the wild ones

The Outside Story

newsletter for natural landscapers

vol. 1 no. 1 Bayside, Wisconsin

HI! This will be a trial run using our new letterhead (thank you Cindy Storm) and a first attempt at a mini-newsletter. If anyone would like to work on future editions please call Rae Sweet at 352-8356.

June 11, 9:30 A.M.
Our June meeting will be a visit to Joanne Gillespie's Country Wetlands in Muskego. We'll meet at the Schlitz Audubon Center at 9:30 and then arrange carpools. We'll try to be back by 1:00. We'll get a chance to learn about wetland plantings (a low spot in your yard, near water or even at the outlet of a sump pump), see Joanne's wetlands and purchase plants.

For all of you that were able to make it to the May dig, I know you consider it a success. But don't take those wonderful plants for granted. Make sure you soak them well and mulch them heavy--and more than once! Also this "drought" might be hard on trees that you have planted and transplanted within the last five years. Put the hose on them for a good soaking.

Watch for insect infestation and destroy infected leaves or insects now. You may have already spotted some tent caterpillars on your shrubs or red aphids on your cuplant.

Explore your property and remove all buckthorn and honeysuckle seedlings.

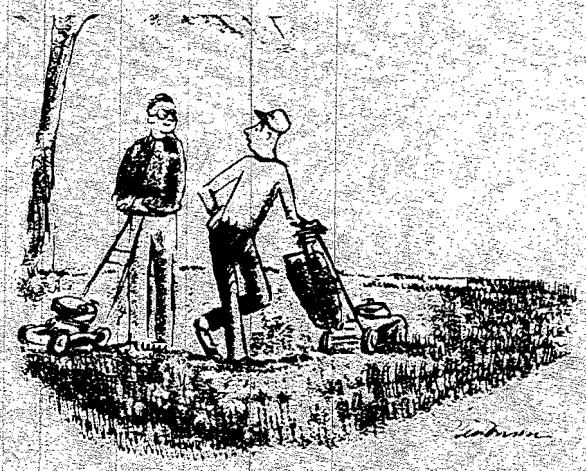
Pinch your New England Asters now, and they'll bloom a little later, and in a much fuller clump.

Try to call or write your village manager or city official to let them know how much you enjoyed seeing the dandelions grow on public property. We all reap the benefit by knowing that herbicides weren't used.

Send in your reservation for the July trip to Madison and Mt. Horeb. If there's enough people, we'll take a second bus. Invite a friend to come along. It should be an exciting day.

See you in June!

Rae



"I'm beginning to question the logic of having the lawn service feed the grass just so I can mow it."

IMPORTANT CAUSES OF HAYFEVER

From The International Textbook of Allergy, JM Jamar, MD, Editor

** locally important
*** regionally important
**** very important

TREES

Birches (Betula)	**
Hickories (Carya)	**
Ashes (Fraxinus)	**
Walnuts (Juglans)	**
Oaks (Quercus)	***
Elms (Ulmus)	**

Though many trees are important sources of allergenic pollens, there are no suggestions that woods be destroyed.

GRASSES

Redtop Grass (Agrostis alba)	**
Bermuda Grass (Cynodon dactylon)	**
Orchard Grass (Dactylis glomerata)	**
Timothy (Phleum pratense)	**
Kentucky Blue Grass (Poa pratense)	***

None of these grasses is native to the United States.

WEEDS

Pigweeds (Amaranthus)	**
Ragweeds (Ambrosia)	****
Goosefoot (Chenopodium)	**

These plants grow in disturbed areas only.

Some of the above was used as testimony by David Kopitzke at the Don Hagar trial in New Berlin in 1976.

GENERAL IMFORMATION ABOUT GRASSES

There are approximately 1100 kinds of grasses growing naturally in the U.S.

Many grasses bloom in May and June when ground nesting birds need cover. To mow then would destroy both cover and nests. Ironically it is against the law to shoot songbirds, but not to destroy their nests!

Mowing grasses from mid-July to frost is counter productive for the following reasons:

1. Many grasses are in seed at this time. Thus mowing them does nothing to remove poller.
2. Mowing grasses eliminates a good filter that removes dust and other particulates, health hazards for the entire population.
3. Cutting grasses removes good food and cover for wildlife. (This does not include rats. They do not gather grass seeds, but depend on grain cribs, garbage and dog food. Rats are not native to the US; they arrived in America with the white settlers, and are dependant on man.)
4. Mowing maintains the landscape at weed level; allowing weeds to germinate and grow. Frequent mowing does not encourage perennial wildflowers.

Note: Plants with colored flowers, including white, are all insect pollinated. Often white flowers are pollinated by moths at night.

Lorrie Otto, 9701 N. Lake Drive, Milwaukee, WI 53217, (414) 352-0734

THAT THE PATIENT MAY KNOW
Harry F. Dowling, MD
Tom Jones, MD
Publ. Saunders, 1959

Pollens cause hay fever and asthma

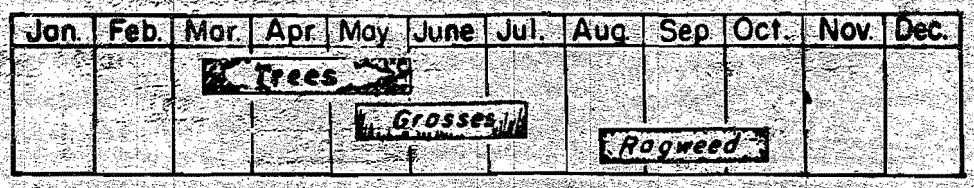
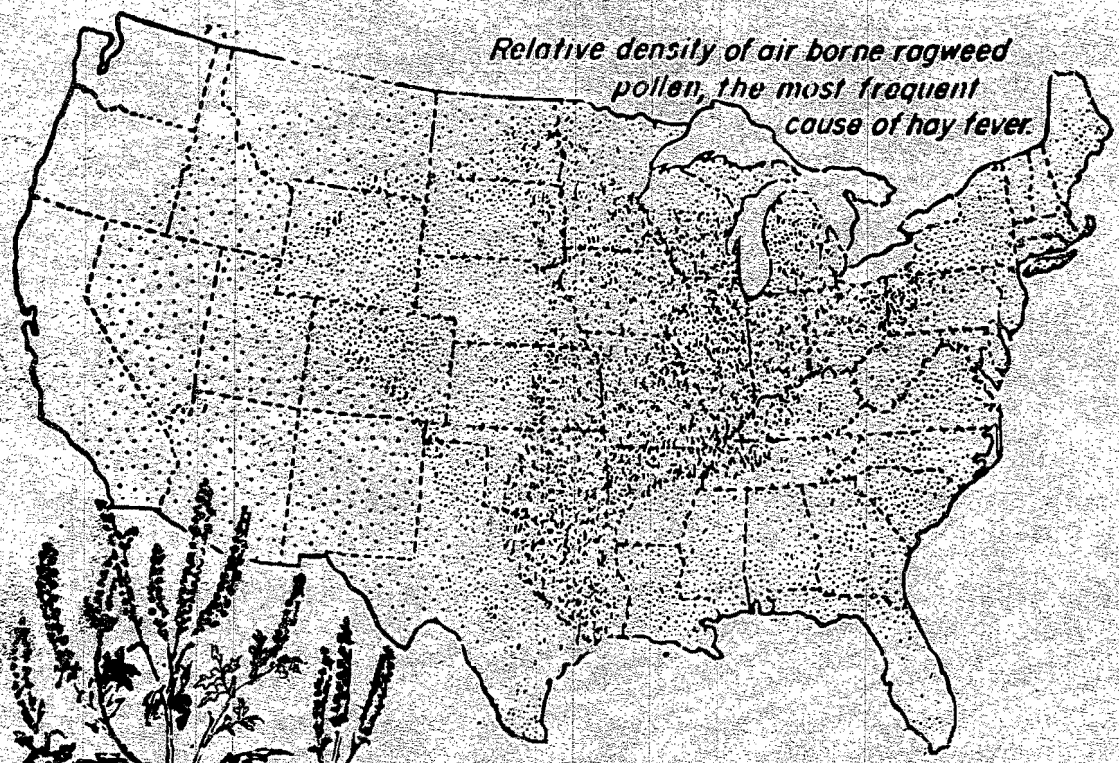


Chart showing seasons when pollen is in the air in most central and northern states. (In the south and in California, the tree and grass seasons start earlier and last longer.)



Short or common ragweed

Pollen grain of ragweed x 600

Giant ragweed

Ambrosia trifida

On the credit side, Ragweed is a boon to wildlife, for its oil-rich seeds (achenes) are a valuable source of fall and winter food for many kinds of birds. After a heavy snowfall, birds can be seen picking the seeds from branches of Ragweeds that stick above snow.

JUDY MANN

Home on the Range Still Holds

Washington Post 6/17/88

My vote for Couple of the Season—and maybe for the whole year—goes to Walter and Nancy Stewart, the Potomac homeowners who are engaging in the practice of "meadow gardening" and driving their neighbors bonkers. Individualism isn't dead after all.

According to the story in yesterday's Washington Post by reporter Jo-Ann Armao, the Stewarts bought their home in Potomac three years ago for $440,000. Walter Stewart is a research scientist at the National Institutes of Health who has made news in the past for his efforts to fight misconduct in science. Nancy Stewart is a lawyer with the U.S. Justice Department. One of the delightful aspects of this story was the discovery that you don't have to be a starving college student anymore to be a nonconformist. Here are two people who haven't been co-opted entirely and who've made a decent living. It's nice to know that's possible.

You'd think that an NIH scientist and a government lawyer would fit perfectly into a swank Potomac subdivision, but underneath their yuppie credentials beat the hearts of rebels. And the Stewarts have committed the one act of rebellion that residents of the suburbs cannot stand: They don't cut their lawn.

Folks in the suburbs will forgive a lot in their neighbors—loutish behavior toward children, unleashed dogs, motorcycles, loud disputes in driveways and terrible taste in landscaping schemes—but lawns are an entirely different matter. Lawns simply must be mowed. And there is a very good reason for this: Lawns show. And therefore, unlike bloody indoor battles between spouses, the state of neighbors' lawns affects everyone else's visual pleasure.

To put it more bluntly, they affect everyone else's fortunes, because lawns affect property values. When property values are at stake, neighbors think nothing of trying to impose their upscale notions of suburban standards on those few folks out there who are brave enough to try to liberate themselves from the tyranny of suburban chores. And as property values continue to go through the roof around here, we are going to be hearing more and more stories about property values vs. property rights.

The Stewarts traded in lawn mowing for the more natural approach of land management called meadow gardening. That's a nice way of saying that they turned their lawn into a meadow, full of wildflowers and tall grasses and weeds and everything else that can take root in nature's landscaping plans. And of course, meadows make wonderful hiding and nesting places for snakes and field mice and lots of other small animals that have been driven into ecological exile by the construction boom that has ravaged the countryside.

Meadow gardening is nothing new. Thalassa Cruso, an Englishwoman who has become one of America's most celebrated gardeners, wrote glowingly of one of her own country lawns that she converted into a meadow. "I let this grass grow high and tall and full of the wildflowers of the hedgerows, and it looks like a fine sweep of herbaceous wild plants . . . . The seeded grasses and the tall ox-eye daisies nodding in the wind are restful and a pleasure to the eye."

In Potomac, however, a meadow is not considered a pleasure to the eye, it is considered an eyesore. The Stewarts got their first taste of Suburban Standards two years ago when they arrived home with their children and found a snooty note in their mailbox that said: "Please, cut your lawn. It's a disgrace to the entire neighborhood." Whoever wrote it didn't have the guts to sign it or to approach the couple in a neighborly manner to discuss the problem. This is the way guerrilla warfare is conducted in the suburbs: Stuffing anonymous notes in mailboxes.

The Stewarts responded with a five-page environmental-impact statement to their neighbors that said, in effect, their meadow was a lot healthier way to go than the chemically soaked lawns all around them. Somebody apparently complained to the county, which ordered the Stewarts to mow the lawn and cited a weed law of dubious legal standing, which the Stewarts have vowed to challenge. They say the weeds pose no danger to anyone and that Montgomery County can't tell them what their property ought to look like.

Thus, the classic battle lines have been drawn between government and the individual, and so far, the individuals are winning. In a display of real statesmanship, the county has delayed taking the case to trial, and the County Council is going to look at some amendments that might allow alternative life styles in suburban laws.

The Stewarts are standing up for the meadow garden, and in so doing they are protecting a lot of their right to enjoy wildflowers growing in the wind.

8/88

WEED ALL ABOUT IT! NEIGHBORS VOW LAWN WAR AFTER A SUBURBAN COUPLE SAYS, 'HELL NO, WE WON'T MOW'

Trouble

"There's beauty to a lawn," says Walter Stewart (with wife Nancy), "but there are aesthetic values on the other side too."

Walter and Nancy Stewart call the seven acres of grass, weeds and wildflowers surrounding their redbrick colonial home in Potomac, Md., a "meadow garden." Their neighbors in the upscale Washington suburb, however, say it's a jungle out there, and they want the Stewarts to cut it.

When the Stewarts—he's a research scientist, she's a Justice Department lawyer—bought their $440,000 home three years ago, they were all for lawn order and had no intention of becoming grass-roots rebels. But their mower kept breaking down. So, abandoning their seedling rivalry and deciding that mower is less, they let the lawn revert to a natural state.

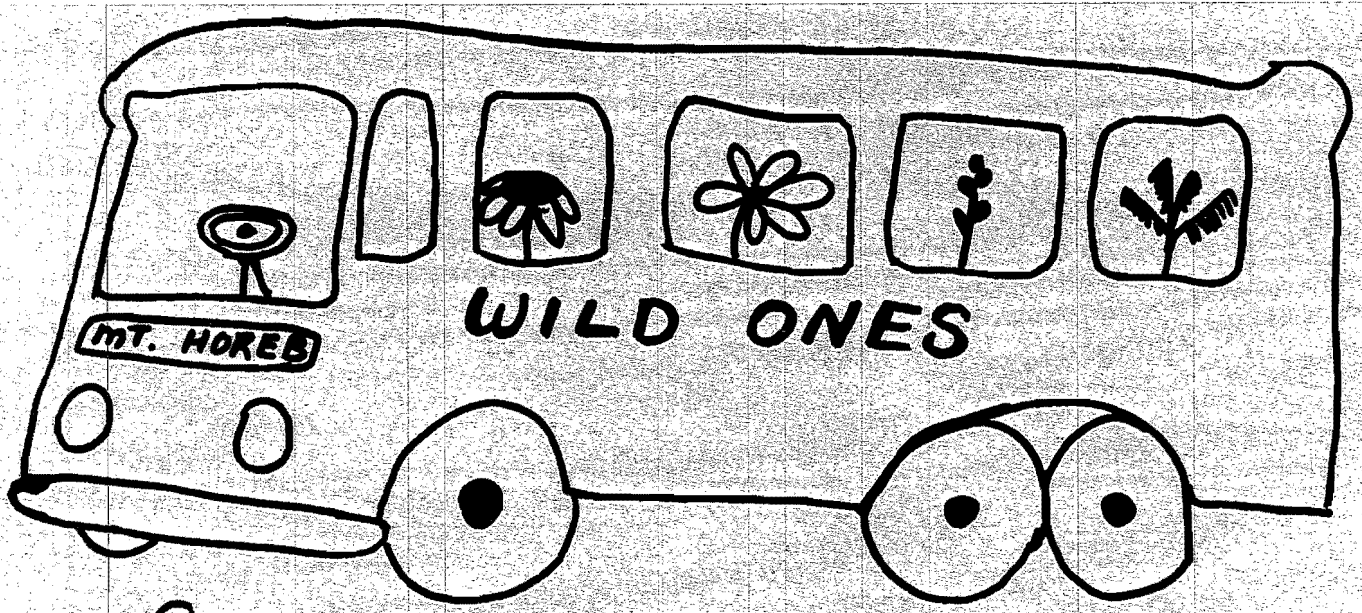
As the grass began to grow, the neighbors began to crab. Some lawn ranger slipped an anonymous note in the Stewarts' mailbox: "Please cut your lawn. It's a disgrace to the entire neighborhood." The Stewarts responded by circulating a five-page reply on the environmental benefits of their meadow, which requires no weed killers or insecticides.

Unimpressed, the neighbors complained to local officials. In May of 1987, Montgomery County cited the Stewarts for violating an ordinance prohibiting home owners from allowing grass and weeds to grow more than 12 inches high. The Stewarts sent around another letter, warning that if forced to destroy the meadow, they would consider other uses for the land, such as turning it into an enormous pumpkin patch.

For now, the case is lying fallow while the county reviews its regulations. The Stewarts, meanwhile, enjoy walking through the meadow with their children, Andrea, 6, Adam, 3, and Kirsten, 2. "When you mow, you deprive a whole bunch of birds and small wildlife of places to live and eat," says Walter. Adds Nancy: "Andrea said she realized why we had bunny rabbits on our property and her friends didn't—the bunnies have a place to live here."

Neighbor Robert Droege demurs. "It's not just a question of the environment," he says. "It reflects on the person in the house. It's like a matter of personal hygiene." Clearly, the seeds of discord have taken root in Potomac, though the courts may yet decide that it's all mulch ado about nothing. □

Photograph by Raeanne Rubenstein



Saturday July 9 8:00-5:00 (approx.)

There's room for 47 of us on an air-conditioned bus

1. Visit Bea Kabler's home in Madison. She had a wild flower garden for a front yard long before it was the thing to do! She only wanted to "save the oak trees."
2. Enjoy lunch in a local park. Bring your own lunch and drink.
3. See Prairie Ridge Nursery in Mt. Horeb. Meet Joyce Powers, owner and consultant, as she tours us through her restorations and nursery.

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tear off and return with $8 payment to: RAE SWEET
(checks made out to WILD ONES)
8635 N. FIELDING
MILWAUKEE, WI 53217
352-8356

NAME:

Phone number:

I WILL CATCH THE BUS AT ☐ Schlitz Audubon Center 8:00 A.M.

☐ Goerkes Corner 8:30 A.M. (Highway 18 and Barker Road)