

A taste of history from the Native Garden

AMY LOVE
Contributing Writer

The blooming continues this week in the Native Garden. In view for all to enjoy is the lovely, early blue flower, Camas, *Camassia quamasch*. The flowers are



TIMOTHY BELL / Clackamas Print

Meriwether Lewis enjoyed its beauty, and now so can you: high-reaching *Camassia quamasch* flowers add a blue and purple flair to the Native Garden.

pale blue to deep purple, with many blooms to a stem and they stand conspicuously above the surrounding native flora.

Camas is an herbaceous perennial from a deep bulb with an extraordinary history in this area. In a journal of Meriwether Lewis, early explorer of our region, dated June 12, 1806, he hints at the abundance of flowers the camas meadows once held. "The quawmish is now in blume (sic) and from the colour of its bloom at a short distance it resembles lakes of fine clear water, so complete in this deception that on first sight I could have sworn it was water," he writes.

Its blue, aquatic effect bathes the Rock Garden in front of the Chemistry Lab and also the bed northwest of the pond. Camas is found naturally in low to middle elevations in meadows that are moist in the spring but dried out by late summer. Its bulb held great value for many Native American tribes as an important staple. Many camas beds were owned and inherited, and each season they were cleared of stones, weeds and brush, and often were controlled by burning in the summer. Several deadly conflicts resulted between tribes over harvesting rights, trade discrepancies and religious issues.

When roasted, the bulb tastes sweet, and the plant's common name is derived from the Nootka word *chamas* which means "sweet." Camas shares a similar appearance and often the same habitat with its deadly relative, death camas (*Zigadenus elegans*).



TIMOTHY BELL / Clackamas Print

Also appreciated by Meriwether Lewis, these popular, sun-seeking *Columbia lewisia* flowers even share his name.

The two are easily distinguishable when in bloom, differentiated by death camas' creme-white flowers. Although Camas had great ethnobotanical uses, there are no known medicinal uses.

Another beauty in the Rock Garden this week is *Columbia lewisia*, commonly called Lewisia. Its flowers are white with pink striped veins through the petals. This perennial likes sun and exposed sites usually found from middle to high elevations. Lewisia was actually named after Meriwether Lewis. It is a favorite among gardeners today.

Along with the additions of local art, this week the garden offers a rich palette of colors filled with movement of water reflections and wind in nature. Take the time to experience the Native Garden. Enjoy.

'I Can' workshops build women's self-sufficiency

CHRISTINA MUELLER
Co-Editor-in-Chief

The second in the series of four "I can" classes sponsored by Connections: Focus on Women took place last week.

"I can take care of my car" was the topic for this hands-on learning

workshop.

The class started out with a brief introduction of the class instructors who were both established in the automobile repair industry. Liz Dally has her own shop in Portland called Hawthorne Auto which she has owned for 15 years. She worked hard to attain the level of knowledge

that her shop requires. At one time Dally was the highest scoring female ever to take the National Institute of Automotive Service Excellence Exam.

Dawn Slama has been in the industry for 15 years. She works in the parts department at Diesel Service Unit.

From there we went out to the cars

which were owned by the Clackamas Automotive Department. They were classified as junk cars so we couldn't mess them up too badly. We later found out that those cars were very badly cared for. Most fluids were not only low but empty and the air pressure in the tires was extremely low.

Next we learned where all of the basic parts of the car are located. From the dipstick to the spark plugs, we learned it all.

We each took our turn at checking the oil and then up the car went. Once it was at a comfortable height for us to walk under we began to identify some of the parts visible from underneath the car. We examined the tires and exhaust system.

We all got to try our hand at checking the air pressure in the tires; it worked better for some than others.

Now came the fun part. We loosened the bolt on the oil pan to drain the oil and so our adventure began.

The rest of the night was basically watch, learn and then try it yourself.

For an idea of how to perform the basics on your car such as a lube and oil change, changing a tire, and checking your fluids this class was definitely informative and fun for women of all ages.

On May 5, ladies will try their hand at plumbing with "I Can Fix the Toilet," which will cover basic plumbing skills. And on May 19 "I Can Use a Chainsaw," will be the topic. For more information on these workshops or other Connections sponsored events contact coordinator Linda Vogt at ext. 2310.

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