



The Wildflowers of Parker River National Wildlife Refuge

(Part 3)



Common Mullein (*Verbascum thapsus*)

Figwort Family. Biennial introduced in the 1700's as a medicinal herb and naturalized. Weedy and commonly known by many names, including Great Mullein, Woolly Mullein, and Cowboy Toilet Paper. Its yellow, saucer-shaped petals group on a tall spike with hairy silver/green leaves. Mullein grows up to 6 feet tall. Historically, indigenous peoples used the plant in ceremonies, for treating teething discomfort, cuts and pains, and respiratory ailments, and for dyes and torches. Its seeds were tossed into slow running water to bait fish. Where to look along the refuge road, in the fields at Stage Island

Sea-milkwort (*Lysimachia maritima*)

Primrose Family. Native perennial. This plant is found only in wetlands and on brackish saltmarsh flats. Widespread, this fleshy herb produces pink, purple, and occasionally white five-petaled flowers along its entire length. Coastal indigenous people brewed the plant as a tea/relaxant. Where to look: around the Salt Pannes Wildlife Observation Area and at the Nelson Island portion of the refuge off Route 1A in Rowley



Northern Blue Flag (*Iris versicolor*)

Iris Family. Widespread, carefree and hardy perennial. This beautiful plant thrives in fresh water marshes and wet meadows. Clump forming with narrow arching-to-erect, sword-shaped blue-green leaves and deep blue/purple or white flowers. Blossoms appear in late spring and summer. Mature height is 2 1/2 to 3 feet. Widely used by indigenous people externally to treat burns and wounds, swellings and sores, and internally for liver and kidney diseases. Where to look: Hellcat Wildlife Observation Area



Sheep Sorrel (*Rumex acetosella*)

Buckwheat Family. Non-native perennial. This non-wetland plant favors acidic soil in the back dunes and in disturbed area. From June to October, look for the distinctive arrow-shaped leaves and clusters of tiny reddish or greenish flowers. Male and female flowers appear on separate plants. The shiny golden-brown seeds attract ground feeding songbirds. The whole plant is enjoyed by rabbits and deer. Its scientific name means "little vinegar," since the leaves have a distinctive acidic flavor. Only the young leaves are edible. Where to look: along the refuge road and at Stage Island



Bearberry (Kinnikinnick) (*Arctostaphylos uva-ursi*)



Heath Family. Native perennial. A low creeping and vigorous shrub named "smoking mixture" by the Algonquian people. White to pink flowers appear from May to July in the open sandy areas of Plum Island. Its fleshy red fruit withers into dry berries that are slow to rot and are excellent food for birds and small mammals throughout the winter. The plant's leaves, when dried, make an astringent tea sometimes used as a laxative. Where to look: There is a patch of Bearberry along the cement walkway that leads to the Parking Lot #1 restrooms.

Information provided by Friends of Parker River National Wildlife Refuge

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