Protecting the Living Skin: Pesticides are defined as chemicals which destroy pest insects or plants. If the target is an insect, the toxin used is often called an insecticide; if a plant, the chemical is referred to as an herbicide. Pesticides have done extensive damage to the living skin of our planet, and often the destruction of habitat or the poisoning of species has resulted in irreparable harm. Over the years very little has been done to educate, control or prohibit the use of these biocides. Interestingly, Wisconsin, which was the first state to ban DDT, won a major victory in the U.S. Supreme Court last June. The case was argued by the Wisconsin Public Intervenor to uphold an ordinance in Casey (population 400) that required a permit before aerial application of pesticides. Now, because of this decision, local control can be more stringent than federal law.

In the Wisconsin Legislature, the pesticide notification bill which was introduced by Representative Louis Fortis (The Outside Story, Nov.-Dec.) passed the Assembly 56-41. However, Republican Representative Robert Welsh voted for reconsideration after January 28. Democrats voted to protect the consumer and Republicans voted to protect the chemical companies, with the exception of three or four on either side. Representative Fortis will discuss his bill at the annual landscaping seminar on February 8 at the UW-Milwaukee Union on Kenwood Avenue.

On a related front, the National Wildlife Federation will support the Chicago weed ordinance case which will be discussed by Bret Rappaport at the Wild Ones March meeting. It is well worth the time and stamp to get a copy of their Brief of Amicus Curiae. (Address: National Wildlife Federation, 1400 Sixteenth Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036-2266) It includes the following: "One of the most telling ways a person has to announce his or her concern for what we have done to the environment is to restore a portion of it to its natural state." That is symbolic speech.

At the February seminar mentioned above, there will be a handout which will include the statements of Jay Feldman to the U.S. Senate Subcommittee on Toxic Substances (March 28, 1990). Feldman is national coordinator for the Coalition Against the Misuse of Pesticides. Share this information with municipal officials and also with neighbors who manage their lawns with chemicals. The excuse given for weed ordinances has always been that they are needed to protect public health, safety, and welfare. Now that the National Wildlife Federation is asserting that, "The claim rests on convenient assumptions that have not withstood scrutiny. Even more frightening is the possibility that the correlation is inverse—that these ordinances are, if not mandating, certainly encouraging, turf grass lawns that are established and maintained with chemicals that may be seriously endangering the public health, safety, and welfare." WOW!! What a lovely case the New Year may bring to us from Chicago!
Mr. Ted Stephenson  
Wisconsin Department of Transportation  
4802 Sheboygan Avenue, Box 7916  
Madison, WI 53934

Dear Mr. Stephenson:

I would like to make a case for planting the new sandpile at I-43 and Silver Spring Drive as a native Wisconsin prairie using seeds genetically adapted (over thousands of years) to our area. Such a planting would not be in the prevailing taste of our times, but tastes are changing. In three or four years, we would find ourselves the subject of feature articles in national magazines with pictures of our prairie in beautiful bloom. We would be an example of good land ethics and good conservation, not to mention good government!

Maintenance, while initially perhaps higher, would eventually be much lower, resulting in long-term savings. Prairie grasses and flowers are extremely drought resistant. They put down roots to six feet or more, which would hold the bank better than any tree, especially shallow-rooted evergreens. The grasses would keep the snow from blowing in winter and look beautiful as well with their cinnamon color.

There are several small prairie restoration areas in Bayside and River Hills (Audubon Center, Indian Hill School, and some private ones) as well as the larger, more famous ones, if you need examples. The difficulty in starting prairies is usually in obtaining soil free from European weeds. The sand trucked in for this construction project represents a golden opportunity. I hope you get enough letters that you will at least consider this suggestion.

Yours sincerely,
Wendy Walcott

How can you help?

In response to a letter to the Wisconsin Department of Transportation, Paul Werth answered that the Silver Spring and I-43 interchange landscaping will include prairie seeds in the new plantings. As discussed at the Wild Ones' Board meeting, the quantity and quality of the native seeds is questionable. If you have concerns, letters can be written to:

Dick Beckmann, Design Section  
Wisconsin Department of Transportation  
141 N. West Barstow  
Waukesha, WI 53187

or James Ritzer, Design  
Wisconsin Department of Transportation  
Rm. 651, P.O. Box 7916  
Madison, WI 53707-7916

Mr. Werth wrote: "Because this project will have federal funds, a certain percentage of the funds must be designated for native wildflowers as mandated by law." We need to ask, "What species?" "What percentage?" And we need to request that there be no non-natives. Thanks! - Jan Koel
Taking care of cocoons until they hatch is very easy. Normally, cocoons are subjected to the cold temperatures of the winter months and they survive very well. If you want your cocoons to hatch at their normal time, you should keep them cold. A garage or outside is best but you can put them in a refrigerator if you wish. Keeping them in a garage will allow them to develop normally as the temperatures gradually warm during the spring. If you keep them outside or in a garage, make sure they are in a place where mice can't get at them. Keeping them in a cage or up high on a shelf will keep mice from finding and eating your cocoons. If you keep the cocoons in your refrigerator, they will be fine but they will not develop until you take them out and allow them to warm up. Once you remove them from the refrigerator, it will take them a month or more to develop and hatch depending on the type of cocoon and the time of year.

The normal hatching time varies for each species and it depends on the climate of the area as well as local weather conditions. The normal hatching times for the four species in southern Wisconsin are as follows:

- **LUNA (Actias luna)** - late May until about the middle of June
- **POLYPHEMUS (Antheraea polyphemus)** - late May until early July
- **CECROPIA (Hyalophora cecropia)** - early June until the middle of July
- **PROMETHEA (Callosamia promethea)** - June until late July

Local conditions, such as living very close to Lake Michigan can delay hatching by as much as two weeks or more. Likewise, the further north or south you go will cause either later or earlier hatching time. You may even delay hatching until late summer or fall by keeping the cocoons in your refrigerator until about a month before you want the moths to emerge. Place cocoons in a cage, box, or aquarium. Make sure that the moths are able to crawl up and hang from the side or top of the container. They need to hang upside down in order for their wings to develop normally. If the sides of your container are slippery, place some branches inside so there is something for the moth to climb up on.

During the winter, moths are in a state similar to hibernation called *diapause*. *Diapause* means that the moths are resting and not continuing to develop. Their development begins as the temperature warms in early spring. If you bring the cocoons in in January they may take two months to hatch; if you take them in early in April they will hatch in early May since their development has already started. Times will be longer for promethea since they normally break *diapause* later than the other species. It's also a good idea to spray the cocoons with water once a week or so once the weather begins to warm. The luna are the most likely to dry out because their cocoons are so thin but all species will benefit from the water.

(Information from: Daniel Bantz 12524 71/2 Mile Road, Caledonia, WI 53108 414/835-2870)
NORTHERN WHITE CEDAR
(Thuja occidentalis)
Cypress Family


HABITAT: Adapted to swamps, wetlands, and to neutral or alkaline soils on limestone uplands; often in pure stands. Native to eastern Canada, the Lake States and the Appalachian Mountains.

DESCRIPTION: Resinous and aromatic evergreen tree with an angled, buttressed, often branched trunk and a narrow, conical crown of short, spreading branches. The leaves are evergreen, opposite in four rows, scale-like, short-pointed. The bark is light red-brown, thin, fibrous and shreddy, and fissured into narrow connecting ridges. The much flattened, jointed twigs are branching on a horizontal plane. The diameter can range from 1 to 3 ft.

Height: 40 to 70 ft.

COMMENTS: This was probably the first North American tree introduced into Europe. It was discovered by French explorers and grown in Paris as early as 1536. They grow slowly and reach an age of 400 years or more. The lightweight, easily split wood was used for canoe frames, poles, posts, etc. The Canadians considered this to be the most durable wood in Canada because it withstands rotting, so as to "remain undamaged for over a man's age." They were used in palisades around their forts and as beams in their houses. They used the branches for brooms. The bark was rolled into torches by the Indians for hunting at night. Bags were woven of the bark as were their mats. In an 1890 Canadian publication, White Cedar prices ranged from $16 to $20 per thousand feet. Today that price would be anywhere from $900 to $1100.

MEDICINAL USE: In 1535 tea prepared from the foliage and bark, now known to be high in Vitamin C, saved the crew of Jacques Cartier from scurvy. Various parts of the tree have been used for dysentery, paralysis, burns, lost consciousness, and to induce perspiration.

NAME ORIGIN: The Genus Name, Thuja (Thew'ya), is from the word thyia or thya, the ancient name of some resin-bearing evergreen. The Species Name, occidentalis (ok-sin-den-tay'lis), means "western; as contrasted with a tree of eastern Asia." It was named "Arborvitae," which is Latin for "Tree-of-Life," in 1558.

AUTHOR'S NOTE: When our family bought a piece of land along the valley of the Mullet River northwest of Plymouth in 1970, this was the predominant evergreen on the property. There was a distinctive stand of about ten of these trees located just at the river's edge. From the moment our children (then age 8 and 10) walked into the quiet chamber of these Northern White Cedars, the spot has been called, "The Cathedral." It is like walking into another world, one of solitude and peace. A small opening between the trees allows deer, raccoons, mink, and other animals to take a drink from the river that is rushing past, without fear of being observed. Since these trees have very shallow roots, we are always worried that the rushing of the water will eventually undermine their root system, toppling them over like so many others on our land.

"The Cathedral" is probably one of the favorite landmarks on our property. Weather permitting, we have served many Easter picnics in its chambers. On warm summer evenings, my husband and I have spent the night with our tent pitched inside. We discovered something, however. The temperature can be 15 degrees cooler than up at the house and it gets very damp.

Anyone who takes a walk along our pathways will spend a moment in this special place. How privileged we are to have shared an interval of time with these historical and majestic trees.

©1991 Janice Stiefel
Plymouth, Wisconsin
The department began thinking about so-called "natural roadides" in the 1950s when it became clear that, as the interstate system expanded, maintaining the traditional highway landscape would be an expensive practice. Non-native bluegrass, interspersed with ornamental trees, created a parklike scene but required repeated mowing.

Roadside Prairie

The DOT (yes, the DOT) helps to restore nature.

BY ELIZABETH McBRIDE

When settlers first encountered the tallgrass prairie, they called it the "inland sea," so expansive was the jumble of high, slender grasses and strong-stemmed flowers that spread before them, rippling and dancing in the wind. Today, only tiny remnants of prairie remain, some preserved in scientific areas, most forgotten patches on the edges of cemeteries and along railroad rights of way.

But the Wisconsin Department of Transportation hopes to help remedy that. Yes, the highway-builders, the people who (let's be honest) we often think of as the destroyers of things green and beautiful, are planting prairies along the roadides.

The impetus was practical. "These plants are adapted to our soils and our weather," explains Paul Werth, a landscape architect with the DOT. "If you can get nature to come back, it requires a lot less maintenance.

"And," he adds, "once people are in tune with what they're seeing and realize it's not just weeds, prairie plants are beautiful."

Drive along the South Beltline between South Towne and Highway 51 and notice the stands of big bluestem, the monarch of the old Wisconsin prairie, which is now turning a deep, purplish-red. A sharp eye will spot little bluestem, Indian grass and side-oats grama grass. Also planted here but now, for the most part, past flowering, are black-eyed Susan, purple and yellow coneflower, blazingstar, compass plant, leadplant, bergamot, mountain mint and wild indigo.

The South Beltline plantings, done in 1987 and 1988, are the oldest in the Madison area and thus the most noticeable, though still not mature. Since prairie plants send down deep roots—often penetrating the soil six feet to tap moisture during hot, dry summers—plantings take about six years to come to full bloom.

For a while, the DOT simply stopped mowing selected areas, which allowed native species to regenerate. Then in the 1980s it began planned restoration efforts. Today, 18 sites around the state have been seeded with prairie species, including a 42-mile experimental stretch along Highway 51 between Portage and Wausau, which was designed and is being monitored by scientists with the UW-Madison.

The restorations do not come cheap. The department estimates that prairie seeding costs about $1,100 per acre compared with $325 per acre for bluegrass seed. Over time, however, reduced maintenance costs should offset those expenses as eventually the sites will require only annual or biannual mowing. The long prairie roots also will anchor the soil and prevent erosion, and, notes project technician Peggy Lison, "we'll be able to stop using herbicides in these areas. That's a really big deal for our communities."

Lison, who supervised the plantings along the South Beltline, points out that the black-eyed Susans and purple and yellow coneflowers there were "just gorgeous this year" and advises motorists to keep a lookout for wildflowers on that site beginning next spring. Madisonians should also know that large areas between South Towne and Fish Hatchery Road were seeded this spring and fall, and designs are in the works to seed additional stretches between Verona Road and Parmenter Street in 1993.

But even now, the esthetic value of the plantings is apparent. Drive east along the Beltline and notice what happens as you leave behind the dull, crew-cut roadside "lawns" and enter the corridor of grasses. The shapes are diverting, the colors pleasing, the effect soothing.

"Instead of being abrasive, it's something to look forward to," says Lison. "You can see something natural for a change."

Used by permission of Isthmus.
JANUARY/First Week: New Year’s Resolutions? Choose two of your new calendars for yard care. On the "Plans" one, note projected dates for ordering seed and plants, planting times, etc. On another, roomier one, note actual accomplishments, and also natural occurrences. Maybe a good year to expand your observation, such as emergence dates for all wildflowers in your yard, butterflies sighted, or rain amounts. Discarded Christmas trees: First gather a variety of them from neighborhood curbs. Store them horizontally until the snow depth is just right for winter landscape planning. Space a few where you’re considering planting conifers. Naturally, the species differ from the white pine and arborvitae you are considering, but from indoors, they will help with visualizing. Move them in the snow (odd numbers, staggered spacing are much more natural than a military row). Drag a big branch to brush outlines of a proposed path or edge-of-woods. Take a few notes and photos, then move the tree on to use as “foundation plantings” inserted in window wells, brush piles to shelter wildlife, or cut up as mulch in newly-planted areas and perennial beds. Random trees or large chunks, anchored in the snow, can add interest to a long snowfence. Or turn an ex-tannenbaum into a bird-feeder near your favorite window. The needles’ acidity is great for our alkaline soils, too.

Second Week: Winter photos reveal the natural architecture of your yard. Viewpoints can include first impressions from the street, late afternoon sun, or even moonlit scenes. A few shots from your neighbors’ perspectives might be extremely useful. Besides recording pleasing areas, note problems to help analyze possible changes. Some prairie seeds need cold stratification now. Decide on the method you’ll use. Check Rock’s *Prairie Propagation Handbook* or Sperka’s *Growing Wildflowers*. Schedule refrigeration length and planting dates on your "Plans" calendar. Don’t worry about exactly where they will reside at this point.

Third week: Immersion time for natural landscape planning. Surround yourself with calendars, notes from Wild Ones’ speakers, classes, and seminars. Find your house site’s basic drawing in real estate/mortgage papers, or get a copy from your municipality’s tax or engineering office. It’s tiny but quite accurate. Enlarge it for 10 cents at most copy places. Gather your favorite handbooks, add a few from the library, and start going over the basic steps for planning. Whether the whole property, an area suddenly much shadier or sunnier, or other factors in your life or neighborhood, there are always a strong set of reasons for examining or re-examining one’s landscape plans at this time of year. If total immersion doesn’t result in all you had hoped for, you will still be well-prepared for getting maximum benefit from the February 8 natural landscaping seminar at UWM. "The Overall Plan" rarely springs forth crystal clear and perfect, but remember, this is natural planning, and it’s better to have it evolve. I re-examine like this each January, still make changes, and every year brings less work and more enjoyment. May this yard never be “finished”!

Fourth week: Zero in on plant communities. Try Curtis’ *Vegetation of Wisconsin*, Smiths’ *The Prairie Garden*, Rock and Sperka (above) and Reed’s *Wetland Plants and Plant Communities of Minnesota and Wisconsin*. Two field guides, Courtnay and Zimmerman’s *Wildflowers and Weeds* and Peterson and McKenney’s *Field Guide to Wildflowers*, will help in sorting out the Latin and common names. Make lists, especially a list of questions for seminar exhibitors and experts.

FEBRUARY/First Week: Start watching color changes in younger branches of red twig dogwood. It’s probably okay to prune a thick brown older stem or two now, but main “renewal” pruning should wait until just after flowering in early June.

Second Week: Collect and sterilize containers for planting. One source says about 100 seeds per flat. We’d appreciate hearing about any sources particularly good for Wisconsin wetlands. Country Wetlands of Muskego is hoping to publish a manual on native wetland communities and propagation...

Third Week: In wet, open areas, start looking for the first hervaceous native, skunk cabbage (Symplocarous foetidus). The flower emerges first, even if snow still covers the ground. You may need to keep checking if you want to photograph its yellow-purple-brown spathe arrangement.

Fourth Week: Prepare for spring garden tool care by filling a strong, wide-mouthed container with sand, probably 2/3 full. With a shovel, mix in 1/2 quart NEW motor oil. (Note: This is NOT a suitable place to recycle used oil.) Keep this container in your tool storage area. After gardening, dip clean forks, trowels, rakes, and hoes into the oily sand several times before hanging up. This mixture will last for years if most garden soil and leaves are removed before dipping. Your tools will last much longer, too.

Please address any questions to me, Barb Glassel (phone and address on back of newsletter). Any questions or comments are appreciated.

Please note these corrections and clarifications in regard to the last Wildcare column: 1) Indian dogbane (from October seed collecting) may be too aggressive in newly established prairies or prairie gardens. Forms large clones. 2) Lorrie recommends planting Common Witchhazel (Hamemelis virginiana), the only species native to Wisconsin. 3) Natural yards rarely need raking. Sometimes, partial redistribution is warranted, or (on lawns), mowing over denser leaves such as sugar maple. This year my yard had an extended wet spell--too risky for mowing leaves, even with a manual lawnmower. Mildew and molds developed rapidly; that's normal and desirable, but I decided to move some of the dense mats to the compost heap. 4) New England asters will do fine without mulch. I decided to try mulching those closer to public view until they are more established. Is mulching interfering with a natural process, or am I helping my yard to catch up with the richness it should have inherited from its pre-logging, pre-agriculture, pre-suburban self? I'm still deciding… 5) Buckthorn and honeysuckles often keep their leaves longer than other understory woody plants, making November a good time to mark them with paint or cloth ties for removal later in the winter. 6) No oak should be planted where it will ever have to be pruned...but if a former owner has put one near a driveway or other area where pruning seems necessary, please consider carefully. Oak wilt can be spread by improper pruning or tree-moving. Relocating traffic paths, even drives, is an alternative that should be given careful consideration.

Do you have project slides? Donald Vorpahl is looking for slides to help the beginning natural landscaper. If you have comparison shots that would be especially useful. Some brief notes on dates, locations, and goals met or set would be very helpful as well. Send to: N6143 Hilbert Road, Hilbert, WI 54129.

Satellite Wild Ones Welcome: If anyone is interested in forming a Wild Ones group in another location, please contact Deb Harwell (address on back of newsletter) for more information and for names of people in your area.

Helpful Courses: UW-Waukesha is offering Prairie Restoration, Insects and Insect Folklore of the Prairie, Prairie Restoration Field Trip with Robert Ahrenhoerster. Also offered is Wisconsin Spring Wildflowers with Nancy Dernahl. Call 414/521-5460 for details. Concordia University has a three-part landscaping series with Daniel Boehlke. Topics are Introducing Wildflowers to Wisconsin, Taming the Wildflower (For Your Garden), and Designing a Native Landscape. Concordia is at 12800 North Lake Shore Drive.

An excellent resource is still available: Managing Wisconsin's Roadsides can be purchased from Citizen's Natural Resources Association of Wisconsin, Inc., 1240 South 11th Avenue, Wausau, WI 54401 ($3). First published last March, this 32-page guide book has much information of use to people in other states.
November: A self-described "damn purist", Robert Ahrenhoerster, owner of Prairie Seed Source in North Lake, Wisconsin, was our guest speaker. His policy is to only sell seeds from southeastern Wisconsin. He believes that the chance of creating hybrid plants is greatly increased by putting seeds and plants from outside our local area next to our native plants. When the gene pool is changed, you risk changing not only factors such as color and height, but also unseen factors such as resistance to frost.

Mr. Ahrenhoerster believes that within 50 feet there may be different genotypes of the same plant, and therefore, to use the "Midwest region" as a basis for your genotype is too broad.

Society's need for a good land ethic was stressed. Our current practice of having millions of acres of mowed, fertilized, and sprayed lawn not only wastes resources, time, and pollutes the environment, but erases needed habitat for struggling wildlife.

By planting regional prairie plants and seeds we help the environment, but we must not delude ourselves by calling this a "prairie restoration." The best we can hope for is a partial restoration, for we are not restoring the insects, birds, animals, soil, and myriad other things that we are not even aware constitute a real prairie.

Taking out one component of an environment can drastically effect the results. For instance, bumblebees are the sole pollinators for creamy and bottled gentians. It is estimated that at one time there were 5 billion prairie dogs in the United States, as well as antelope, elk, and bison. These animals are all grass grazers--they must have had an enormous impact on the prairies.

Many tips for planting prairie seeds were given:

* Expend 90 - 98% of your effort on site preparation.
* Get rid of all existing plant covers.
* Work the top few inches of soil constantly all summer.
* Roll your site to create a firm seed bed (when you walk on the soil, you don't want to sink in any more than 1/2".)

The first year you will not see much above ground, as plants are establishing root systems. Set the lawnmower at its highest height and mow the site two or three times during the growing season. If there is enough material, you can burn the area. By the third year, it should start to look like a young prairie. Some plants, however, may take six to seven years to bloom. It takes a little longer on what was not historically prairie soil.

Regular burnings of prairie plants are recommended. Burning attacks alien species that are not adapted to fire. The black soil traps heat which warms the soil and starts the prairie seeds growing. Burned thatch releases fertilizers and nutrients to the soil. However, we were cautioned not to burn unless we know what we are doing and have enough help. Get a burning permit from your municipality. Wear brightly colored clothing. Use water tanks and flappers. Have only one flank of fire going at a time. You are responsible for people downwind of your smoke (watch out for poison ivy fumes). Two weeks after a burn, plants will be emerging.

We were advised to think "corridor" when planting our native species, not "block". Think in terms of creating corridors for wildlife from one existing cover to the next.

We were also cautioned to avoid crown vetch. It is very aggressive and next to impossible to get rid of once it takes hold.
A concluding thought: We have a national park system representing almost every other type of ecosystem except the prairie. If it was not for the rich prairie soil, we wouldn't be the nation we are.

**December:** Our festive holiday meeting was enjoyed by all who were able to attend and share the cookies, cider, and seed exchange.

Lorrie Otto gave a memorial talk on Bev Shapson, an early Wild Ones member. A video was also viewed.

**WINTER TWIG CHARACTERS**

Native tree twigs are from left: American elm, shagbark hickory, sugar maple.

DRAWING COURTESY MILWAUKEE PUBLIC MUSEUM.
Meetings are held on second Saturdays at 9:30 a.m. at Schlitz Audubon Center, 1111 East Brown Deer Road, Milwaukee, WI 53217 (414/352-2880) and repeated at 1:30 p.m. at Wehr Nature Center, 9701 West College Avenue, Franklin, WI 53132 (414/425-8550). Annual dues are $15.

January 11: Janice Stiefel will help us "Name that Plant!"

February 8: Natural Landscaping Seminar at UWM. Call 414/964-4990.

March 14: Attorney Bret Rappaport updates us on the Chicago lawsuit.

April 11: Randy Powers tells us about his growing native seed company.

May 9: Our annual spring wildflower dig date. Bring shovels and containers.

June 13: We'll meet at Robert Ahrenhoerster's home to see restored prairie. Pack a lunch - we'll eat outdoors.

July 11: Travel to Illinois to see Pat Armstrong's prairie and famous house. Again bring a lunch with you.

August 8: Lisa Geer will lead the "Help Me" tour.

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