

The Outside Story

newsletter for natural landscapers

Vol. 7 No. 5

September - October 1994

Carol Chew, Editor

New Illinois and Ohio chapters elect officers, plan activities

Welcome to new Wild Ones chapters in Illinois and Ohio.

Rock River Valley Wild Ones held their first meeting on July 7. At that time they discussed many mutual interests and a variety of program ideas, including creating public plantings in Bryon Forest Preserve, member seed exchanges (within their bioregion), and holding a prairie burn workshop.

New officers are: President Joshua Skolnick, Vice President Joe Jonakin, Secretary Nancy Blank, and Treasurer Fran Lowman. There were 22 members at the initial meeting. Rock River Valley Wild Ones is the second chapter formed in Illinois. The other one is the Northern Illinois

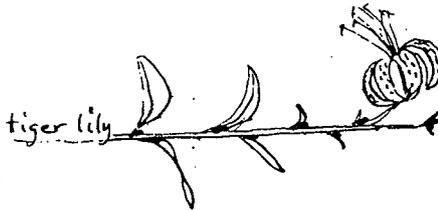
Chapter near Chicago.

A love of native wildflowers, incorporation of wildlife into landscapes and environmental concerns were just a few of the issues that brought the Columbus, Ohio chapter of Wild Ones together.

A diverse group of eighteen individuals attended their first get-acquainted meeting in June. During July they toured several historic prairies in their region with a naturalist from the Ohio Department

of Natural Resources. Future activities include a plant rescue, a visit to Ohio Prairie Seed Nursery, a workday at Chadwick Arboretum, several lectures and a holiday party. New officers are: President Joyce Stephens, Vice President Debbie Brown, Recording Secretary Linda Lee, Corresponding Secretary Shirley Barnes, Treasurer Cindi Irwin, and Membership Chair Robert Baker.

Joyce writes, "As news of our organization and its activities becomes public, we anticipate our membership will continue to grow. We hope that our chapter can be a significant influence in Ohio in developing awareness of natural landscaping and environmentally sound practices."



Prairie grasses add rich and varied colors to fall landscape

If your natural landscaping includes several native grasses, you are now enjoying such hues as reddish-copper, wine, steel-blue, gold, russet, blue green, silver, amethyst, crimson, and emerald.

Grasses which once formed the foundation of the North American Prairie are useful in the native garden to support forbs. Five types that stand out because of their longevity and ability to adapt to many kinds soil are: Big Bluestem, Little Bluestem, Indian-grass, Switchgrass and Prairie Dropseed. Once these covered much of Midwestern grasslands and provided food for bison in a vast and productive ecosystem. In conjunction with more than one hundred different wildflowers, grasses blanketed the central continent with an ocean of green that built some of the world's finest soils.

Big Bluestem, monarch of prairie grasses, is the most prevalent and widely distributed. Largely responsible for the formation of prairie sod, it grows to eight feet and thrives in clay to sand. In late summer a three part seed head forms resembling a turkey foot. First frosts turn its lush green to copper.

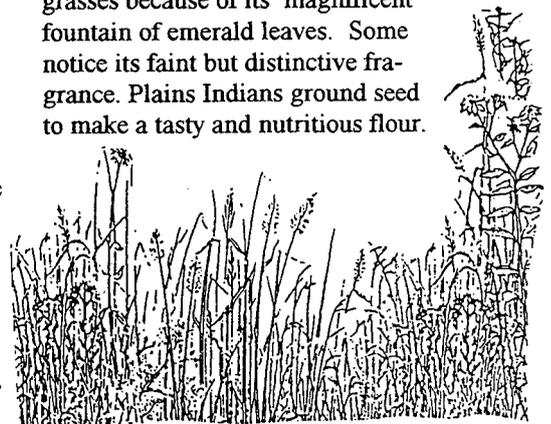
Little Bluestem is an ornamental grass which grows best in medium and dry soils. Its blue-green color turns to bright red topped by fluffy silvery-white seedstalks.

Indiangrass is a silky golden brown in fall. Second in importance to Big Bluestem, it does well on well-drained soil, growing rapidly and often maturing the second year.

Switchgrass changes to light yellow in fall, producing widely spreading conical seedheads. Large, tough rhizomes form on a wide

variety of sites, clumping individually on poor soil and aggressively forming tight sod on fertile ground. Plant with competition if soil is good. It's a fine cold weather wildlife cover as it grows from three to five feet high and resists being knocked down by snow and ice.

Prairie Dropseed is often considered the most attractive of prairie grasses because of its magnificent fountain of emerald leaves. Some notice its faint but distinctive fragrance. Plains Indians ground seed to make a tasty and nutritious flour.



President's Corner

Here it is. . . back-to-school time! A few years ago at age 47, I went back to college. How different from 30 years earlier when I was also a student, but really not sure why I was there. This time each class was a pleasure. Since I thought I would not be retracing these college steps again, I all but wore the teachers out with my questions. I was actually sad to finish the last class for my degree. At the same time, I realized I not only had a good foundation for continued learning for the rest of my life, but also had LOTS to learn.

Each Wild Ones member is at a different stage in learning about native ecosystems. We all can have the joy of sharing knowledge. Only through education and example can we develop natural landscapes into the commonplace instead of the unusual. Freely share your knowledge (and plants) with others.

I encourage you to let us know about your experiences. What got you interested in native plants? What obstacles or successes have you had? Have you helped others start? Meetings are great forums for exchange, but many more will learn through the newsletter. Let's hear from you! – Mandy Ploch

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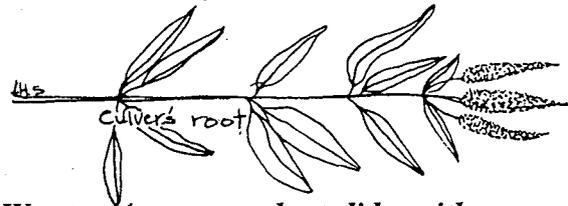
Books of Interest . . .

Grasses: An Identification Guide by Lauren Brown (Houghton Mifflin, \$10.95) covers the northeastern U.S., including Wisconsin and most of Illinois. Contains an easy-to-use key and detailed drawings.

Also useful is Jane Embertson's *Pods, Wildflowers, and Weeds in Their Final Beauty* (Charles Scribner's Sons, \$18). It includes plants from the Great Lakes region and features photographs of plants in bloom and as they appear when dry.

Landscaping for Wildlife by Carrol L. Henderson (Minnesota's Bookstore, \$10.95) is a valuable resource for creating Midwestern wildlife habitats, whether small or large. Numerous color photos and diagrams accompany the text. It's now spiral bound for easy use.

The Natural Habitat Garden by Ken Druse (Clarkson Potter, \$40) is available in the bookstore as well as his previous book, *The Natural Garden*. – MaryAnn Maki (Stop by Schlitz Audubon Center's bookstore or call 414/352-2880. Hard-to-find editions can be ordered.)



Want to share your plant slides with groups?

Do you have a story to tell about native landscaping experiences and techniques that you'd like to share with others? Find out how to get on a speaker list so we can offer this information to outside groups such as garden clubs and nature centers. If you are interested, call Rae Sweet (414/352-8356).

If you know of any groups looking for a native landscaping speaker, have their program planner contact Rae Sweet for a list of speakers and their topics.



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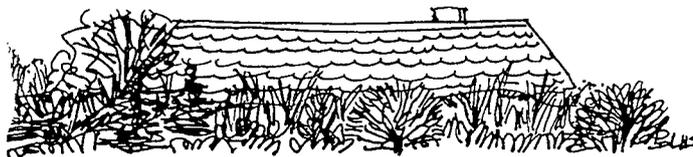
Lorrie's Notes . . .

Ken Druse's book and the healing message of autumn goldenrod

In early June I flew to the West Coast with Ken Druse's new book, *The Natural Habitat Garden*, in my lap. Samples of many ecosystems surveyed in this beautiful publication were far below me and innocent of my wish that his message be sealed into their future. *The hands that have harmed can surely heal.*

There are gorgeous photographs of native plants in his book but one must also take time to read the bracketed stories in each chapter, especially when they pertain to the special niche we occupy and manage. Members of Wild Ones and their kin will receive an extra surge of pleasure as they recognize familiar yards and teachers. Among the latter, Neil Diboll (the "prairie prince"), JoAnne Gillespie (her license plate SEDGES), Clifford Miller, Judy Stark, and author Sara Stein. Three properties where we gather prairie seeds at our October meetings: Milt Ettenheim's, Mark's memorial berms, and my sand sandwich are captured at the height of their summer color. There is a great spread on Marsha and Dick Krueger's yard which is always a favorite on annual Audubon bus tours. Remember the days when Marsha would come to our meetings after she had seeded her front yard? She would wring her hands and squeeze out the words, "Oh! It's just dirt! I look out in the morning and it's just dirt!"

One of the charming touches in the book is the "thinking stone", so named because one day the owners discovered a little boy sitting beside their trilliums. When asked what he was doing, he replied, "Thinking". We all need such a stone in our yards as well as this book on our birthday list. Druse proclaims that this new kind of gardening requires an enduring sense of stewardship. He express his faith in the future with a final paragraph, "I concentrate on hopeful, beautiful images in this book and on the simple message contained in the translation of the Latin word for goldenrod, *solidago*, which means making whole. With *solidago* and other natives, I think that we can make the earth whole, or at least come a little closer." – Lorrie Otto



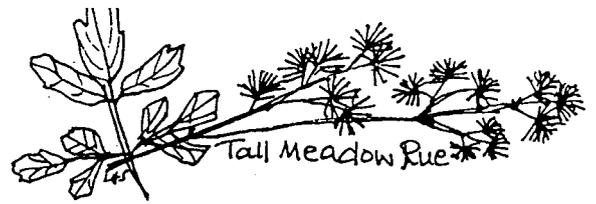
Homes for sale feature native landscaping:

Often in discussing native landscaping the question of who will buy our property if we need to sell has arisen. Any Wild One who has dug, planted, and enjoyed the fruits of his or her labor will wonder if the new owner will know or love the beauty of a naturally landscaped yard. How wrenching it would be, not only to a previous owner, but to all creatures who depend on native plants for their habitat, if all the natural landscaping were to disappear. Two naturally landscaped homes now up for sale have recently come to our attention.

One in New Berlin, Wisconsin is a light, airy three bedroom contemporary home with a prairie area (and no grass to cut on its 85' x 120' sized lot). Call Jeraldine Marchant (414/782-3110).

The other is three bedroom, cedar-sided contemporary ranch with a 1/2 acre of trees and wildflowers and screened deck ready for outdoor enjoyment. It is located in Greenfield, Wisconsin. Call Kay and Jim Shallow (414/282-1427 home or 414/297-1910 work).

Let us know if you have a naturally landscaped home for sale we can mention in the newsletter. – Delene Hansen & Mary Ann Kniep



Can you add to our schools and public places natural areas list?

A number of schools and other public places have areas of natural landscaping with native plants. Below is a list of some in southeastern Wisconsin. If you know of additional ones or have listings in your area, please let us know. Contact names, descriptions, and dates projects were started are given when known.

Bayside, Wisconsin: Bayside Middle School (Lorrie Otto) has recently restored a wooded site bordering classroom windows (1974);

Cedarburg, Wisconsin: West Lawn Elementary School (Shelley Olson); Webster Middle School (Michael Hanson, Lee Olson) small natural area with pond;

Fox Point, Wisconsin: Stormonth School (Rochelle Whiteman) has new areas in progress planted by students and cared for by parent volunteers (1994);

Germantown, Wisconsin: Germantown High School;

Glendale, Wisconsin: Good Hope School (Lisa MacLaren); Maple Dale School; Nicolet High School (Christine Kolb) strip of roadside land has prairie plants raised by biology students (1990); Parkway School has three acres of prairie plants along Milwaukee River Parkway; St. John's Lutheran School;

Grafton, Wisconsin: Grafton Elementary School (Mark Grey, designer) has an outdoor classroom created in courtyard setting (1993);

Hartford, Wisconsin: Hartford Central Middle School (Dave Schultz, Dennis Panicucci);

Hartland, Wisconsin: Arrowhead High School (Greg Bisbee);

Mequon, Wisconsin: Lakeside School (Judi Ficks); Oriole Lane Elementary School (Kathy Palmer); Stephen School; Unitarian Church North (Liz Warner) has a prairie garden near an octagonal church and other natural areas;

Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Christ Church has a very successful 12 year-old project (1982); Central Methodist Church (Dick Truitt) is a contemporary building with a rooftop prairie designed to help clean the air (and the mind) along busy Wisconsin Avenue;

Golda Meir Elementary School (Babette Kis) has a 12' x 12' blooming prairie (1994); Hawley Elementary (environmental speciality) School has a small natural area (1988); John Muir Elementary School; Nezsckara Elementary School (Marilyn Manke) has a butterfly garden in an

urban setting (1993); Riverside University High School (Rick Johnson - 964- 5900) has a prairie project started several years ago needing volunteers and specific plants; Sherman Art School (Linda Bohan) has a small prairie restoration; Vincent High School (Don Shebesta); Webster Middle School has a small prairie restoration; (Note: Babette Kis works with one Milwaukee Elementary School per year to get it started on a prairie project. River Trail School will be next. Forbs are planted the first year for instant beauty and grasses are added later.)

New Berlin, Wisconsin: Sunnyslope School;

Port Washington, Wisconsin: Dunwiddle School (Dorothy Boyer) has naturalized with native plants in areas close to classroom windows (1993);

River Hills, Wisconsin: Indian Hill School has prairie and woodland areas next to classroom windows and a water garden with a bridge (1990);

Saukville, Wisconsin: Saukville Elementary School (Lois Zahorik);

Waukesha, Wisconsin: North High School (Mark Feider).

Check to see if volunteer help, 4 x 4" pots, or plant donations are needed for any of the above projects.

If you're helping start a project three suggested resources are: *Prairie Restoration for Wisconsin Schools* by Molly Fifield Murray (UW-Madison Arboretum). Written by a landscape architect, this looseleaf notebook is a guide from site analysis to management. *How Green is Your School?* by Don E. McAllister, Ph.D. (Ocean Voice, Ottawa, Canada) contains a checklist which is a good starting point for interested volunteers and school staff. *Project Wild* (WREEC, 4014 Chatham Lane, Houston, Texas 77027. 713/622-7411) has excellent materials and courses available. - Marilyn Manke



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COMMON EVENING-PRIMROSE

(*Oenothera biennis*)

Family: Onagraceae (Evening-Primrose)

Other Names: King's Cure-All, Sand Lily, German Rampion, Sundrops, Scabish, Evening Star, Tree Primrose, Night Willow-Herb, Large Rampion, Four-O-Clock, Coffee-Plant, Fever-Plant.

Habitat: Roadsides, fields, and waste places.

Description: Large, lemon-scented, yellow flowers bloom at the top of a leafy stalk. The stem is hairy and sometimes purple-tinged. The flowers are ½" wide with 4 petals and 4 reflexed sepals arising from the top of a long floral tube. There are 8 prominent stamens; the stigma is cross-shaped. Leaves are 4 to 8 in. long, numerous, slightly toothed, and lance-shaped. An oblong, 1 in. capsule forms the fruit. Height: 2-5 ft.

Flowering: June to September

Comments: The Common Evening-Primrose is native to our shores. However, it must have been one of the first plants sent from the New World back to Europe, since it was described by European writers as early as 1600 and cultivated at that time in English gardens for its edible roots that are supposed to be wholesome and nutritious when boiled.

The flowers of this night-flowering biennial open in the evening and close by noon. The plant takes two years to complete its cycle, with basal leaves emerging and establishing themselves the first year and flowering the following season. The roots are edible and the seeds are an important food source for birds.

Medicinal Use: This plant recently received attention from pharmaceutical companies who discovered that it possesses a compound capable of reducing the rate of blood clotting or thrombus formation, and hence, possibly acting as a substance that helps to prevent heart attacks. Recent research also

suggests that the seed oil may be useful for atopic eczema, allergy-induced eczema, asthma, migraines, inflammations, PMS, breast problems, metabolic disorders, diabetes, arthritis, and alcoholism. Evening-Primrose oil is a natural source of gamma-linolenic acid.

American Indians used the root tea for obesity and bowel pains. They poulticed the roots for bruises and rubbed the root on muscles to give athletes strength.

Name Origin: The Genus Name, *Oenothera* (ee-noth'er-ra), is from a Greek word meaning "wine imbibing." It supposedly increased the desire for drink. The Species Name, *biennis* (by-en'nis), means it is a biennial. Since this wildflower usually opens between 6:00 and 7:00 in the evening, it was given the name of Evening-Primrose. If you take the time to watch them, the petals will actually open before your eyes. (I know, because I watched them one night). The name, Evening Star, is derived from the fact that the petals emit phosphorescent light at night.

Author's Note: Personally, I have trouble finding this plant during its first year, as it is lost in the foliage of other plants. Since flowering takes place during the second year and then the plant dies, it doesn't help to mark where I saw the beautiful yellow blossoms because it's not likely to appear in that same spot the following year. After all these years, I'm still trying to find a way to recognize this plant before it blooms. The fact that the Common Evening-Primrose has escaped my watchful eye makes me respect it more. In these times of high taxes, crime, bureaucratic meddling and mandates; it lives a life that some of us might covet - one that is unpredictable, free, elusive and disguised.



Water gardeners share ponds; Five yards get 'Help Me' visits

Three ponds were visited at our July Milwaukee meeting. Mandy Ploch's front yard pond has clear water and is mostly shaded. Her back yard pond is in full sun which contributes to a small algae problem. Soft-stemmed bullrush, tussock, and bottlebrush sedges, arrowhead, native white and yellow waterlilies and pond plantain are planted in soil at a depth of about six to eight inches. Most survived the first winter.

After locating sites and excavating one foot, a newspaper layer was laid. Next liners were dropped in and secured before the ponds were filled with water. Six inches of excavated soil was replaced and plants were added. Mandy recommends using heavy edging stones large enough to stay in place. Ponds provide a tranquil setting reflecting trees, sky and clouds and attracting birds, toads, frogs, insects.

Irene and Steve Macek's pond is deeper and plants are potted instead of growing in soil on the bottom. Lilies provide shade for goldfish and koi swimming below. The 60% vegetation coverage is optimal. Mosquitoes are controlled by fish, amphibians, and birds.

Water gardening is new to many and quite a pleasure to develop.

In June, Linda McGovern lead a tour of Schlitz Audubon Center's Green Tree Garden. It contains over 100 species of native plants, three-fourths of these have been added in the last four years. Five members invited us to their yards for help and advice: Mary Lee Croatt, Mary Rasette-Pottharst, Charlotte Holt, Ann Junkerman, and Ed Janke. Storm clouds burst open as we were leaving Ed's home. Perfect timing.

- Jan Koel & Marilyn Manke

Wild Ones t-shirts for sale

All of you who have been waiting to wear a Wild Ones t-shirt, can now purchase them. Lucy Schumann's full-view prairie plant design, first shown in July - August 1993 issue of *The Outside Story*, is printed in brown on front and back of a pre-shrunk ecru cotton shirts. Sizes are M-L-XL for \$12 and XXL for \$15. Shirts will be sold at meetings at Schlitz and Wehr Nature Centers or by contacting Arlyne Acasio (414/895-0642) or Delene Hansen (414/425-4608). Thanks to member Chris Reichert for her assistance.

Create habitats in your yard

To order a Backyard Wildlife Habitat information packet, which includes a 79-page paperback *The Backyard Naturalist*, and a pamphlet on wildlife habitats, send \$2 plus \$3.25 for postage to National Wildlife Federation, 1400 Sixteenth Street NW, Washington D.C. 20036 or call 800/432-6564.

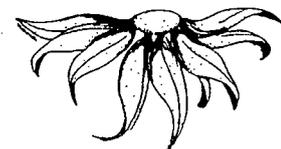
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Wild Ones - Natural Landscapers, Ltd. is a non-profit organization with a mission to educate and share information with members and community at the "plants-roots" level and to promote bio-diversity and environmentally sound practices. We are a diverse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

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Is your annual membership check due? Check your newsletter label to see the month & year you last paid. Renewals are due on or before a year from that date.

Swamp Candles - Yellow Loosestrife



Letters . .

Volunteers needed to fight invaders

The Milwaukee County park system probably contains the county's largest intact wild areas and therefore, represent its most important ecological land. As much as I take pride in my 1/2 acre of woodland, I know it's not large enough to sustain many native species or their interactions. Unfortunately, as many of you have noticed, park areas are currently being seriously degraded by invasives. While volunteers at Wehr Nature Center and Riverside Park are working to control invasives, the rest of the park system remains undefended. For example, Greendale's small Scout Lake Park, has many areas so heavily invested with buckthorn that this invasive plant has essentially become the dominate groundcover.

Park administration has acknowledged that exotic invasive plants are a serious problem, but one for which they have neither the money or manpower. They agree that utilizing trained volunteers is probably the only cost-effective way to control invasives, although this strategy might meet union resistance. I have sent the horticulture director a proposal suggesting the use of trained volunteers for the control of park invasives. Although their ultimate control requires park system cooperation, which will undoubtedly be a slow process, we can begin some initial work.

As a first step, I propose we use volunteers to survey county park natural areas for the presence, location, and density of exotic invasive plants. To assign parks, go over surveying and recording methods, and review exotic invasive species' identification, volunteers are invited to meet at 4700 W. Grange Avenue, Greenfield on September 17 at 2 p.m. Please call 414/423-1709 to let me know how many to expect.

Data will provide an idea of how bad the invasive problem has become and will be important for determining which parks should receive attention first. — Ken Solis, MD, Greenfield, Wisconsin

Thanks for the plants

Mary Lee and Lloyd Croatt shared hearty Jack-in-the-pulpits and Solomon seal with the children of Whitefish Bay's Cumberland School who thanked Croatt's "for staying one step ahead of the bulldozer."

UW-Madison Arboretum:

Prairie Drawing (September 10) Curtis Prairie will be the focus for using drawing techniques to explore light, form, texture, and shadow. **Fall Wildflowers** (September 17) is a seasonal introduction to native plants. **Arboretum Open House & 60th Anniversary Celebration** (September 25) Tours, activities, and displays. **Seed Collecting** (October 22) Learn techniques, timing, and ethics for collecting native seeds. Call 608/263-7888 to register.

the Front Forty

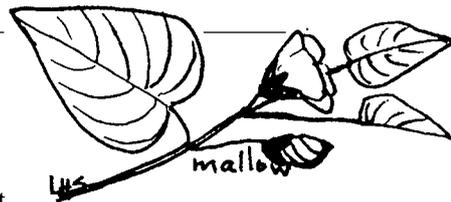
When the time came to select plants for my front forty, I ran into a dilemma. To be or not to be a purist? For all my noble thoughts of planting according to John Curtis' *Vegetation of Wisconsin*, I had to deal with reality. Three feet of top soil had been stripped away by subdivision developers, leaving us with nothing but clay.

I chose some plants native to our area such as lead plant, stiff goldenrod, prairie dropseed, rattlesnake master, prairie coneflower, and little bluestem. Others were chosen just for love, such as pale purple coneflower, purple coneflower,

nodding onion, prairie smoke, and pale corydalis. All are growing, some better than others. Butterflies, insects and birds that have come to check plants out don't seem to be bothered by the selection.

Forty square feet may be a drop in the bucket, but if you ever left a bucket in the rain you know it's drops that fill it.

If you've started your front (side or back) forty I'd love to hear about it. Call me at 414/251-2185. When I'm not at home my answering machine is. — Judy Crane

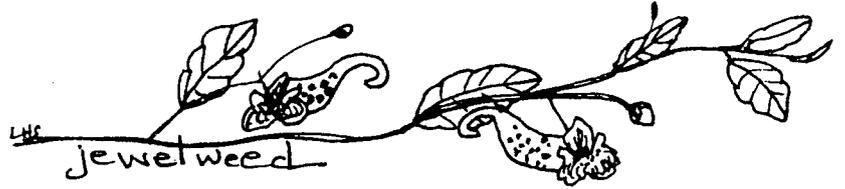


Wisconsin DNR State Fair brochure features Wild Ones

Thanks go to the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources for including Wild Ones in their brochure which was distributed at the model native garden at State Fair Park. Also we appreciate the efforts of volunteer members who donated time to talk to fairgoers and promote native plants during the fair.

A very special note of appreciation to Barb Glassel who designed and has coordinated the project in the DNR area for two years.





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, September 10: NATIVE TREES AND SHRUBS are featured on this Michael Yanny tour. We'll learn about how these plants are propagated in a nursery.

Saturday, October 8: It's time for PRAIRIE SEED GATHERING and digging for asters.

Saturday, November 12: Annette Alexander's yard in Whitefish Bay will be featured as she tells about how she rolled up her turf and started natives.

Green Bay, Wisconsin Chapter: Call 414/434-6309 for more information about chapter events.

Northern Illinois Chapter: (The following meetings will be held at 7:00 p.m. at the College of DuPage, Room K157.)

Thursday, September 15: MUCHOS GRASSES! Pat Armstrong will show and discuss our beautiful native grasses

and Kerry Leigh from the Natural Garden will talk about ornamental grasses and how to use them.

Thursday, October 20: RIGHT PLANT, RIGHT PLACE! Marcy Stewart-Pyziak, horticulturist and educator, will help us select plants right for the different growing conditions found in our typical suburban yards. With a focus on native plants, she'll show slides of trees, shrubs, perennials, and groundcovers.

Thursday, November 17: THIRD ANNUAL SEED EXCHANGE AND HOLIDAY PARTY! Trade for unusual seeds, partake of delicious food, and enjoy our Wild Ones Players.

Rock River, Illinois Chapter:

Thursday, September 15, 6-9 p.m. We'll begin a SERVICE PROJECT at Jarrett Prairie Center in Byron Forest Preserve. Bring along your seeds and transplants to get things started.

Saturday, September 17: Carpool to Nachusa Grasslands for fall activities. Meet at Byron Forest Preserve Jarrett Prairie Center at 8 a.m.

Sunday, September 25: SEED COLLECTING in local prairie remnants. Meet at Jarrett Center at 1 p.m.

Thursday, October 20 at 6 p.m.: WORKSHOP on seed collecting and

processing. Information on prairie burns. A burn workshop will be held on a later weekend. Date to be announced.

Sunday, October 23: SEED COLLECTING in prairie remnants in Ogle, Winnebago, and Carroll counties. Meet at 1 p.m. at Jarrett Prairie Center.

Sunday, November 13: SEED COLLECTING in local prairie remnants. Meet at Jarrett Center at 12:30 p.m.

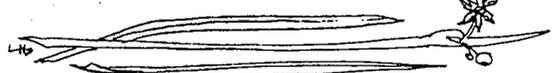
Thursday, November 17 at 6 p.m.: Monthly chapter meeting. Topic TBA.

Columbus, Ohio Chapter:

Saturday, September 10: TOUR of Ohio Prairie Seed Nursery which is source for ODOT's roadside wildflower program. Meet at 8:30 a.m. in the parking lot of the Bob Evans Restaurant in Westland Mall to form carpools.

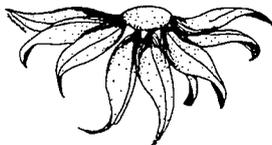
Saturday, October 8: Help with Chadwick Arboretum's wildflower garden. We'll meet there at 9:00 a.m. and work until about 11:00 a.m.

Saturday, November 12: Meet at Chadwick Arboretum at 9:00 a.m. to hear representative of Nature Conservancy discuss their preservation projects in central Ohio.



Common Blue-eyed Grass

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The Outside Story

newsletter for natural landscapers

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