

## **Kelseya uniflora**

*by Kathy Ahlenslager*

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Kelseya uniflora (Watson) Rydberg is an intricately branched, mat forming, partially evergreen shrub in the Rose family (Rosaceae). It has small reddish-purple flowers that are produced very early in the spring. Kelseya is most often found growing from cracks in limestone cliffs where it forms mats which cover the cliff faces like patches of thick, green tapestry.

Kelseya is locally common in the mountains east of the Continental Divide, from the Little Belt Mountains near Great Falls and the Front Range west of Augusta, south to the Centennial Mountains and the Beartooth Mountains on the southern border of Montana. It is currently known from Beaverhead, Big Horn, Broadwater, Carbon, Gallatin, Lewis and Clark, Meagher, and Teton counties in Montana. It also occurs in four counties in northwestern Wyoming and two counties in south-central Idaho.

Kelseya is a monotypic genus, which means that this one species is so unique that it must be placed by itself in a separate group. Almost all species of plants in our state are in genera which are more widely distributed elsewhere, but Kelseya is found mainly in Montana.

The genus Kelseya was named in honor of Francis Duncan Kelsey, who first discovered the plant along the Missouri river northeast of Helena in 1888. He was one of Montana's first resident botanists.

# Francis Duncan Kelsey

*by Peter Lesica*

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Francis Duncan Kelsey was born in Indiana in 1849 and spent most of his early years in Ohio. He received a Bachelor's degree from Marietta College in Ohio and attended Andover Theological Seminary in Massachusetts, then served as a Congregationalist minister in Maine and Massachusetts before moving to Montana in 1885.

Kelsey served as a minister in Helena from 1885 to 1893. From 1887 to 1890, he was also a lecturer at the College of Montana in Deer Lodge. During this time, Kelsey studied the flora and collected nearly 500 fungi and 650 vascular plant specimens. Twenty-three of the fungal specimens and 18 of the vascular plant specimens were nomenclatural types. He discovered at least five plant species that were new to science. These include Kelsey's milkvetch (*Astragalus atropubescens*), small shooting star (*Dodecatheon conjugens*), kelseyia (*Kelseyia uniflora*), white-margined phlox (*Phlox albomarginata*), and Kelsey's phlox (*Phlox kelseyi*). Most of these plants he discovered within a few miles of Helena. The majority of his collections were made in Lewis and Clark, Jefferson, and Powell Counties, but he also collected in Cascade, Deer Lodge, Gallatin, Granite, Madison, Park, Sweet Grass, and Yellowstone Counties. Kelsey's collecting and teaching of the local flora did much to arouse interest in botany throughout the state. He directed the assembly of a collection of Montana plant specimens for display at the 1893 World's fair. This collection is now housed at the herbarium at Montana State University in Bozeman. The remainder of his collection (eventually totaling over 6,000 specimens) is at the herbarium of Miami University in Ohio.

Francis Kelsey left Montana in 1893 to accept the first professorship of botany at Oberlin College in Ohio. During this time, he organized his herbarium and published a dozen professional papers, many of them dealing with his Montana

experiences. In 1897, he accepted a pastorate in Toledo, Ohio, and was a lecturer in botany at the Smead School for Girls until his death in 1905.