



Grow your native plant knowledge

W Wyoming is home to a wide array of native plants—trees, shrubs, sub-shrubs, wildflowers, grasses, sedges, and more! From first snowmelt into late summer and autumn frosts, there is always more to discover about the native flora of our state. Below are some great resources to help build your native plant knowledge and identification skills.

Getting started

There are a number of online resources that focus on the plants of our state. Many of these can be found on the Barnyards & Backyards Native Plants page, located at <https://bit.ly/BBNativePlants>. Here you'll find a wealth of *Barnyards & Backyards* articles, plant guides with photos, links to plant societies you can join, and other resources.

Penstemon glaber specimen collected in Fremont County, Wyoming, in 1986.
Photo by the Rocky Mountain Herbarium.

Tree ID

Out hiking and have a tree in your sights but don't know what it is? The Wyoming Native Tree ID site, created by the Wyoming State Forestry Division, is a great starting point. If you have cell reception, you can visit <https://bit.ly/all-things-trees> and answer a series of questions to figure it out. For days you don't have cell service, you may also want to print it out as a hardcopy.

The UW Biodiversity Institute's "Key to the Conifers of Wyoming" is another handy resource to print out and tuck in your backpack or saddlebag. Visit <https://bit.ly/conifer-key> for a free downloadable copy.

Great books

Don't mind packing a bit more weight? Here's a sampling of books to help you get started. We only have space to cover a few, but there are many more out there.

- *Wildflowers of Wyoming: Second Edition* (2015) by Diantha States & Jack States. Check out this publication to get acquainted with some of Wyoming's beautiful wildflowers. Arranged by plant family, it will help you learn both families and their characteristics (a very useful thing to know when trying to identify new plants). Along with photos, *Wildflowers of Wyoming* provides interesting tidbits on the various plants and their families. The original version was published some time ago, so some of the plants have been moved to different families or put in a different genera—but you'll find this will happen with almost any book you pick up. Folks continue to busily rearrange plants and assign different names based on new genetic information and other factors.
- *Wildflowers of the Rocky Mountain Region*, Denver Botanic Gardens. This guide focuses more heavily on plant characteristics. Plants are arranged by flower color (which can vary within some species), then petal number with flower characteristics. Plants in the same family tend to be placed next to each other within these sections. This volume is chock full of great pictures, though the language in the plant

descriptions is a bit more technical. Readers should expect to sort through a few more plants since it covers a region, not just one state.

- *A Field Guide to Wyoming Grasses* by Quentin D. Skinner. This publication is a go-to guide to the wide range of grasses that call our state home. To view an electronic copy or order a hard copy, visit <https://bit.ly/skinner-grasses-guide>.
- *Rangeland Plants: Wyoming Tough*, UW Extension. This guide covers 75 grasses, grass-like, forbs (wildflowers and others), and woody plants found around the state. The publication is meant to help the more-than-casual observer of nature identify the most important and common plant species found in Wyoming's rangelands. To view an electronic copy, visit <https://bit.ly/B-1265>.

Take it up a level

Are you a more advanced native plant lover (or would like to become one)? Check out these resources to step up your game.

- *Vascular Plants of Wyoming* by Robert D. Dorn. This is *the* taxonomic key for native plants in Wyoming. To use this guide effectively, you'll need to brush up on your botanical lingo, though the volume does contain a section that defines various terms. The guide contains only text (no photos), so you'll need to work your way through the various plant characteristics to identify a plant. It is helpful to have magnification of some sort on hand so you can see the plant characteristics mentioned. Many botanists carry a loupe, a small, simple magnifying device that fits easily in a pocket.
- The Rocky Mountain Herbarium's online database, located at <https://bit.ly/rm-herbarium-data>, is an excellent resource for those familiar with scientific names. The database's data entry page allows you to draw a polygon on a map of Wyoming (and

beyond) to see which plants have been collected by botanists in the area. The site also contains a vast collection of high-resolution scans of pressed plant specimens, and much more.

See it in person

There is nothing like exploring the outdoors with a group of like-minded plant enthusiasts! Visit the sites below to learn about in-person events that will increase your knowledge of native flora.

- **B&B plant walks and workshops:** Advertised on B&B Facebook page (<https://bit.ly/barnyard-backyard-fb>) and on the B&B email listserv (visit barnyardsandbackyards.com to sign up)
- **Wyoming Native Plant Society:** wynps.org
- **Wyoming BioBlitz:** <https://bit.ly/wy-bio-blitz>
- **Wyoming Resource Education Days** (for junior high and high school students): wyomingrangelands.org/wyred1



Plant walk participants visit a post-burn site to learn about plants that follow wildfire. Photo by Jennifer Thompson.



White chokecherry blossoms (*Prunus virginiana*). Chokecherry is one of the flowering shrubs in the rose family found around Wyoming. Photo by Jennifer Thompson.



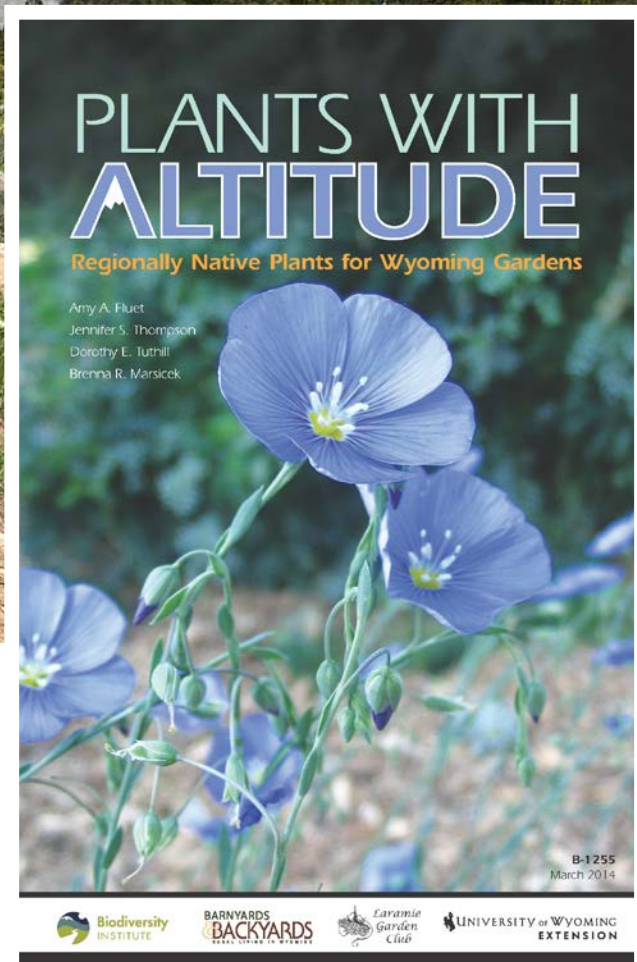
In summer, some higher-elevation locations in Wyoming are carpeted with blooming phloxes such as this cushion phlox (*Phlox pulvinata*). Photo by Jennifer Thompson.



Creeping Oregon grape (*Berberis repens*) flowering in Sinks Canyon. Photo by Jennifer Thompson.



Photo by Jennifer Thompson.



There’s an app for that

There are also a number of apps useful for plant identification—some focused on Wyoming plants, others more general. Visit <https://bit.ly/bb-plant-id-apps> for B&B’s review of six popular apps.

As always, snapping a couple photos can help you identify an interesting plant when you get home. (Just make sure they’re in focus!)

Grow it to know it

You can also see native plants up close and personal in your own backyard! Growing native plants in your landscape is a great way to observe these plants throughout their life cycles. Get started by checking out the B&B Native Plants page and Landscaping page for advice on selecting and growing these plants.

The UW Extension publication *Plants with Altitude: Regionally Native Plants for Wyoming Gardens* is another great resource for those looking to grow native plants. Free downloadable copies are available at <https://bit.ly/wy-native-plants> and the publication is also

available in website form at <https://bit.ly/plants-altitude-site>. To purchase a hard copy from the UW Biodiversity Institute, visit <https://bit.ly/plants-alt-book>.

Have fun

Whichever method you choose (or use no method other than observation), take advantage of our sometimes-fleeting growing season to get out there and learn a bit more about our wondrous native flora!

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Jennifer Thompson is UW Extension’s small acreage outreach coordinator and a Wyoming native plant enthusiast. She encourages readers to join her on a B&B plant walk next summer!