

A Flax Tale

It's summertime, and I'm so excited to tell you about myself because my beautiful flowers are showing! I'm *Linum lewisii*, but you can call me **Flax** (or Prairie Flax) if you prefer.

Although I am a wild blue flax, my family is one of the oldest cultivated plants in history. Like my ancestors in this area, I grow up to be 60-65 cm tall and smother myself in pale blue flowers (2.5 cm across) from late spring through mid-summer. My flowers open in the morning and last for only one day. I love heat and am drought tolerant, so I thrive on the sunny slopes of Nose Hill. Deer don't like to eat me, but I am of special value to the native bees that feast on the 3500 pollen grains that my flowers produce during their one day. You can even eat my flowers if you'd like to!

I produce about 10 seeds in each of the round capsules you can see on my dried stalks from last year; they are rich in nutrients such as dietary fibre and omega-3 fatty acids, and oil painters use drying oil made from my seeds, too. People also make linen fabrics with the long cellulose fibres that grow inside my stalks and, in the past, banknotes were printed on linen.



Using flax fibre for cloth and other purposes is a very old practice, and linen was well known in the ancient Biblical world. Hebrew women learned to spin and weave flax fibres during the exile in Egypt and the clans of Beth Ashbea were famous workers in linen (1 Chr 4:21). When we read in the Bible that the curtains in the Tabernacle (Ex 26:1) were made of 'finely twisted linen', or that the priests of the Temple (2 Chr 5:12) and royalty and wealthy people (Esth 8:15) wore 'finely woven linen' garments, scholars tell us that these expensive fabrics were made of flax fibres so thin that they were almost invisible. The skilled weavers were able to make linen almost as fine as silk, so sheer and light that it was cool in hot weather. Isn't that amazing?



While I am a small plant among many found on Nose Hill, perhaps you can understand why I was excited to tell you a little about myself and my heritage. I hope, whenever you see me, you will remember that God, the Creator, made me with amazing qualities, some hidden inside me, some showing on the outside. He made you with amazing qualities also; have you discovered them yet? Be sure to thank Him when you do!

Thanks for letting me introduce myself,

Flax