

The Outside Story

newsletter for natural landscapers

Vol. 7 No. 1

January - February 1994

One Dollar

February Seminar features more topics and expanded displays

If you haven't read her book yet, Sally Wasowski's best-seller, *Requiem for a Lawnmower* is sure to keep you entertained. Sally and her husband, Andy, are Wild Ones' Julie Marks Speakers at the 14th Natural Landscaping Seminar at UWM on February 12.

Sally, a landscape designer and past president of the Native Plant Society of Texas, is recognized as one of the country's leading authorities on landscaping with native plants. The Wasowskis are known for their entertaining presentations featuring audience participation. You'll have to be there to see how they do it!

Four different theme tracks will be featured at this year's conference. A series of informative lectures will give THE BASICS for those starting in native landscaping. Other sessions will help those involved in SCHOOL SITE ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING or those interested in learning about dealing with community WEED ORDINANCES. Due to popular demand, new workshops on ATTRACTING WILDLIFE have been added.

During the entire day, a greatly expanded ENVIRONMENTAL FAIR

will bring together all of the major native plant nurseries and seed sources from Minnesota, Iowa, Wisconsin, and Illinois. Bring your questions about wetlands, woodlands, and prairies. We'll have landscape designers showing their work and representatives of native plant and natural areas preservation groups available to provide their expertise.

Don't miss the special Arbor Day/Earth Day prices on native trees, shrubs, vines, and wildflowers offered for conservation plantings of any size by two county Land Conservation Departments. Remember your local schools, Scout groups, or your own yard when you see these.



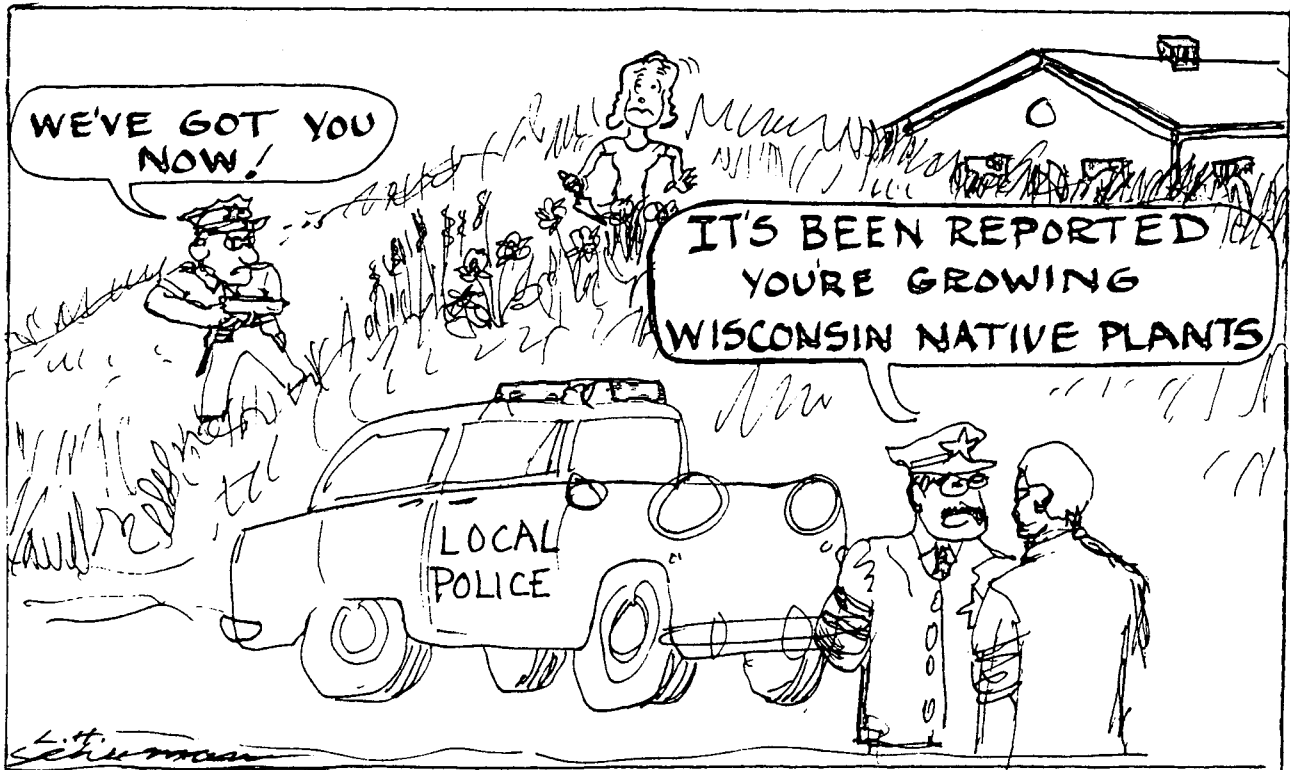
Natural Landscaping Seminar Speakers

UWM Union, 2200 East Kenwood Boulevard, Milwaukee
Saturday, February 12, 1994 - 7:45 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

- "Requiem for a Lawnmower" - Authors Sally & Andy Wasowski
- "Plant Propagation Techniques" - David Kopitzke, Wisconsin DNR Bureau of Endangered Resources
- "Growing Woodland Wildflowers" - Dan Boehlke, Woodland Gardens Wild Plant Nursery
- "How WILD is Your School Site?" - Dr. Dennis Yocker, Wisconsin Environmental Education Coordinator
- "Creating Butterfly Gardens" - Entomologist Susan Borkin, Milwaukee Public Museum
- "Looking at Home Landscapes" - Landscape Designer Don Vorpahl
- "Natural Front Yards in the Milwaukee Area" - Naturalist-teacher Lorrie Otto
- "Designing My Woodland Yard" - Lucy Schumann, Artist and past Vice-President of Wild Ones - Natural Landscapers
- "Landscape Ordinances: Avoiding Problems" - Attorney Bret Rappaport
- "Front Yard Prairies" - Neil Diboll, Prairie Nursery
- "Creating a Wildlife Habitat in Your Yard" - Dan Panetti, Owner of Wild Bird

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Weed Ordinance Workshop date set for March 25

Attorney Bret Rappaport of Chicago will be the key speaker at a day-long workshop designed for community-decision makers who are involved with the implementation of local weed ordinances. Rappaport is an experienced, colorful, and entertaining speaker who has written extensively on the history of lawn ordinances.

The event is being organized by the Native Plant Preservation Coalition of Wisconsin and will be held at the North Shore Library at 6800 North Port Washington Road, Milwaukee. The workshop was originally scheduled for February but is being moved to allow planners more time to reach interested municipal officials and others. Please call 414/351-2291 or 414/351-0644 if you know of individuals who wish to attend.

Saving dead wood will put life in your yard

"For birds and small mammals, snags (dead trees) and stumps are ecological gold. More than 150 species of creatures nest in them and feed on their insect tenants. Included are nuthatches, woodpeckers, squirrels, raccoons, bluebirds, owls, chickadees, wood ducks, and wrens.

Saving snags and stumps is crucial to kicking our pesticide habit and solving the dilemma of pesticide resistance.

Top off--don't chop down--snags 12 inches or more in diameter and away from the house. The thicker the better. Remember to check for nests and dens first. Big dead logs and underbrush away from the house are also desirable.

Mosquitoes will disappear from your yard as elegant, snag-nesting swallows, swifts, and purple martins sweep through the air.

Huge great-granddaddy den trees can be homes for peregrine falcons, barn owls, and ivory-billed woodpeckers." - from PETA Factsheet #11

WHITE PINE

(Pinus strobus)
Pine Family

Other Names: Weymouth Pine, Soft Pine, Deal Pine, Northern White Pine, Spruce Pine.

Habitat: In woods, often forming dense forests.

Description: This is a tall tree with horizontal large limbs and relatively few of them. The needles are 2 to 4 in. long, slender, and occurring 5 to the bundle. The cones are 3 to 10 in. long, tapering, thornless, and slender. The bark is not scaly as in other pines but dark with deep furrows. It can be 2 to 3 ft. in diameter. **Height:** 80 to 110 ft.

Comments: White Pine is one of the most important and tallest timber trees in the northeast. It has been so extensively lumbered that few virgin trees, which once grew to heights of 200 to 220 ft., remain. It is our only 5-needled pine. The wood is light, soft, straight-grained, and generally not as resinous as other pines. For house construction it has great value.

Two enemies that plague this majestic tree are White Pine Blister Rust, a fungus attacking the inner bark; and White Pine Weevil, an insect that kills the topmost shoot, deforming the tree and limiting its value.

It is not usually realized how much the American Indians formerly depended on tree bark for food. Early explorers often reported extensive areas where the bark had been peeled from all the large trees. The eastern Indians favored the barks from the pine family, especially that from the White Pine, although the inner bark of other trees, such as Black Birch and Slippery Elm, were also relished.

It was a tree important in the development of the thirteen colonies when the giant trees were cut into masts for the British Navy. It is the state tree of Maine, where it was first seen in 1605.

Medicinal Use: Dried White Pine bark is still a valuable ingredient in cough medicines. It is an official drug of the U.S. Pharmacopoeia, the National Formulary and the U.S. Dispensatory. Its medicinal properties are expectorant and diuretic. It is most often prescribed



in the title role of Compound White Pine Syrup, or as the doctor would write it on your prescription, Syrupus Pini Albae Compositus. This mixture contains six other botanicals. If you want to make this remedy at home, there is a complete recipe at the National Formulary. Euell Gibbons published a much simpler recipe from an old herbalist in Indiana. Put 1/2 cup of coarsely ground White Pine bark in a jar and cover it with 2/3 cup of boiling water. When cool add 1/2 cup whiskey, seal the jar, and let it soak overnight, shaking the jar occasionally. Next day, strain it, and to the liquid add 1 cup honey. Mix until the liquid is uniform throughout, and it is ready to use. If kept in a capped or corked bottle, this cough syrup will keep indefinitely without spoiling. A dose is 1 tablespoon for adults and 1 teaspoon for children, as needed.

Needles of the White Pine are very high in Vitamins A and C. Had those old-timers, who used to suffer from scurvy every winter when fresh vegetables were unavailable, used an infusion of White Pine needles instead of tea or coffee, they would never have been touched by scurvy.

Name Origin: The name of Weymouth Pine, common in Europe, refers to Lord Weymouth who planted numbers of the trees shortly after their introduction in 1705. The **Genus Name**, Pinus (Py'nus) is the old Latin name for the pine. The **Species Name**, strobus (strow'bus), is an ancient name for some incense-bearing tree.

Author's Note: The nymph of the Dogday Harvestfly (Tibicen canicularis), or Cicada, feeds on the root juices of pines. Nymphs take up to three years before maturing. They soon disappear from mixed forests if pines are removed. The Periodical Cicadas (Magicicada spp.) which feeds on various tree roots, can take from 13 to 17 years to complete development.

If you ever find yourself in the midst of a White Pine forest, take time to observe the aura of peace and quiet that permeates the surroundings. Look closely as you walk — usually this habitat supports many unusual species of fungi, lichens and mosses.

© 1993 Janice Stiefel

Janice was selected winner of two best-of-show photo awards at the Milwaukee Public Museum Mushroom Fair. She showed some of her excellent, extensive collection at Milwaukee Wild Ones' December meeting. She and her husband, John, are currently planning restoration of recently acquired wetlands in Door County.



Winter Sad - Lady's Slipper

Imagine your fall yard a field of blue-violet bottle gentians

Bottle gentian (*Gentiana andrewsii*) is a lovely, blue-violet perennial which is native to Wisconsin's wet-mesic prairies and which will also thrive in ordinary garden soil. It grows one to two feet high and blooms from September through October. Bottle gentian, late blooming heath asters, New England asters and big blue stem are richly colorful companions which can resist fall nighttime temperatures as low as twelve degrees Fahrenheit.

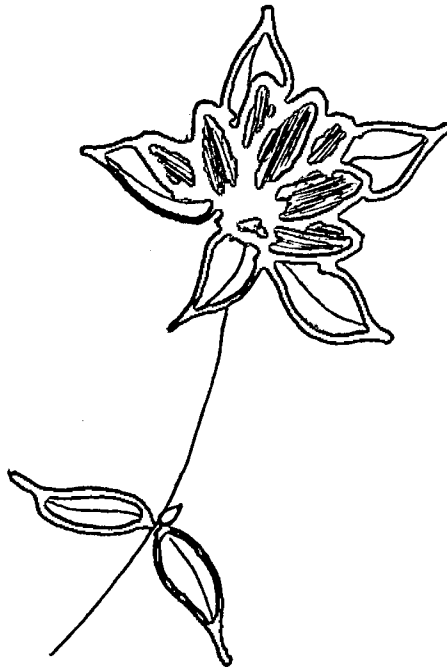
Bottle gentian does best in soils which are distinguished by a balanced supply of moisture tending to be a little on the wet side (watch to see if the ground puddles after a rain.)

Propagation by Plant Division: Separating mature plants is the easiest way to propagate bottle gentian. This is more successful if done in the fall. *Never* dig native plants in the wild unless they are in danger of being destroyed by a developer and you have permission of the owner. Perhaps you have access to nursery propagated bottle gentian, or a friend with an established prairie garden is willing to share stock.

Cut apart a fully developed plant so each portion has several roots and a bud from the crown. Keep as much soil around the roots as possible, plant in an appropriate area, and water thoroughly. Some sources suggest trimming small portions of the root system to encourage growth.

Establish a colony by setting plants 12 inches apart. Under the right conditions, it will thrive and reseed the area. Imagine a beautiful mass of bottle gentian showing off its blue-violet flower cluster in the fall sunlight!

Direct Seed Sowing: It takes patience and time to propagate the plant from seed, but the challenge and results will be gratifying. Again, be sure to have permission to gather seeds. In southeast Wisconsin, October through November is the time when the top cap of the flower will open to expose ripe seeds. Shake seeds loose from flower head into an envelope and sow at once.



Select a site that is in full sun at least half the day. Cast seeds directly onto the soil and press in. Cover the area with leaf mulch until spring. In southeast Wisconsin bottle gentian sprouts in April. At the first sign of sprouting seedlings remove the mulch. Be sure to mist every day and lightly cover with a clear, polyethylene sheet so young plants will not dry out. The plants will be very small the first year.

Raised Nursery Bed Method: Babette Kis who has done years of research on seed germination has found great success germinating bottle gentian outdoors. She recommends equal parts of unsterilized peat moss, perlite, topsoil and vermiculite with a pH of 6.5 to 7.5. A raised bed filled with rich garden loam will also encourage growth. Press seeds into soil and cover with leaves to winter over.

At the first sight of seedlings remove mulch cover. Leave in the bed for two years. As in the other method, be sure to keep soil moist. Cloche plants with a polyethylene sheet. Bottle gentian propagated from seed will bloom the third year, and the bed will be full of flower heads by the seventh year. Imagine how gratifying that will be!

Sources consulted for this article you'll want to check are: *The New Seedstarters Handbook* by Nancy Bubel; *Vegetation of Wisconsin* by John T. Curtis; "Germination of Prairie Plants under Ambient and Controlled Conditions" by Babette Kis in *The Michigan Botanist*, Vol. 23; *Growing and Propagating Wild Flowers* by Harry R. Phillips; *Growing Wildflowers* by Marie Sperka; *The Prairie Garden* by Robert Smith with Beatrice S. Smith; and *Prairie Propagation Handbook* by Harold W. Rock.

Special thanks to Babette Kis for her advice. Be sure to look for her workshop at the February Natural Landscaping Seminar. - Dorothy Boyer

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Books on growing natives

Schlitz Audubon Nature Center has the following books available. Shop in person or call Peg Cadigan (414/352-2880) for their large selection of nature books or have them special order hard-to-find editions.

The Wildflower Gardener's Guide by Henry W. Art (Garden Way, \$11.95) Two editions in this series cover the upper Midwest. One features prairie plants and the other wildflowers of the Northeast, including the Great Lakes region. Each individual plant description gives excellent propagation techniques. A separate section on wildflower propagation gives extensive information.

Wetland Planting Guide for the Northeastern United States: Plants for Wetland Creation, Restoration, and Enhancement by Gwendolyn A. Thunhorst (Environmental Concern, Inc., \$19.95) A new guide for those damp Mequon lots which want to re-emerge as wetlands!

Growing & Propagating Showy Native Woody Plants by Richard E. Bir (The University of North Carolina Press, \$18.95) There's not much available if you want suggestions for replacing your buckthorn. This book fills a needed niche and covers native shrubs in all of the U.S. east of the Mississippi. The plant section has individual color photos of each species described.

The New Seed-Starters Handbook by Nancy Bubel (Rodale, \$14.95) Recommended by a horticulturist as a sure-fire explanation of all aspects of seeding and site preparation. Has section on growing wildflowers from seed, an excellent explanation on what goes on in germination, glossary, and much other helpful material.

Don't forget Marie Sperka's often-mentioned *Growing Wildflowers: A Gardener's Guide* (Scribners, \$13.95). This is a classic gardening guide which covers more than two hundred species of wildflowers. Ignore instructions for growing extremely invasive purple loosestrife, however.

The National Wildflower Research Center's Wildflower Handbook (Voyageur Press, \$12.95) Provides a source of native plant information about seed and plant sources all over the country. Also lists nonprofit groups (such as Wild Ones) and government agencies that work to promote awareness of native plants.

Remember to have Sally and Andy Wasowski autograph your copy of *Requiem for a Lawnmower and Other Essays on Easy Gardening with Native Plants* (Taylor, \$15.95) at the February Natural Landscaping Seminar.



Ways to germinate seeds vary

Germination rates of prairie species can vary greatly. Most seeds require some form of pretreatment, imitating nature, in order to change from a dry, dormant embryo to a visible sprout. Treatment can include *dry stratification*, *moist stratification*, *scarification*, and *inoculation*, or any combination of these techniques.

Some seeds, including buttercup, Pasque flower, columbine, and blue-eyed grass, do best if planted fresh as soon as they are collected.

For others, start with proper winter storage in a cool, dry place in a clean, dry airtight container or jar. A garage or unheated attic serves well. Remember to label! This is considered *dry stratification*.

Species that can be planted directly after dry stratification include thimbleweed, Canada anemone, smooth blue aster, monarda (bee balm), evening primrose, culvers root, heath aster, silky aster, coreopsis, sunflowers, and most prairie grasses, except cord grass and needle grass.

Four to eight weeks before germination is desired (either inside or outside), *moist stratification* is worth the effort since it will increase germination success. Place seeds with equal amounts of clean, moist ("sandcastle" consistency) sand into clean plastic bags. Close and label with species' name and date. Then place in the refrigerator (not freezer) to mimic nature's cycle of freeze-thaw of the soil surface which breaks down chemical inhibitors of germination.

Most forb seeds benefit from this process, including nodding wild onion, milkweed, New England aster, shooting star, coneflower (pale purple, purple, yellow), penstemon, phlox, black-eyed Susan, silphium (cup plant, compass plant, prairie dock), goldenrod, Alexanders, rattlesnake master, gentians, prairie smoke, and liatris.

In addition, legumes and puccoons require additional techniques to break their hard coats to begin germination. One is *scarification* which involves making a small cut in the hard seed coat enabling the seed to absorb water. As it does, the embryo expands which ruptures the protective coat causing the seed to sprout. *Moist stratification* should follow scarification, but for a shorter time, usually 10 to 14 days.

Inoculation is necessary for certain prairie legumes: leadplant, milk vetch, indigos, Canada tick clover, round-headed bush clover, lupines, and prairie clovers. After scarification and stratification, seeds of this group will germinate but need nitrogen-producing soil bacteria for successful growth. Your soil may contain these bacteria, but to be sure, purchase inoculum specific to the particular prairie legume species.

"Treat" your seeds right and you'll be rewarded with higher germination rates and better propagation success. - Pat Brust

Programs feature woodland yard & plant-animal photos

November's program was Lucy Schumann's step-by-step guide to the transformation of her 45' by 45' front yard from a mowed lawn with two trees to a wonderful woodland setting containing over 100 different plant species.

She shared her installation and maintenance techniques, artistic insights, and four-season photos in a practical, inspiring program.

Janice Stiefel presented part of her superb collection of slides showing the interrelationships of native plants with butterflies, moths, and other insects.

As part of our annual holiday meeting, we also shared our excess seeds and enjoyed hot cider and cookies. - Mandy Ploch

Green Bay Club ends year

The last 1993 meeting for the Natural Landscaping Club of Green Bay was held November 10 at Heritage Hill State Park Visitor Center. A short program about the Green Bay Botanical Garden was given by Paul Hartman. A progress report and future plans were discussed.

A business meeting was held to elect new officers. In addition, members were given an opportunity to share seeds and information about their natural landscaping projects.

Thanks were given to Marge and Jack Swelstad for allowing seed collection on their property. This year they had 84 varieties of prairie plants blooming. - Sue Barrie and Marylou Kramer

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Wild Ones - Natural Landscapers, Ltd. is a non-profit organization with a mission to educate and share information with members and community at the "plants-roots" level and to promote biodiversity and environmentally sound practices. We are a diverse membership interested in natural landscaping using native species in developing plant communities.

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Window feeder tip: If you have a bird feeder next to a window for close-up viewing, try attaching small berry-bearing branches to achieve a more natural feeding. Use winterberry, sumac, bitersweet, etc.

Forest floor: It's a good time to think about adding new natural areas to your yard. Are there places where you can create a "no pick-up" place for leaves as you do your usual Spring clean-up? You may see some grass growing through for a while, but it soon will be smothered out as a "forest floor" is created. Make a distinction between the "no pick-up" zone and the lawn. Do this by digging a three inch edging around the new area to make it look more purposeful. In just one year you will notice trees sprouting in the new mulch and numerous insects will be scurrying about attracting a wider variety of songbirds to your yard. - Ideas from the *Environmental Conservation Newsletter* of the Molzon Landscape Nursery in Lincroft, New Jersey



Wildcare . . .

January/February: NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS are successful when based on last year's satisfactions & frustrations. Less time spent caring for a conventional lawn should free up hours for developing a small pond, learning to identify butterflies, or building a dry-laid rock wall to lure chipmunks away from porches or decks.

PLANT I.D.: Resolve to tour your yard about 20 minutes before leaving for Wild Ones' meetings, and bring in a sample leaf, flower, insect, or other phenomenon--let's help each other identify more of these mysteries.

PROPAGATION PREPARATION means organizing all those flats, labels, and notes from seminars & field trips. Remember Janice Stiefel's hunt for photos & drawings of which caterpillars become which moths & butterflies? Finding drawings of emerging seedlings, plus first "true" leaves, is difficult too. Be ready to sketch on your own--your field notes will help to separate desirables from weedy aliens, and may even help other native plant enthusiasts.

CATPROOF SHIELDS for any seedlings, indoors or out, call for some ingenuity. Upturned old wire baskets are good and let in more light than newer plastic ones. So far I've lined up a 1930's steel milk crate, a wire hospital bassinet, and another rectangular grid basket from a garage sale. All fit upside down over or just inside a flat.

FIELD GUIDE REPAIR: Go over those well-used wildflower books. A rubber band around loose pages in your paperback edition of Sperka's *Growing Wildflowers* isn't really convenient. Devise a cover that has a snap or velcro closure, maybe waterproof.

GARLIC MUSTARD I.D. is so much easier if you start in early spring--then you can mark it, and watch one plant's developing stages, while eliminating the rest. This plant is a bad displacer of more preferable species.

MINI PROPAGATION STUDY GROUP will meet at 8:45 a.m. in the Schlitz Audubon Library on Saturday, January 8, before the regular meeting. Join us to discuss techniques. - Barb Glassel

Illinois group plans winter seminar

"Living the Natural Life: Prairie Gardens for the Natural Landscaper" is the theme of a seminar to be held on Saturday, February 26, 1994 at the McHenry County College Conference Center, 14th and Lucas Road, Crystal Lake, Illinois. Featured speakers are: Peter Schramm and Dennis Lubbs. There will be concurrent afternoon sessions on water gardens, butterfly gardens, and landscaping for wildlife. Register before February 11. Fee will include a pasta buffet luncheon. Contact: Wildflower Preservation and Propagation Committee, McHenry County Defenders, 132 Cass Street, Woodstock, Illinois 60098 or call: 815/338-0393.

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I'm interested in becoming a member of Wild Ones - Natural Landscapers, Ltd.. The nearest chapter location is: Milwaukee (Schlitz Audubon Center), Milwaukee (Wehr Nature Center), Green Bay, Madison, Northern Illinois (Circle, please).

There is no chapter in my area, but I'm interested in chapter information.

Please renew my Wild Ones Membership in _____ Chapter.

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Calendar

Schlitz Audubon Center & Wehr Nature Center Chapters: (Note the same program is given at Schlitz Audubon Center, 1111 E. Brown Deer Rd., Milwaukee, WI 53217 at 9:30 a.m. and Wehr Nature Center, 9701 W. College Ave., Franklin, WI 53132 at 1:30 p.m.)

Saturday, January 8: Lorrie Otto discusses the growing interest in SCHOOL NATURAL AREAS and their care.

Saturday, February 12: Attend the NATURAL LANDSCAPING CONFERENCE at UWM. All members should plan to attend and invite others.

Saturday, March 12: Michael Yanny of Johnson Nursery will give us some good selection and propagation tips about which woody plants are best to use to replace all the honeysuckle and buckthorn we're eradicating. Expect an entertaining and informative talk.

Green Bay Chapter: Call 414/826-7520 for current information about upcoming programs.

Northern Illinois Chapter: (Building K, Room 157 College of DuPage, 22nd Street, Glen Ellyn, IL 60137.)


Thursday, January 20 at 7 p.m. Jerry Johnson will tell us about HEIRLOOM VEGETABLES and the lost genetic diversity in domestic vegetables.

Thursday, February 17 at 7 p.m. WINTER SURPRISE. What winter delights lie waiting to be discovered in your yard? Come and bring something interesting: a photo of a bird at your feeder, a colorful sprig of berries, dried milkweed pods, etc. Pat Armstrong will show slides of the "Ten Best Plants for Winter Interest."



Thursday, March 17 at 7 p.m. AQUATIC GARDENING IN THE 90'S. Gary Wittstock from Aquascapes with talk about garden ponds.

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