spring flowers of the Red Hills and sometimes blooms again in September. It can be confused with *Tetraneuris acaulis* (Stemless Hymenoxys), *Thelesperma filifolium* (Plains Greenthread in the far southwest corner of Kansas), and *Hymenoxys odorata* (Western Bitterweed in the extreme southwest corner of the state).
Bloom Period: May | Jun | Sep

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■ *Goat's Beard*

Goat's Beard

(Western Salsify)

Tragopogon dubius

Family: Sunflower **Height:** 1-3 feet

Longevity: Biennial to short-lived perennial

Kansas Distribution: Statewide

Description: Stems erect, 1 to several, sparingly branched, white-woolly when young, smooth when mature. Leaves alternate, very narrow, up to 12 inches long, margins smooth, tapering to a point. Flowers solitary, terminal on hollow stalks, to 2 inches wide. Modified leaves (bracts) at base of heads longer than the florets. Fruits and seeds resemble very large dandelion seed heads.

Comments: Brought from Eurasia, this species can be quite common but is not a major problem. The flower and, particularly the seed head, resemble Wild Dandelion. However, the leaves of Goat's Beard have long, narrow, grass-like blades compared to the broader blades of Wild Dandelion. Goat's Beard possesses a white, milky sap similar to that observed in milkweeds. Roots of Goat's Beard are edible, and livestock will graze young plants.

Bloom Period: May | Jun | Jul

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Paper Flower

Psilostrophe villosa

Family: Sunflower **Height:** To 2 feet
Longevity: Perennial or biennial
Kansas Distribution: Southwest ¼
Description: Stems erect, much-branched. Leaves simple, alternate, short-stalked below to stalkless above, spoon-shaped, woolly, to 4 inches long and ¾ inch wide. Flowers in congested clusters, florets yellow, ray florets 3-4, each with 3-4 lobes, disk florets to 12, each five-lobed. Fruits small, smooth, one-seeded.
Comments: Paper Flower is well adapted to dry conditions and is fairly common on sandy and gypsum soils of the Red Hills. The bright yellow flowers turn whitish and paper-like as they age, thus the common name.
Bloom Period: May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep

©Kyle Gerstner

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■ *Scarlet Globe Mallow*

Scarlet Globe Mallow

Sphaeralcea coccinea

Family: Mallow **Height:** To 1 foot
Longevity: Perennial
Kansas Distribution: West ½
Description: Stems mostly erect, single or clustered, branched, silvery-hairy, 6-12 inches tall. Leaves alternate, stalked, deeply divided into 3 or 5 segments. Flowers in terminal clusters or sometimes arising from bases of leaves. Petals 5, sometimes notched, usually a brilliant salmon but may be reddish-orange to brick red to pink. Stamens numerous, yellow. Fruits rings of 10-15 wrinkled, somewhat hairy, kidney-shaped segments, each containing few, brown seeds.
Comments: This fragrant plant is drought resistant and usually grows on dry or sandy soils. Its relative, Narrow-leaf Globe Mallow, can occasionally be found in the southwest ¼ of Kansas, including the Red Hills. The latter has lance-shaped leaves, the flowers are arranged in open, elongate, branched cluster arrangements, and can grow to 4 feet tall. Both species are in the same family as Cotton, Hollyhock, Rose-of-Sharon, and Okra.
Bloom Period: May | Jun | Jul | Aug

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Engelmann's Daisy

Engelmannia peristenia

Family: Sunflower **Height:** 6-24 inches
Longevity: Perennial
Kansas Distribution: West ½
Description: Stems erect or spreading from a woody taproot. Leaves alternate, stalked or stalkless, deeply pinnately lobed, 4-10 inches long, 3 inches wide, bearing stiff hairs, lobes round-toothed with upper part of leaf less divided. Flowers 1-1½ inches wide, in loose clusters on 1-5 inches-long stalks. Ray florets 8, yellow, ½ inch long, indented at the tip, disk florets numerous, yellow. Fruits small, egg-shaped with short scales at tip.
Comments: The most identifiable feature of this flower is the yellow ray florets that curl under at the tips during hot weather. This species is not typically found in grazed pastures; it is preferred livestock forage. Look for it along highways and other non-grazed areas.
Bloom Period: May | Jun | Jul | Aug

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Serrate-leaf Evening Primrose

Serrate-leaf Evening Primrose

(Plains Yellow Primrose)

Calylophus serrulatus

Family: Evening Primrose **Height:** 6-30 inches
Longevity: Perennial
Kansas Distribution: Statewide
Description: Stems erect or somewhat prostrate, few to many, smooth or hairy. Leaves alternate, stalkless, narrow, hairy above, gray below, often folded, margins slightly toothed or sometimes smooth. Flowers 1-2 inches wide. Petals 4, bright yellow, to ¾ inch long. Fruits tubular capsules to 1 inch long. Seeds numerous, small, brown.
Comments: This drought-tolerant plant is highly palatable for livestock and decreases in abundance with heavy grazing. The leaves fold during the day, reducing water loss. A fairly early and consistent bloomer through summer, stands of Serrate-leaf Evening Primrose often are showy. The flowers typically fade to pale yellow, and sometimes pinkish, with age.
Bloom Period: May | Jun | Jul | Aug

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Plains Prickly Pear

Plains Prickly Pear

Opuntia macrorhiza

Family: Cactus **Height:** To 6 inches
Longevity: Perennial
Kansas Distribution: Statewide but mostly west
Description: Stems comprising fleshy, waxy, dark green, flattened, oval- or egg-shaped pads bearing clusters of many needle-like spines, spines not barbed, to 2 inches long. Leaves absent. Flowers of 7 or more light yellow, papery petals, often reddish at base and on upper edges of older segments. Fruits fleshy, reddish-purple, spineless, egg-shaped berries. Seeds pale, flattened, circular.
Comments: Where stem joints of this plant rest on the ground, they may take root, often leading to a clump of numerous pads. Once cleaned the fruits are quite tasty and make a good jelly. A clammy, white fuzz often found at the joints is formed by the cochineal scale insect. The female insect is a source for red dye used by Native Americans and still in use today, often under the name of carmine or carminic acid. Plains Prickly Pear increases in over-grazed pastures and periods of drought.
Bloom Period: May | Jun | Jul | Aug

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Buffalo Gourd

(Wild Gourd)

Cucurbita foetidissima

Family: Cucumber **Height:** To 2 feet
Longevity: Perennial
Kansas Distribution: West ¾
Description: Stems to 20 feet long, arising from a thick, woody root that reaches 4-6 feet long and weighs 100 pounds or more. Leaves triangular, gray-green, large, coarse. Flowers solitary, dark yellow, somewhat protected by large overhanging leaves, trumpet-shaped, with 5 lobes. Male and female flowers produced separately on same plant. Male flowers on long stalks, female flowers on short stalks. Fruits about the size of an orange, green and white or yellow striped, inedible. Seeds white, smooth, flattened, oval.
Comments: These relatively low-growing, sprawling plants are noteworthy for their constantly fresh appearance, demonstrating their efficiency at extracting water with their deep taproots. The gourd (fruit), when crushed, can be used as a substitute for soap. Native Americans used the root medicinally, but they took great care not to mutilate it while digging believing that personal injury might happen to them or their family.
Bloom Period: Jun | Jul | Aug

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Showy Partridge Pea

(Prairie Senna)

Chamaecrista fasciculata

Family: Bean **Height:** 4-48 inches

Longevity: Annual

Kansas Distribution: Statewide except northwest ¼

Description: Stems slender, erect, usually branched, not growing much more than 24 inches in the Red Hills. Leaves alternate, 1-4 inches long, with 12-30 leaflets arranged evenly on both sides of stalk. Flowers yellow, petals 5, unequal in size, the lower one with 4 red spots at its base, anthers 6-7, drooping, reddish-brown. Seed pods bean-like, 1-3 inches long, flattened, eventually splitting with a twisting motion and flinging the seeds. Seeds small, dark, flattened.

Comments: Showy Partridge Pea has sensitive foliage; the leaflets will fold when touched and during the night. In large quantities, it has a cathartic effect on livestock although deer seem unaffected. Wild turkeys and quail, as well as songbirds, eat the seeds. This plant can be found in disturbed sites, open woods, and sandy, rocky soils.

Bloom Period: Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct

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Silktop Dalea
(Golden Prairie-clover)
Dalea aurea

Family: Bean **Height:** 8-30 inches
Longevity: Perennial
Kansas Distribution: West ¾
Description: Stems upright, silky-hairy. Leaves alternate, few, with 5-9 egg-shaped leaflets arranged alternately on both sides of a stalk. Flowers in dense, terminal, thimble-shaped spikes, petals lemon-yellow. Fruits flat, hairy pod, like a bean. Seeds 1-2.
Comments: Silktop Dalea is sometimes called Golden Prairie-clover. *Aurea* means "gold" and its flowers resemble those of other prairie clovers. This dalea grows on rocky prairie slopes, waste areas, and in ravines. Livestock find this plant palatable and over-grazing may reduce or even eliminate it from the prairie. Silktop Dalea's deep taproot and sparse foliage contribute to its ability to withstand drought. Native Americans used it to treat diarrhea and colic.
Bloom Period: Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep

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■ *Broadleaf Milkweed*

Broadleaf Milkweed

Asclepias latifolia

Family: Milkweed **Height:** 1-3 feet
Longevity: Perennial
Kansas Distribution: West ½
Description: Stems stout, erect, unbranched, new spring shoots of blue-green color. Leaves alternate, thick, leathery, egg-shaped, 2-6 inches long, 1-5 inches wide. Flowers in dense clusters arising from the bases of upper leaves and almost hidden by the leaves, yellowish- to pale-green. Fruits pods, oblong. Seeds numerous, bearing silky hairs at tip.
Comments: Broadleaf Milkweed has copious amounts of milky, latex sap. This beneficial milkweed attracts large numbers of bees and parasitoid insects that prey upon insect pests. It is, however, poisonous to livestock although seldom consumed. Native Americans ground the stems and inhaled the dust to treat respiratory ailments.
Bloom Period: Jul | Aug

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Cocklebur

Xanthium strumarium

Family: Sunflower **Height:** 8-60 inches
Longevity: Annual
Kansas Distribution: Statewide
Description: Stems erect, simple or branched, coarse, often covered with resinous dots. Leaves alternate simple, long-stalked, light green, blades broadly egg-shaped, surfaces rough, hairy, margins coarsely toothed, tip rounded or broadly pointed, base heart-shaped. Flowers clustered, inconspicuous, cream-colored and green, male and female flowers separate on the same plant. Fruits bur-like, covered with many stout prickles with two incurved hooks on the end. Seeds flattened, dark brown.
Comments: The young leaves of Cocklebur are toxic to cattle, sheep, and pigs. The prickly burs have earned this plant the nicknames, "Velcro Plant" and "Porcupine Eggs." Cocklebur invades pastures and ponds where water has receded. Several dye colors can be achieved from this plant depending on treatment of the dye bath.
Bloom Period: Jul | Aug | Sep

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Camphor Weed

Heterotheca subaxillaris

Family: Sunflower **Height:** 1-5 feet
Longevity: Annual or short-lived perennial
Kansas Distribution: West ¾
Description: Stems erect, sometimes bushy, simple below, branched above. Leaves alternate, simple, lower stalked, upper stalkless and clasping stem, oblong or egg-shaped, to 4 inches long, ½-2 inches wide, surfaces rough or hairy, margins toothed or nearly smooth, middle leaves progressively reduced in size. Flowers to ½-¾ inch wide, borne in loose, flat-topped cluster. Ray florets 20-40, yellow. Disk florets yellow. Fruits, one-seeded, ray flower seeds triangular, thick, mostly smooth; seeds of disk florets flattened, hairy.
Comments: Camphor Weed is found on dry, rocky hillsides, pastures, old fields, open woodlands, waste areas, and roadsides. It often dominates in sandy soils. The common name comes from the camphor-like aroma of this plant. Livestock will not graze Camphor Weed.
Bloom period: Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct

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Prairie Blanket Flower

Prairie Blanket Flower

(Prairie Gaillardia, Gaillardia, Slender-leaf Blanket Flower, Lance-leaf Blanket Flower)

Gaillardia aestivalis

Family: Sunflower **Height:** 8-24 inches
Longevity: Perennial
Kansas Distribution: Central
Description: Stems erect, branched, with deep, woody taproot. Leaves alternate, ½-2½ inches long, to ½ inch wide, upper leaves narrowly spear-shaped to lance-shaped, lower leaves spoon-shaped, smooth-edged or with few teeth. Flowers terminal, 2-5 inches wide, ray florets yellow, occasionally reddish at base, three-toothed at tip, disk florets dark purple. Fruits small seeds.
Comments: Found in sandy, rocky soils of the Red Hills, Prairie Blanket Flower exhibits distinct, widely spaced ray florets. There are small bristles distributed among the brownish disk florets. This species is not typically found in dense stands as is often the case for its close relative, Indian Blanket Flower. This plant grows in sandy prairies, open woods, and disturbed areas.
Bloom Period: Jul | Aug | Sep

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Broom Snakeweed

Broom Snakeweed

(Perennial Broomweed, Turpentine Weed)

Gutierrezia sarothrae

Family: Sunflower **Height:** 4-16 inches

Longevity: Perennial

Kansas Distribution: West ½

Description: Stems woody, several to many, usually branched, arising from a woody rootstock. Leaves alternate, stalkless, linear or threadlike, with smooth edges. Flowers abundant, small-rounded heads in clusters at end of branches. Fertile ray florets 3-8, yellow, fertile disk florets 2-6, yellow. Fruits small seeds less than ⅛ inch long.

Comments: The name, Turpentine Weed, alludes to the odor of the crushed plants. The Red Hills also hosts Annual Broomweed which can be confused with Broom Snakeweed. If the plant has a woody stem, it is Broom Snakeweed. Annual Broomweed is rare in the western third of Kansas, though relatively common in the Red Hills. Broom Snakeweed is toxic to many animals, resulting in abortion, if eaten in large enough quantities. This species was used as a treatment for snakebite by Native Americans.

Bloom Period: Aug | Sep

References:

This booklet focuses on plant ecology, providing only brief descriptions of each plant. There are many excellent field guides offering detailed descriptions available at local book dealers and Kansas libraries. Reference lists and plant images are available at www.kansasnativeplantsociety.org, www.kswildflower.org, and www.wildflower.org/plants. Here are a few suggested references:

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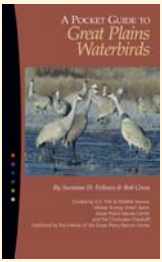

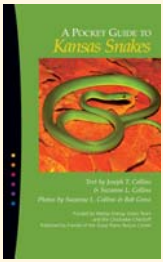

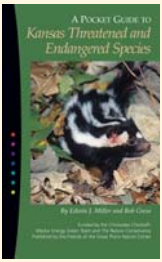

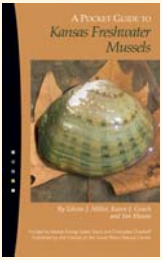

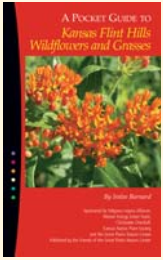

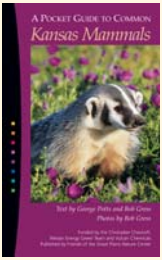

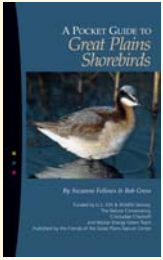

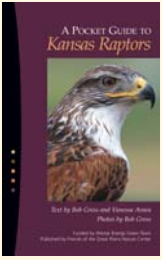

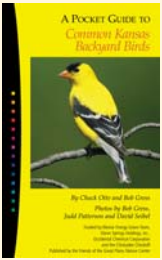

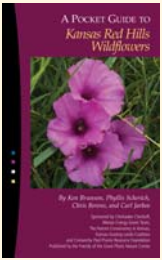

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