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To burn or not to burn

Wisconsin's Department of Natural Resources wants to limit prairie burning in a effort to clean the air. The DNR contends that fires release harmful particles and compounds which could contribute to ozone pollution. They have proposed restricting burning of prairies, as well as grasslands at wildlife centers.

Fire is considered a necessary tool in restoring native plants and in keeping areas open for wildlife. If shrubs and trees are allowed to take over sites, many species of plants, animals, and insects would lose habitat according to environmental experts.

A *Milwaukee Journal* editorial said recently that, "When two good causes collide, it's time for compromise," and suggested that prairies and clean air can co-exist by allowing prairie burns and teaching homeowners to stop illegal burning in favor of composting.

Mushrooms: miner's canary?

Native Notes Newsletter says that in the last few years there have been several reports suggesting that fungus diversity has been on the decline worldwide. A recent study documenting decreases in mushrooms was cited, as well as evidence that there is a "negative correlation between the abundance and diversity of fungi and air pollution, specifically levels of atmospheric nitrogen, sulfur, and ozone."

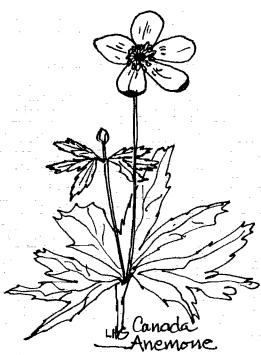
The article goes on to say, "Fungi are critically important to forests. The normal decomposition of all organic forest material depends on the presence of fungi... Fungi covers the roots of most forest trees extending their filaments from the living cells of roots to spaces between soil particles--giving fungi a supply of carbohydrates and the tree water and minerals. " Loss of mushrooms may warn of forest decline.

Volunteers needed to study prairie plants and insects

The Outside Story

As the result of the need expressed by many involved in prairie preservation for specific information about plant/invertebrate relationships, Andy Larson of Riveredge Nature Center is beginning a new study. "Data obtained from these efforts will be published annually and hopefully will expand our fundamental knowledge of the prairie community as well as serve as a basis for future studies. In addition, efforts will serve to focus the attention of the public on 'bugs,'" Larson says.

He hopes to carry out his survey using volunteers who will gather data by observing their own natural landscaping or by checking native or restored prairies.



To maximize initial efforts, attention will be focused on a limited number of plant species which represent different plant families. A large amount of information can be obtained in a short time by using this method. This is not to preclude anyone from providing data on other species, however. The common names of species to be observed are:

Prairie dropseed, big bluestem, spiderwort, Indian grass, Canada wild rye, pasque flower, prairie smoke, purple prairie clover, lupine, leadplant, Canada ticktrefoil, downy gentian, rattlesnake master, Sullivan'smilkweed, butterfly weed, hoary puccoon, wild bergamot, Culver'sroot, cupplant, prairie dock, blazing star, wild quinine, pale

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 All about the compass plant.

Milkweed monitors wanted

Have you every wondered what effects air pollution might be having on forest trees and wildflowers? The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources is currently studying the potential effects of air pollution on sugar maples, white pine, aspen and common milkweed. Why common milkweed? Common milkweed is a native with wide-spread distribution, is susceptible to ozone injury at relatively low ozone concentrations, is important in the feeding cycle of monarch butterflies and symptoms of air pollution injury seen in the wild can be reproduced in the laboratory.

Surveys by DNR staff have found ozone injury to common milkweed is most prevalent in southeast Wisconsin where ozone pollution is a serious problem. But the problem is not limited to the southeast. Plants as far north as Door, Vilas, and Bayfield counties have also shown injury.

Understanding the impact of air pollution on our native plants is important. The DNR is seeking volunteers to assist in studying ozone injury on milkweed. For information contact Ed Jepsen, Bureau of Air Management, AM/10, DNR, P.O. Box 7921, Madison, WI 53707-7921, 608/266-3538. (Article by Ed Jepsen, Summer 1992, Environmental Education in Wisconsin.)



New childrens' book teaches natural landscaping ideas

Constance Perenyi has written a delightful book, *Growing Wild*, explaining to children and adults the benefits of inviting wildlife into our yards. Colorfully illustrated with cut and torn paper collages, the book contains excellent resource information. Available from Beyond Words Publishing, Inc., (Phone 1-800/284-WORD)

Green Bay yard with native landscaping is featured in annual benefit garden tour

Jim Jerzak's family is busy preparing 2,500 handouts to give to visitors expected for this year's Green Bay Botanical Garden Walk. The family's native landscaping project was begun four years ago on a city lot. The following is from the information each guest will receive:

"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 back to its natural state.' - National Wildlife Federation

We consider natural landscaping to be an approach involving plant materials native to the region used in ways which simulate relationships found in nature. As such, landscaping tends to support diverse, indigeneus insect, animal, and bird life. An environment with few species suffers greatly if conditions change and cause the species to decline. For example, consider the devastation to city landscapes when Dutch elm disease wiped out an entire monoculture. Plants that are regional natives survive without fertilizer, pruning, or mowing. The result is a self-sustaining, environmentally healthy landscape which we think is also nice to look at.

Rather than a front-yard monoculture of bluegrass, some foundation plantings, and an occasional robin grubbing for worms; we see birds eating berries of cockspur hawthorn and nesting in the protection of the thorns. Goldfinches love the purple coneflower seeds; chickadees eat gray dogwood berries as fast as the bush produces them. Monarch butterflies like prairie flowers, while hummingbirds prefer wild columbine. Look closely and you might see beneficial insects such as ladybugs.

We started out with only the bigger trees ("upper story") and sandy soil. The first step was soil preparation - woodland plants do best in rich humus. In the summer of 1987 we put a layer of leaf mold over the planned natural area and covered it with 12 inches of finely shredded hardwood bark to create a rich, woodland soil.

Next, the "middle story" of native shrubs and shorter trees were planted. Look for cockspur hawthorne (my favorite), American hop hornbeam, arrowwood viburnum, gray and red-osier dogwood, snowberry, fragrant sumac, and American hazelwood.

In the spring of 1988 we started the "understory." The general principles followed were: 1) Put shade-loving plants in the shade and sun-loving plants in the sun; 2) Try to simulate natural relationships in arranging plants. Groundcovers selected were wild ginger and wild violet for shade and wild strawberry for sun. We then put "accents" in groups of three to five as naturally as we could throughout the areas. What you see is the result of plants finding their nitches. We used rootstock from Wisconsin nurseries so as not to disturb wild areas. Weeds (which are defined as non-natives) are pulled by hand. We recommend a lawn border to surround the natural areas, particularly in the city. Our reward is four-season beauty: woodland blooms in the spring; prairie forbs in summer; fall color in asters and grasses; and in winter the striking designs of snow-covered plants."

continued from page 1

purple coneflower, New England aster, stiff goldenrod, and grey-headed coneflower.

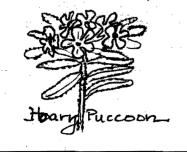
Because of the difficulty of identifying all species found on a plant, some observers may want to start by recording the activity of a few invertebrates or may study only pollinators, tissue feeders, for example.

For procedures and forms, send SASE to: Andy Larson, Riveredge Nature Center, Newburg, WI 53060.

Prairie Days at Weir

Experience a journey back to the tailgrass at Weir Nature Center on Friday, July 24 and Saturday, July 25. This event will feature crafts, hikes, music, and information about life on the prairie in the 1800's. Visit a "pioneer village" and "trading post" Enjoy food from the "chuck wagon". Learn about prairies before and after the plow, as well as restoration, preservation and natural landscaping. Spend a day in the past to help contemplate the future of prairie.

Join the nature center staff and volunteers for a fundraising event and old-fashioned social on Friday evening from 7:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. There will be an evening hike, down homemusic, and dessert. Saturday's activities are from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Call 414/425-8550 for more information about admission prices.



Lorrie's Notes...

All of the energetic, idealistic men who have been running in the presidential primaries have been so savaged by the media that voters are disheartened with the whole system. People threaten not to vote or plan to support the candidate who admits he has never heard of the Rio Earth Summit, and thinks jobs are more important than the little "gray" owl. And again the public is prisoner of the press which would have us believe that the choice concerning old-growth forests is between 30,000 jobs for West Coast lumbermen or a few spotted owls for Audubon elitists.

No news reporter explains that the spotted owl is only the symbol of the mindboggling diversity of interdependent life in the ancient forest--of which only 5% is left on our federal lands. Sometimes we hear about the marbled murrelet, the fisher, the salmon, and other endangered animals with spinal columns, but nothing is said about invertebrates which are functionally even more important in the forest ecosystem. For example, a recent study of two adjacent Oregon forests showed one out of four insects in an old-growth stand was a predator or parasite. In the managed forest, only one out of 1,000 insects was a predator or parasite--leaving such an inbalance that spraying pesticides is necessary. There were 16 species of arthropods, in that forest as comparied with 61 in the ancient forest. Another startling discovery was that canopy lichens in the old forest are capable of fixing nitrogen!

The tiny, red-backed vole is part of the tight circle of interdependance in the spotted owl's life. The vole eats truffles; the truffle depends on the vole's feces for dispersal of its spores and on the mycorrhizal tree host for energy; the tree requires mycorrhizal fungi for uptake of nutrients. Finally, the tree provides rotten wood needed by the vole for cover from the owl which eats it. (Old-growth forest expert, Chris Maser has collected observations in a book about this.) As scientists discover more about ancient forests, most people shake their heads in wonderment, "Only a God could have made this."

President Bush has refused to sign the biodiversity treaty which protects plants and animals. "Jobs are more important than the environment," Bush said off-hand as he boarded his helicopter. Secretary of the Interior Manuel Lujan is quoted as saying at a news conference, "Owls die every day." His latest suggestion is to trap spotted owls and transport them to other forests so that the coastal old-growth can be clear-cut. Obviously, unlike Noah, he has not been commanded to "save all that creepth and crawleth." - Lorrie Otto

Wisconsin Department of Transporation to inventory roadside vegetation

In order to develop a plan for establishing, preserving, and maintaining natural roadsides, the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WISDOT) is currently embarking on a program to inventory vegetation along state trunk highways. Each year 100-mile segments will be studied. Since there are 12,000 miles of state highways--this will be a lengthy process.

WISDOT is asking individuals or organizations who have an interest in native roadside plants for help. If you have gathered information or know someone who has, please contact: Richard Stark, WISDOT, P.O. Box 7916, Madison, WI 53707.

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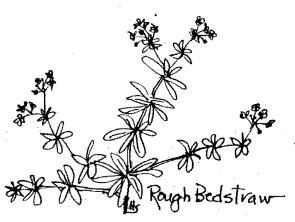
Northern Illinois group holds second meeting

The Northern Illinois Wild Ones chapter met at the College of Du Page for their May meeting. Board members and committee volunteers were introduced. Secretary Jean Lyall reported that 80 were in attendance at the first meeting. Karen DiGuilio gave the treasurer's report. Co-chair Pat Armstrong told the group that 55 answered the survey of landscaping interests.

Vicki Nowicki, co-chair, said that 15 people came to Virginia Umberger's and eight to Wendy Paulsen's on field trips this past month. She read the list of upcoming summer activities. Also noted was an article in the *Chicago Sun-Times* by Caroline Osrick on Mother's Day which featured the club. Pat showed brochures which were for sale from the McHenry Wildlife Defenders, such as "Planting Your Natural Yard."

Speaker for the evening was landscape architect Ron Nowicki whose topic was "How does one design a native landscape?" He used props, plat surveys, and other visuals to demonstrate the ongoing process. Nowicki emphasized that one should always start with a plan.

The next meeting will take place on September 17. - Jean Lyall



Here are tips for prairie seeding large areas

Mariette Nowak of Wehr Nature Center suggests the following steps if you have one or more acres to seed.

1. Turn over the soil at least 3 times in 3 - 6 week intervals to eliminate weeds. The first tilling can be deep plowing and the following ones should be shallow disking to destroy germinating plants, but allowing the development of a firm seed bed essential to prairie growth. Sometimes deep plowing is done a winter or even a year in advance of seeding.

Research at Milwaukee's Boerner Botanical Gardens has shown that, at least in SE Wisconsin, deep plowing, disking, and cultivation are necessary to rid the seedbed of deep-rooted perennials, which offer the most competition to prairie species. This is especially true when planting in hayfields or pastures containing alfalfa, timothy, and other agricultural plants.

2. Seed the area in late spring or late fall immediately after the last disking. Ideally, 20 pounds of forb seed and 10 pounds of prairie grass seed per acre is recommended, although a minimum of 14 pounds of forb seed and seven pounds of prairie grass seed per acre has been used successfully. Ineither case, add 1 1/2 pounds of annual rye grass seed as cover. When applying seed, mix 3 parts sand to 1 part seed for easy, even distribution.

Seeding can be done by machines or by hand. Areas of a few acres or less can be easily sown by hand broadcasting. Either rake or drag and roll the seed into close contact with the soil. Areas too large to seed by hand can be sown by a seeder similar to a Nisbet drill.

3. Mulching may be very helpful as

a protection against drying and erosion.

4. In the first growing season and possibly the beginning of the second year, reduce the growth of weeds by clipping, mowing, or removing. A rotary mower can be used 2 or 3 times the first year and perhaps 1 to 2 times the second, but it must be set high to avoid cutting too many tips.

5. If permission from authorities can be obtained, reduce competition from weeds and woody invaders by the use of fire after the second growing season and every 2 to 3 years thereafter. The best time to burn is just before new top growth appears, about April 1 - 10. If fire can't be used, mow with a rotary mower late each fall or early spring, preferably the latter.

For more information, send 25 cents and a SESA for "Planting a Prairie" handout to: Wehr Nature Center, 5879 South 92nd St., Hales Corners, WI 53130 (414/425-8550)

Indian Prairie needs seed collectors

Glendale's Indian Prairie project leaders are looking for people who can help gather seeds. The prairie consists of a few acres of open land in the Milwaukee River Parkway at the site of a former creek and close to the area mentioned by Wisconsin's first scholar, Increase Lapham, as the place where Indian settlements occurred over a period of thousands of years.

Participants will gain valuable knowledge of prairie restoration techniques. Call Rochelle Whiteman (414/351-2291), if interested.

The Inside Story

COMPASS PLANT

(Silphium laciniatum) Composite or Daisy Family

OTHER NAMES: Pilot Plant, Pilot Weed, Turpentine Weed, Polar Plant, and Rosin Weed.

DESCRIPTION: Three to twelve foot tall plant with three inch wide yellow ray and disk flowers enclosed by large, hairy-edged, green bracts. The leaves are twelve to eighteen inches long, alternate, rough, deeply divided, with edges oriented in a north-south direction, unstalked or short-stalked.

HABITAT: Prairies

Compiled by JANICE STIEFEL

FLOWERING: July-Sept.

COMMENTS: Many a pioneer or traveler used the Compass Plant to find their way across the prairies. The large yellow flowers were like a signpost, easily spotted in the distance. It seems to be preferred by cattle, so most grazed prairies are devoid of this member of the Silphium genus. The plant takes four to five years to mature and flower; in a clay soil, it can take up to eight years. In order for it to survive dry spells without wilting, the roots can penetrate fourteen to eighteen feet into the ground.

When in bloom, the Compass Plant forms a gummy material along the upper third of the main stem. This resinous material (hence, the name Rosin Weed) was used by American Indians as chewing gum. Pioneer children on their way to and from country school also took advantage of this free prairie chewing gum. The Omaha and Ponca Indians avoided camping wherever the plant grew abundantly because they believed that lightning was prevalent in such a place.

In his poem, Evangeline (Chapter IV), Henry Wadsworth Longfellow wrote:

"Look at this vigorous plant that lifts its head from the meadow, See how its leaves are turned to the north, as true as a magnet; This is the compass flower, that the finger of God has planted Here in the houseless wild, to direct the traveler's journey Over the sea-like, pathless, limitless waste of the desert."

MEDICINAL USE: Early settlers used it internally to treat chronic rheumatism, swollen glands, and glandular enlargements. The dried leaves were used as a diuretic, expectorant, emetic, and antispasmodic. It was valued for curing dry, obstinate coughs, and for treating intermittent fevers. The Dakota Indians used it as a tonic and wormer for their horses. An unspecified species of Silphium was used by the Greek and by traders to cleanse teeth and sweeten breath.

NAME ORIGIN: The **Common Name** refers to the north-south orientation of the leaves. The **Genus Name**, Silphium (Sill'fi-um), is a Greek name for some resinous plants. The **Species Name**, laciniatum (la-sin-i-a'tum), means "cut into narrow, almost fringe-like segments."

AUTHOR'S NOTE: This is a most impressive plant, however, I have yet to have one bloom in our meadow. At least one of our several Compass Plant "clumps" should be approaching the age of blooming. I have found that it takes a lot of patience waiting for some of the native plants to flower - and I don't always have it. Another year to wait seems like an eternity.

With the rapid loss of prairie habitat, the day may come when the Compass Plant is only found on private land held by little people like you and me. Fortunately, some environmental groups have been able to obtain portions of our prairie remnants to be held for future generations to observe and study. Researchers believe that one out of every ten plants contain compounds with ingredients that could treat cancer, AIDS, or future diseases still unknown to us. Yet, according to a recent survey of botanists, more than 250 plant species in the U.S. alone face "a real risk of extinction" within the next five years. That number is but a small fraction of expected worldwide extinctions in the same period. Common sense tells us that the faster we extinguish other life forms, the more we threaten our own.

> © 1992 Janice Stiefel Plymouth, Wisconsin





JULY/First Week: The wild strawberries from a prairie may spread to an adjoining lawn, and the charming effect makes the lawn more "natural". Despite mowing, my strawberries figured out how to really hug the ground and still flower and fruit. Robins desert the neighbor's feeders in favor of such treats, but I still manage to get a few pints for myself in June. Prairies often yield bonuses like this, and if you have an idea to share, please contact the editor or me.

Time to collect seed from these prairie plants: New Jersey tea (*Ceanothus ovatus*); yellow pimpernel (*Taenidia integerrima*); spiderwort (*Tradescantia ohiensis*); shooting star (*Dodecatheon meadia*); and wild garlic (*Allium canadense*). In moist areas, look for seeds of angelica (*Angelica archangelica*).

Second Week: There will be little maintenance in wild yards in July and August. Remember to check watering and weeding in newly-planted areas. Lots of good reasons to get outside: pick wild raspberries and currants, take photos, gather sweetgrass for a basket, inspect the water level in cup plant, treat visitors to a ferny or tallgrass tour. Newly seeded prairies: time for second mowing, to 6" again, by hand or hay mower. Small prairie plants won't be over 6", and weeds will be kept from going to seed. Both will provide erosion control, and eventually the undesirables will just be gone...

Third Week: Collect seed from frostweed (*Helianthemum canadense*); downy wood mint (*Blephilia ciliata*); and downy phlox (*Phlox pilosa*). . .Herb Robert (*Geranium robertianum*) is a favorite woodland wildflower. This pink annual propels its seed like its cousin, the cranesbill, so it is easier to transplant seedling volunteers than to gather seed. Low, fernlike, it likes damp woods and rocky shores. Call me if you'd like some from my paths.

Fourth Week: Collect seed from alum root (Heuchera richardsonii).

AUGUST/First Week: Newly-seeded prairies: Third and final mowing, to 6" again. Even if some seedheads of desirable plants get cut off, the plants' energies will be channeled into strengthening stems, roots and leaves, instead of flower production. . .Seed collecting excursions could include Canada anemone (Anemone canadensis); large-flowered beardtongue (Penstemon grandiflorus); northern bedstraw (Galium boreale); black-eyed Susan (Rudbeckia hirta); gray-headed coneflower (Ratibida pinnata); golden Alexanders (Zizia aptera); lead plant (Amorpha canescens); tall meadowrue (Thalictrum dasycarpum); oxeye (Heliopsis helianthoides); and yarrow or milfoil (Achillea millefolium). Seed of hoary puccoon (Lithospermum canescens), is easily lost; plant in flats immediately.

Second Week: Summer reading suggestions-- Water Gardening Basics by William C. Uber, Butterfly Gardening: Creating Summer Magic in Your Garden by the Xerces Society, and A Hummingbird in My House by Arnette Heidcamp.

Third Week: Gather wild bergamot (Monarda fistulosa) seeds and prairie dropseed (Sporobolus heterolepis); wild (white) indigo (Baptisia leucantha); little bluestem (Andropogon scoparius); nodding wild onion (Allium cernuum); purple and white prairie clover (Petalostemon purpureum and P. candidum); evening-primrose (Oenothera biennis); and thimbleweed (Anemone virginiana).

Fourth Week: Collect seed from rock or stiff sandwort (Arenaria stricta). . . Store your seeds in an airy, dark place. Harold Rock's Prairie Propagation Handbook is excellent and inexpensive.

-- Barb Glassel

-rerb-Robert Geranium_Robertianum_

blue eyed grass

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The Outside Story is published bimonthly by Wild Ones - Natural Landscapers, Ltd. Material for newsletters should be submitted by the first of the month preceeding the next publication date to: Carol Chew, 8920 North Lake Drive, Bayside, WI 53217. Send change of address to: Jean Palm, 625 Orchard Street, West Bend, WI 53095. Dues are \$15 annually. Back issues of newsletters are \$1 each, available from: Deb Harwell, 8712 North Spruce Road, River Hills, WI 53217.



"Beat the bulldozer" dig and field trip highlighted

May: Our annual dig took us to a landfill site to save beautiful woodland wildflowers. As we stepped into the woods a carpet of white false rue anemone took our breathe away. Wild geraniums, May apples, trilliums, Jack-in-the-pulpit, tooth wart, spring beauty, trout lilies, and more were ours for the digging. We dug until our strength gave out and our cars were full!

The thought of this lovely woods and all its plant and animal treasures being destroyed is extremely sad. Through our efforts, some tiny bits of the beauty will live on.

June: A grand get-together was held on our June field trip. The Wisconsin Wild Ones took a bus to Naperville where we met our Illinois Wild Ones group at Pat Armstrong's home for a yard tour.

Pat began by showing us buffalo grass which she has used in small areas where she wanted low vegetation. This is a warm season, drought-resistant grass which is dormant in cool weather. Side oats gramma and blue gramma were mixed in with buffalo grass. Her lime and clay soil was plowed and seeded in October 1983, with seed germination the following spring. Of the 180 seeds introduced, 150 varieties took hold. The first year, the yard was totally covered with Queen Anne's lace, and red clover, which have since disappeared. Pat believes planting from seed provides better genetic diversity and variety. She selected her plants to fit the following criteria: 1) lime lovers or lime tolerant; 2) good fall color (she has five sumac species); 3) matching plants to the environment. As an example, aromatic aster, which loves limestone, has spread prolifically. In 1982, Pat gathered five acorns from a Chinquepin oak tree. The following year, she had three seedlings each about a foot high which she planted in her prairie area. These oaks like limestone and have taken hold and are doing very well.

Switch grass grows by one side of the house. Pat's theory is that wind blew most of the other seeds away from this area, but the weight of the heavier switch grass seeds kept them in place.

Every spring Pat obtains a state burning permit from the Environmental Protection Agency. The grass around the house is cut short in November to provide a fire break for the spring burn.

Another side of the yard features a woodland area. Here 100 woodland species were seeded, 80 of which survived. These were planted under a large bur oak tree which was once in quite poor condition. After four inches of woodchips were applied all around the tree, it has revived and looks very healthy.

Pat was a very gracious hostess who invited us into her wonderful passive solar home for lemonade and crackers with dandelion jam! Pat designed the home herself and calls it The Prairie Sun. Roof and walls are heavily insulated and thick shutters can be closed to cover windows. An evergreen wind break shields the north side. Everything reflects Pat's belief that a house should grow from its surroundings of prairie and limestone colors. - Kristin Summerfield

Calendar

Milwaukee and Weir Nature Center Chapters: Saturday, July 11 - Field trip to Robert Ahrenhoister's. Meet at I-43 & Brown Deer Rd. Park & Ride at 9:30 a.m. or I-94 & 84th St. Park & Ride at !0 a.m.

Saturday, August 8-Help Me Day with Landscape Architect Lisa Geer. Plant sale afterwards with Dan Boehlke. Meet at I-43 & Brown Deer Rd. Park & Ride at 9:30 a.m. Weir group will meet at Nature Center at 1:30 p.m. Northern Illinois Chapter: Saturday, July 11 at 10 a.m.- "New American Landscape," informal meeting at the Nowicki's home (708/852-5263) Bring lunch, if desired.

Sunday, July 19 at 1:00 p.m. - Visit to Wilma McCallister (312/775-00816) to experience a prairie garden designed on a computer by a blind woman.

Saturday, August 1 at 8:30 a.m. - Visit to Midwest Groundcovers, Route 25, north of St. Charles. Green Bay Chapter: Wednesday, July 8 at 7:00 p.m. - Help Me Day. Call 414/ 494-7811 for information.

Tuesday, July 14, 10 a.m. at 8 p.m.-Green Bay Botanical Garden Walk featuring a naturally landscaped yard.

Wednesday, August 12 at 7 p.m.- Naturalist-guided tour of Barkhausen Preserve.

Drawings in this issue by Lucy Schumann

wild ones

The Outside Story

newsletter for natural landscapers.

Non-profit Organization U.S. Postage P A 1 D Hilwaukee, Wisconsin-Permit No. 4016

