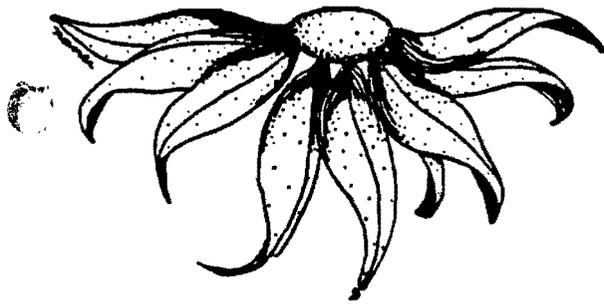


the wild ones



# The Outside Story

newsletter for natural landscapers

vol. 3 no. 2

March-April 1990

Bayside, Wisconsin

**Planning for our next seminar:** Darrel Morrison was the chairman of the Landscape Architecture Department in Madison when he devised a course for his students which camped them in famous natural areas throughout the state. They studied plant communities so that they could learn to design with community-like groupings of native vegetation and not only use plants which belonged in a region but also know how to place them so that they related to each other. "The resource-conserving ecological designs that perpetuate regional differences may also be the most artful." Darrel is now the Dean of the School of Environmental Design at the University of Georgia. He has accepted our invitation to be the Julie Marks Memorial speaker for next February. Same place. Same hours. Remind your friends and mark your calendar for the **second** Saturday of February 1991 for our next Natural Landscaping Seminar at UWM. The overflow crowd will watch the professor on a TV screen in the adjoining cinema. (We promise to have the sound system working!)

*Terrie Otto*

.....

"This...is a plea that we design better, that we plan landscape spaces that are of the region, that provide intricacy and permit change over time such that they are always new, always engaging. In no way is this a suggestion that we abrogate our design responsibilities. In fact, to design in this manner in the urban context requires at least as great a sense of form and aesthetics as does more standard practice. It still requires the formation and manipulation of space; it still requires the accomodation of the numbers of people who will use our spaces. Far from copying nature, it requires us to distill nature without sterilizing it. It requires that we learn more by getting out into the natural environment which can instruct us on aesthetics, on the wide range of vegetation which has "design potential," and on the dynamics associated with evolving natural systems. But it doesn't keep us from being artists in designing places that people can enjoy for a long time. Instead, it places us in the exciting role of being four-dimensional artists rather than three-dimensional ones." - Darrel Morrison in Native Notes, a newsletter devoted to landscaping with native plants.



**Greetings:** It was a thrill to be part of the February UWM seminar. There was great information given and there are so many people who really are interested in what we all are doing in our organization and in our yards. People are starting to become aware of this wonderful group and want to help us get the word out. We have been invited to display at several shows in the coming months. As officers we decided that it was important that not only do we inform the public of our existence but do it in such a manner as to reflect the quality of the organization itself. It is for this reason that we have gone ahead and accepted the engagements as well as putting together our own display. Lorrie has graciously allowed us to use some of her photographs and our very talented Lucy has done her magic to pull the project all together. I hesitate to say too much as the exhibit will be introduced at our next meeting and I want to keep a little surprise to the endeavor. Suffice to say, I think we will all be proud of the unit. The display itself is sufficient enough that once it is set up the message will be clear to those who see it. However, the charm of this group is the people who belong and it is for this reason I ask each of you to consider the dates of the shows and the possibility of giving an hour or so of your time when you attend them to stand nearby and talk it up!!! Just mention the fun we have, the great information we get, and answer questions anyone might have. Since I'm confident that need for people to help out will be met I would like to thank you in advance for all of your efforts. Thanks alot....Deb

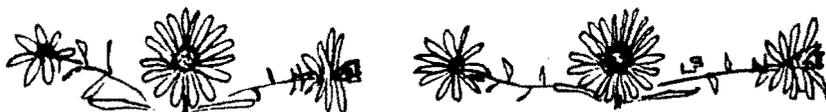
**Upcoming shows** with The Wild Ones' exhibit include: The Realtors' Home, Landscape, and Garden Show to be held March 23-April 1 at State Fair Park. The Community News' Lawn, Garden, and Landscape Show to be held April 19 - 22 at Mecca. Milwaukee Public Museum's Wildflower Show is June 3.

**Thanks.** Many thanks to Lorrie Otto for the successful February Natural Landscaping Seminar. An estimated 600 people attended (up from 290 last year). Also a special word of appreciation to Deb Harwell for planning The Wild Ones' hospitality table; to Dan Chew and Jeff Harwell for video taping presentations; and to those, like Isabel Cash, who gave helping hands.

## *The Inside Story*

On the following page is a new newsletter feature from Janice Stiefel (P.O. Box 204, Plymouth, WI 53037, 414/893-5226). She tells about her interest in the history of wild plants and plans for her column:

"In simple, easy-to understand format, I will be reporting some of the fascinating information about wild plants I have uncovered in many years of research through reference books, field guides, herbals, and Indian folklore sources. My hope is to spark interest in the wild plants growing in our woods, marshes, prairies, roadsides, and backyards. Please note that I'm reporting what I have found in other sources and don't be tempted to experiment with any of these plants for medicine or food. This column is only intended to promote an interest in wild plants and their preservation in our country and throughout the world."



**SKUNK CABBAGE**  
(*Symplocarpus foetidus*)  
Arum Family



**OTHER NAMES:** Hermit of the Bog, Rockweed, Polecat Weed, Swamp Cabbage, Devil's Tobacco, Skunk Weed, Meadow Cabbage.

**HABITAT:** Moist woodlands, open marshes and swamps, and along streams.

**DESCRIPTION:** A mottled, brownish-purple and green shell-like spathe enclosing a heavy rounded spadix covered with tiny flowers, pushes through moist earth in very early spring. By late spring, a tight roll of fresh green leaves unfolds to form huge, cabbage-like leaves. Leaves can be 1 to 2 ft. long and 1 ft. wide. Height is 1 to 2 ft.

**FLOWERING:** February to May

**COMMENTS:** Skunk Cabbage is a native to the northern and middle U.S. The reddish color of this plant resembles meat and helps attract flies, as does the terrible odor. As the plant grows, it produces heat. Temperatures within the buds have been recorded to be 27°F. warmer than the temperature of the outside air. This heat not only helps protect the bud from very cold weather, but also intensifies the odor and, thus, helps to draw more pollinators.

**MEDICINAL USE:** The medicinal parts lie in the roots and seeds. Water or alcohol extract the value. Chemically, it contains wax, silica, iron, fat, salts of lime, and a fixed oil. The Indians knew all about it. They used it for bad digestion, stones, obstructions, loss of appetite (the smell probably caused this), and even scurvy. Externally, a pulp substance was made into a liniment for rheumatism and the mashed root was placed on boils and swellings. It was also used in cases of blood poisoning and snakebite. Their prize remedy was as a contraceptive. Their decoctions were taken by both men and women, three times a day for three weeks and it was said to assure permanent sterility.

According to the \*Doctrine of Signatures, Skunk Cabbage was to be used in the treatment of chest problems. The cabbage head appears to represent the human thorax (chest), when cut across. It is a long respected remedy in various chest complaints, chronic bronchial and asthma conditions, inflammation of the respiratory tract, and whooping cough.

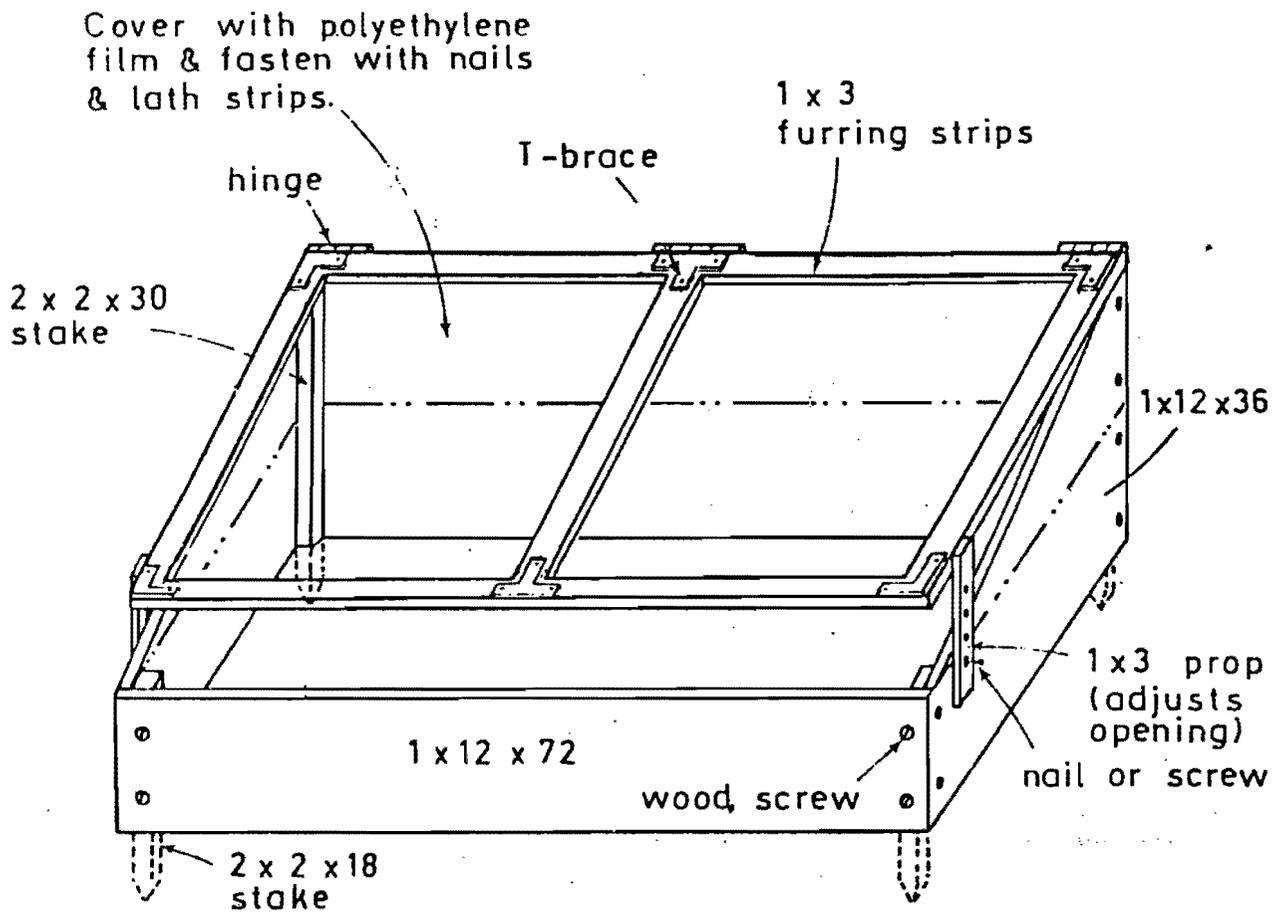
**NAME ORIGIN:** The Genus Name, *Symplocarpus* (Sim-plo-kar'pus), is from two Greek words, symploke and karpos, which mean "connected fruit." This refers to the fruiting stalk which is the result of the ovaries growing together. The Species Name, *foetidus* (fe'ti-dus), means "evil smelling."

**AUTHOR'S NOTE:** When I see Skunk Cabbage poking its speckled, purple head through the snow in February, I know that spring is not far away. This is the most exciting time of the year to me. Each day I can't wait to take a walk on my pathways to see what is coming to life. It's like going on a treasure hunt.

I am fortunate enough to live along a trout stream bordered by a calcareous (limestone) fen, plus a woodland with Red and White Cedar, Beech, Birch, Oak, Ash, Sugar Maple, Red and White Oak trees; and an open area for the propagation of prairie plants. I have pathways winding through all three environments with boardwalks and bridges in the wet areas.

Wild flora have always been of great interest to me. In fact, I have photographed and researched the history and folklore of almost 300 species which are growing in the eastern part of our state. Some very interesting information has been compiled, which I am going to be sharing with you. Many of these species date back to the middle ages and beyond. It's like they are living links with our ancestors.

\*Doctrine of Signatures: A theory proposed by a Swiss physician in 1657 suggesting that some plants have "signatures" to help man know which plants were useful medicines. These "signatures" were parts of the plant that physically resembled parts of the human body - whatever the plant looked like was what it would cure.



**MATERIALS**

Lumber

5 pcs. 1x12-inch Pine or Spruce 6 ft. long  
 1 pc. 2x2-inch Fir 8 ft. long  
 4 pcs. 1x3-inch Furring Strips 6 ft. long  
 4 Lath Strips

Hardware & Miscellaneous

4 3x3-inch steel corner angles with screws  
 2 3x3-inch steel Tee braces with screws  
 30 No 10 x 1 1/2-inch Flat wood screws  
 3 3/4x3-inch butt hinges  
 3 oz. 3/4-inch wire nails  
 4'x6' 6 mil polyethylene film  
 1/2 gal copper naphthanate wood preservative  
 1 qt. white paint

**COLD FRAME**

University of Connecticut  
 Plan No. SP 598 (1975)

CONSTRUCTION NOTES

1. Treat all lumber with 3 coats of copper naphthanate (20%) wood preservative.
2. Paint wood white after treating, if desired.
3. Cold frame may be disassembled and stored after growing season.

All dimensions in inches.

3/90

# Bluebird Nest Box

The Eastern Bluebird is a vanishing species in Northeastern Wisconsin. Part of its problem comes from habitat destruction, but a good share of the decline of the bluebird can be attributed to lack of good nesting spots. Severe competition from sparrows and starlings for natural cavities is one problem. Also, in days past when wooded fence posts were plentiful, the hole that many times occurred in them provided an ideal nesting site for the bluebirds.

The bluebird box illustrated here is an adaptation of the natural fence post nest site. The hole on top of the box simulates the hole on top of a fence post. Rain water which comes in through the top is necessary for successful brooding. The young birds will not drown.

The screen on top eliminates predator and starling invasion from above. The open top discourages the use of the box by house sparrows; they prefer to nest in a box that has a roof.

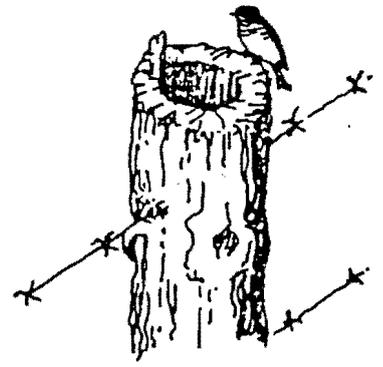
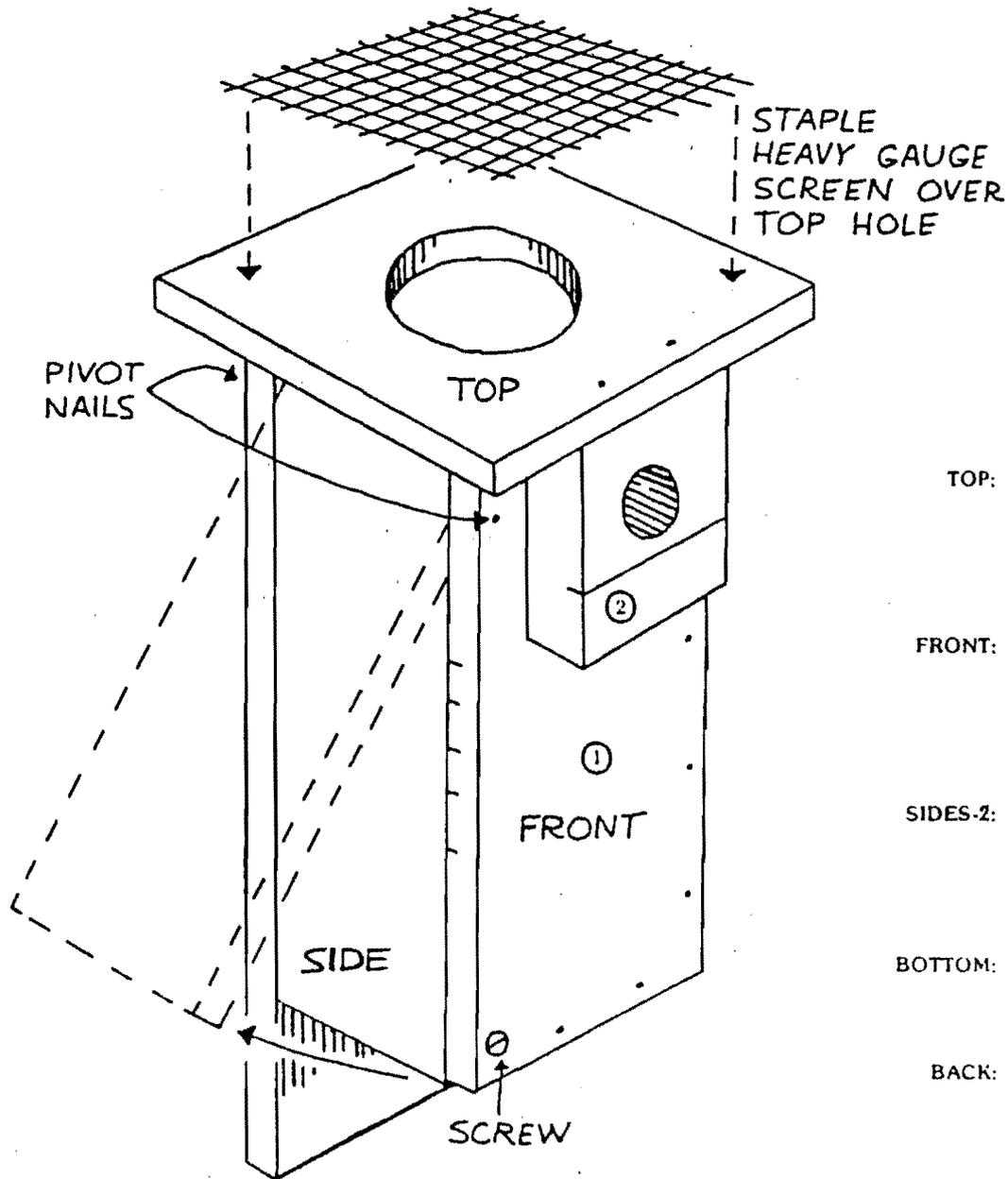
The entrance block provides a thicker material around the entrance hole so predators like raccoons and cats cannot reach the young nestlings. Starlings are reluctant to enter because they have difficulty getting through and fear the effectively longer entry-way.

The depth of the box keeps the nestlings out of the reach of predators and it also confines the nestlings in the box longer, allowing them more time to develop and thus be capable of flight when they leave the protection of the nest box.

The box is constructed so that it can be opened and cleaned, and also to allow for more easy banding of the birds.

Bluebird boxes should be placed on a pipe or cedar post at a height of five to six feet in an open area preferably on a high ridge. Suburban or country sites are best. Boxes should be set up in April or May, but even June should not be too late to attract bluebird residents.

Other bluebird boxes, or modification of this box, have not proved suitable in our area. Contact Vince Bauldry, Green Bay, for further information.



## Materials & Instructions

**TOP:** Wood—7" x 8" x 3/4"  
 Hole—3 1/2" diameter, located 2" from back edge  
 Screen—Approximately 5 1/2" square held down with staples, eight 1/2" staples

**FRONT:** Wood—① 5 1/2" x 14" x 3/4" ② 3 1/2" x 4 1/2" x 1 1/2"  
 Hole—1 1/2" diameter, located 1 1/4" down from top edge of 2 on center  
 Saw—Saw across 1/8" deep, 1/2" below hole. Also, 5 saw curfs on inside.

**SIDES-2:** Wood—4" x 14" x 3/4"  
 Locate one side approximately 1/8" lower than other and nail only at top. Screw will be used to keep bottom closed and is "clean out" house lock

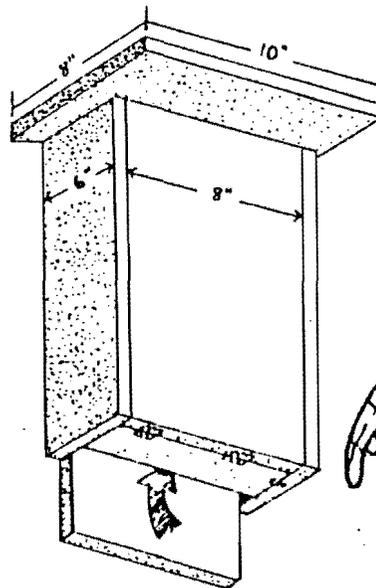
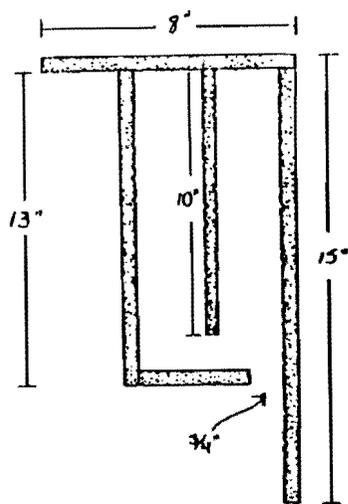
**BOTTOM:** Wood—4" x 4" x 3/4"  
 Nail 3 sides  
 2 dozen nails, 1 1/4", are needed.

**BACK:** Wood—5 1/2" x 18" x 3/4"

5

# CRITTER CRAFTS

## Build a Bat House



Bats roost or seek shelter in a variety of places during the daytime.

These resting sites may be inside or outside. For example, hoary bats (see *Color-Me Critter*) roost outside in trees while many other bats roost inside caves, attics or similar places.

These days, it is not uncommon for bats to occupy bird nesting boxes. This interesting behavior has led many conservationists to build specially designed bat boxes.

If you want to build a bat house, ask your parents or a friend to help you. Then just follow these simple diagrams.

The most important thing to remember while building your bat house is the width or size of the entry space. The ideal width is  $\frac{3}{4}$  of an inch. It's best not to exceed one inch. Use wood with rough surfaces to allow the bats to climb easily in and out.

When complete, fasten your bat house securely to a tree trunk or the side of a building, about 12-15 feet above the ground. In Florida, bat houses should be placed in shady locations. Inside temperatures should never exceed 90°F. This is too hot for bats! It is very important to remember that bats can live only where local food supplies are good. Most bats live near rivers, lakes or swamps where insect numbers are high. The closer bat houses are to these places, the greater the chances your bat house will be used.

It's hard to say how soon you can expect your house to become occupied. Sometimes bats move in within a few weeks, but most often, bats require a year or two to find the new house. You can increase occupancy chances if the bat house is hung before early April.

If any bats move into your bat house, let us know, or write to Bat Conservation International, c/o Brackenridge Field Laboratory, University of Texas, Austin, TX 78712.

From *The Emerging Naturalist*  
by Judy Gillan and Swannee Nardandrea

# From the Secretary ...

**January:** 45° West, 90° North is the title of the music and slide show given by Thomas Pellon. This longitude and latitude describes Wisconsin. This was a beautiful and moving presentation featuring the seasons of native Wisconsin wildflowers. Tom also distributed a list of wildflowers which will be available at Bauer's Garden Center, Milwaukee (414/384-7995).

Following Tom's presentation, was an extensive wildflower slide show by Janice Stiefel. Janice has been researching the history and folklore of wild plants for many years. Among the many interesting things she shared with us is that if cows eat the white shakeroot plant, the cow's milk will be poisonous. It is said that Abraham Lincoln's mother died from such tainted milk. Janice has graciously offered The Wild Ones uses of her research about wildflower folklore for our upcoming newsletters. Thank you, Janice!

**February:** The annual Natural Landscape Seminar which takes the place of our regular February meeting was a great success. This seminar is co-sponsored by The Wild Ones, The Milwaukee Audubon Society, Wehr Natural Landscaping Club, and the University of Wisconsin Conservation Club. A wide variety of speakers and topics ranging from landscape planning; to managing natural landscapes; to wildflowers for sunny, wet, or shady areas were available for participants to choose from. Several booths were set up outside the lecture halls featuring a variety of books and publications for sale, as well as information on wildflower seeds and plants available at various regional nurseries.

A complimentary copy of our newsletter will be sent to all people who attended the seminar. We invite anyone who is not already a member of The Wild Ones to attend our future meetings. There is a \$12 annual membership fee. This fee will entitle you to mailing of future newsletters, monthly meetings, and our annual "bulldozer alert" dig for wildflowers.

## Calendar



**March:** Rae Sweet is going to share photos of her yard with us. She will describe how she transformed her Bayside front yard into a beautiful prairie.

**April:** What can we expect to inhabit the natural plant communities in our yard? Lee Olsen when he talks about diversity of life in native landscapes.

**May:** May brings our annual "dig" when we save wildflowers from developer's bulldozers, and transplant them into our own yards. A members-only event!

**June:** We will tour yards to see examples of natural landscaping.

**July:** We'll be busing to Kohler to look at the prairie restoration there.

**August:** "Help Me Day" is the theme of this meeting. We travel to yards to help owners with suggestions and encourage their efforts.

**September:** Another chance to see natural landscaping on yard tours.

**October:** We'll gather seeds and dig asters and goldenrods.