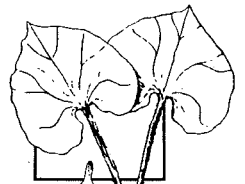




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A VOICE FOR THE NATURAL LANDSCAPING MOVEMENT

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Wild Ones®

Journal

*As many of us go about our "prescribed burns" (see Wild Ones Handbook, *Prairie Maintenance* chapter), it is interesting to note the perceptions of America's settlers on the fiery "landscape that was."*

FIRE

From a letter by Cyrus Church dated Friday, April 1, 1898, Walworth, Wis.:

In the spring of 1838 real farming commenced on the prairie, the previous year's [ground] breaking being in good condition to cultivate and put in crops. When the land was first broken a little corn was sometimes planted. They would take an axe and strike the bit into a furrow, then drop in the grain and give a blow on each side to cover it. This was

about all that could be done, as the sod was very tough.

Wheat was generally harrowed in. The ground was plowed for corn. The plows that were here were brought from the East and were a miserable excuse for a plow, as they would not score on the prairie soil; but it was use them or none.

In 1839, Chas. T. Gifford, of Elgin, Ill., invented the first plow that would run clean. The mould board was made of boiler iron, the point of steel. Of course he had it patented and it was a wonderful good thing for the farmer.

The land being new and free from weeds, the crops were good. The grain had to be threshed with a flail or trodden out with cattle or horses. In 1840, a man by the name of Knapp, of Delavan, brought the first threshing machine onto the prairie. It consisted of a cylinder only, and we separated the straw from the grain with pitchforks. That was pretty nearly perfection.

... I made a flail and then went up on the prairie to thresh out a grist. It had to be threshed on the ground of course, and the wind must blow the chaff out of it, for there was no fanning mill to do it.

I worked one day and the next day I calculated to get enough for the grist. For some reason I had failed to take my dinner with me, and started home after it. I had got down near the big spring on the Bagley farm, when I looked back and saw a smoke near my wheat. I started back to see about it and when I got to the top of the hill I saw the fire on the top of my stack. I hurried along to see if I could save something, as I had left my tools there. There was a stack of hay nearby which was on fire and in many places the fence was burning. I had not been gone from there an hour and when I left there was no sign of fire or smoke in sight.

(continued on page 2)

FIRE (continued from front page)

I think it was the first week in October. There had been a heavy frost to kill the grass, but we had no idea that fire would run yet. We had had no experience with it as there had been no fire the two seasons before. The fire started in the southwest part of the prairie, and a heavy wind took it across the prairie as fast as a horse could run. Mr. Bell had a little log house near where the house he afterwards built now stands. He had some stacks of hay about there, and the fire licked up everything clean but the house.

A few days after this we saw a smoke which appeared to be some distance away. Mr. Sanders said we had better go and burn around our stack of hay. We had put up a large rick of hay in company, near where Orson Bilyea lives. We hurried along and got there just in time to see the fire jump on the stack, and we left for home.

... Some time in April, Joseph Bailey came to Walworth. It was getting to be dry and pleasant weather, and one day while we were away he saw smoke at a distance. Fearing the fire might run through there and burn the rails [fences], he went to burn around them, and in so doing burned up every rail; but the fire he was afraid of never came near.

About this time my mind was not in a very amiable condition, but when I met Mr. Bailey, he was feeling so much worse than I was capable of that it had a wonderful influence over me. Though I felt the loss of the rails keenly, I never blamed Mr. Bailey for what he had done for he was trying to do us a kindness, and was ignorant of what the prairie fire was capable of doing.

From said experience we learned to guard against prairie fires which gave us much trouble some seasons, as our fences were constantly exposed.

From an account by Ida Osmond Heaton (1861-1963):

We came to Iowa in October 1865. I was 3½ years of age. We came in a covered wagon. My father came out

to Iowa first, walking out here. We lived in Wisconsin. He bought 80 acres of land with a little log cabin on it, with one room. Father bought a pony to ride back to Wisconsin. We, my mother and three children, Estelle, Chester and myself, then moved to Iowa with Father. The covered wagon was loaded with household goods, all we could bring ... I remember several things along the road, one especially when we came to the Mississippi river. Had to drive the wagon on a flat boat and that frightened me so I never forgot. I also remember when we stopped at Dubuque to sell the honey we had brought along with us. I remember seeing the big dolls in the store windows.

My sister and I had the whooping cough on the way, but not very bad, as traveling seemed to be good for it. My brother did not have it then. We finally arrived at our new home in Iowa.

Father had to buy some livestock and farm implements, but we got along fine. There was no Creston then. Afton was our nearest town, about 15 miles, and with but two houses on the road to there. We had to guard against prairie fires, as there was so much open prairie all around us. We had to "back-fire," as it was called, all around the place. Father would plow all the way around the farm, on each side of a wide strip—wide enough so that fire would not jump across it. The grass in between the plowed strip would be burned off. We children would like to go along with Father at night when he burned the tall prairie grass on the strip. This was once each fall. We had to do this to protect our farm from those terrible prairie fires.

When Father had to go to Afton after groceries, we always took matches along. If we saw a fire along the way, we could burn off a place to get away from the fire as the fires were so swift in that tall dry prairie grass. We could see what we called "buffalo wallows" all along the way, as it had not been very many years since this was buffalo pasture land.

From the book *Fond du Lac County, Wisconsin, Past and Present, 1912.*

An original prairie of tall and exuberant grass on fire, especially at night, was a magnificent spectacle, enjoyed only by the pioneer. Here is an instance where the frontiersman, proverbially deprived of the sights and pleasures of an old community, is privileged far beyond the people of the present day in this country. One could scarcely tire beholding the scene, as its awe-inspiring features seemed constantly to increase, and the whole panorama unceasingly changed like the dissolving views of a magic lantern, or like the aurora borealis. Language cannot convey, words cannot express the faintest idea of the splendor and grandeur of such a conflagration at night. It was as if the pale queen of night, disdaining to take her accustomed place in the heavens, had dispatched myriads upon myriads of messengers to light their torches at the altar of the setting sun until all had flashed into one long and continuous blaze.

The following graphic description of prairie fires was written by a traveler through this region in 1849:

"Soon the fires began to kindle wider and rise higher from the long grass. The gentle breeze increased to stronger currents and soon fanned the small, flickering blaze into fierce torrent flames, which curled up and leaped along in resistless splendor, and like quickly raising the dark curtain from the luminous stage, the scenes before me were suddenly changed as if by the magician's wand, into one boundless amphitheater, blazing from earth to heaven and sweeping the horizon round,—columns of lurid flames sportively mounting up to the zenith, and dark clouds of crimson smoke, curling away and loft till they nearly obscured stars and moon, while the rushing, crashing sounds, like roaring cataracts mingled with distant thunders, were almost deafening. Danger, death, glared all around; it screamed for victims, yet, notwithstanding the imminent peril of prairie fires, one is loath, irresolute, almost unable to withdraw or seek refuge."

The prairie ecosystem and fire are synonymous. Native prairie will not endure without fire, and *true prairie* invites fire by the very nature of the fuels it produces and the climate in which it occurs. (I use the term *prairie plantings* to indicate the contrived landscapes utilizing native grassland species as opposed to indigenous prairie remnants. This may seem a subtlety, but is germane in regard to the necessity of fire.)

In an article in *Science* magazine, University of Wisconsin scientists Mark Leach and Thomas Givnish state that plant species are disappearing from Wisconsin prairie remnants due to "a lack of fires that once replenished the soil with nutrients and cleared the landscape, which allowed a diverse plant community to flourish."

A fact sheet titled *Questions About Warm-Season Grasses*, published by the Missouri Department of Conservation, states: "Fire was a natural occurrence in the evolution of prairie grasses. They developed not only a tolerance for fire, but a response to it that allows them to outgrow the less tolerant competition if the burn occurs at the proper time of the year."

Responding to the question as to whether mowing would accomplish the same purpose the publication stated: "No. Such a treatment would achieve some of the affects of burning, but not all that are required to maintain the desired grass stand condition."

John Madson, in his book, *Where the Sky Begins*, writes, "Not only are encroaching shrubs and trees killed by a well-fed, wind-whipped prairie fire, but the fire-tolerant grasses may draw benefits from the apparent chaos."

"The black ash surface resulting from burning increases the rate of spring warming on burned prairie, so does the removal of thick grass mulch, permitting more light, warmth, and moisture to touch the soil itself, stimulating grasses and forbs. Growth and vigor of prairie may suffer in thick, unburned mats of dead grass parts that have built up over several years.

BURN OR MOW?

This dense mat locks up certain nutrients as well as shading and insulating the prairie soil. **Fire helps set the stage, unlocking nutrients and returning them to the earth, exposing seed beds to sun and rain."**

In a paper presented at the 1968 Symposium on Prairie and Prairie Restoration, researcher Clair Kucera stated that on Missouri prairies a three-year

interval between burnings will maintain grass dominance and species diversity that are typical of native prairies. On plots burned annually, production and densities of native grasses were in some cases 100 percent greater than plots that were not burned at all. On plots burned once every five years, results were about the same as on fire-free plots; and that the total root mass in the

upper inch of soil was as much as 39 percent less than on prairie burned annually.

THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND:

1. There is no substitute for periodic fire as a component of the prairie ecosystem.
2. Fire is inherently dangerous, especially so in the hands of individuals who are not trained in its use and control.
3. Burning of planted prairie parcels may be detrimental to invertebrate populations who find suitable habitat on such small isolated parcels. (This is not so on large areas where refugia are available due to the spotty nature of wildfire.)
4. Periodic mowing and raking of planted prairie parcels *may* serve to provide *some* of the benefits of burning. It removes the litter, but does not darken the soil surface nor return nutrients to the soil (this is a more complex phenomenon than it sounds).

Thus, while not a substitute for burning, mowing and raking may be the only alternative available to the residential homeowner when burning is not possible.

—Andy Larsen, Executive Director,
Riveredge Nature Center, Newburg, Wis.

In the evening the prairie took fire, either by accident or design, and burned with great fury, the whole plain being enveloped in flames. So rapid was its progress that a man and a woman were burnt to death before they could reach a place of safety; another man with his wife and child were much burnt, and several other persons narrowly escaped destruction. Among the rest a boy of the half-white breed escaped unhurt in the midst of the flames. His safety was ascribed to the great medicine spirit, who had preserved him on account of his being white. But a much more natural cause was the presence of mind of his mother, who seeing no

hopes of carrying off her son, threw him on the ground, and, covering him with the fresh hide of a buffalo escaped herself from the flames; as soon as the fire had passed, she returned and found him untouched, the skin having prevented the flame from reaching the grass on which he lay.

History of the Expedition Under the Command of Captains Lewis and Clark to the Sources of the Missouri, Thence Across the Rocky Mountains and Down the River Columbia to the Pacific Ocean, Nicholas Biddle and Paul Allan, eds., Philadelphia, 1814, quoted in *The Moving Frontier*, Louis B. Wright and Elaine W. Fowler, eds., 1972

THE PUBLICITY WAS FANTASTIC

In 1997 I was chairman of Sheboygan County's Festival of Trees (Wisconsin). In 1998 the chairman was Helene Capizzi, who's married to the "Home Page" editor of our local paper, *The Sheboygan Press*. She overheard a conversation I was having at a festival meeting about saving some plants on a homesite which was soon to be excavated. She went home and, unbeknown to me, mentioned to her husband about the saving of plants by the Wild Ones. And that's how I found my yard the subject of a newspaper article.

The interview and photo session were a hurried affair as I had to attend a funeral in an hour, so I was not in my usual gardening apparel when photographed. (They were to come back for another shot when I was in my denims, but I inconveniently fell off my stoop on returning from the funeral and was incapacitated for awhile. Am happy to report I am completely healed; and my biggest fear when I fell was—who will weed my garden?)

The publicity from the article was fantastic. Not only did the newspaper get calls, but I received many. Mostly folks wanted to know more about Wild Ones and how to join or where they could get Sweet Woodruff and questions on its behavior—i.e., *is it really invasive, how do you tend to it in the fall, is it a perennial, etc.* I received so many copies of the article from friends and acquaintances and have heard so many positive remarks from people in the community. I try to give summer luncheons for my friends to be able to share the garden, but regret the time I have to spend in the kitchen preparing the food, as I would rather be outside.

We added a garden room onto our home in the early part of 1998, and the construction did take its toll on the garden as the trucks had to go right over it to dig the basement. So we are still in the midst of getting the garden back to normal. It will take a year or so to get some of the perennials back to their former state, but the room was worth it. We eat all our meals there and can feel like we are sitting right out in the garden without the mosquitoes. ☸

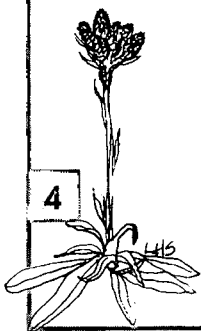
—Nancy Warrington

IS YOUR LANDSCAPE READY TO MAKE ITS MEDIA DEBUT?

Wild Ones members have been featured in some big-name news, home and garden magazines, radio and television programs, and books. For community awareness, however, nothing beats the local paper. Community newspapers are generally hungry for interesting stories about local citizens, so tell them about your property. Send them a couple snapshots, some Wild Ones literature, and your personalized yard brochure (turn to page 6 for ideas). Give the editor some advance notice of your vegetation's peak color season so your interview can be scheduled accordingly.

If you have already been featured in the media, please tell us about your experience.

"Ideas move rapidly when their time comes."
—Carolyn Heilbrun



Above: The diminutive Pussytoes (*Antennaria* sp.) begins opening its fuzzy white flowers in April. Illustration by Lucy Schumann.

Wild Ones break traditional rules

By MARY ANN HOLLEY
PRESS CORRESPONDENT

The Wild Ones, a group devoted to the concept of native plants as alternatives to lawn, was a direct outgrowth of a natural landscaping workshop offered in 1977 by the Schirz Audubon Center of Milwaukee. The group learned much about the natural landscaping philosophy, and organized yard tours to help with planning natural landscapes. A calendar was developed that lists the best trees, shrubs and grasses for the best landscaping results.

Each spring, summer and fall, members rescue plants in the path of development. Annually, each chapter offers a help-me day of consultation at various members' properties.

"At first, it was just the artists who were courageous enough to break the cruel law of lawns," says Wild Ones member Leon O'Neil of Milwaukee. "Not only were the landscapes flat, bleak, and shrubby, but shrubs were not free to develop their own shapes or bear flowers and fruit at the end of their branches."

empowers people to defy the laws of conformity and decorate their yards with diverse, lush communities of life, says O'Neil. In July 1979, there were nine members. As of the last formal count, autumn 1996, there were 1,200 Wild Ones in six states, and 12 local area chapters.

The group believes that time will prove that their landscaping methods are not only popular for their economic and environmental benefits, but by example, landscapes are becoming more natural.

No lawn mower is needed at the Stuart and Nancy Warrington home, an island of lush vegetation in the middle of Sheboygan.

"I'M DIGGING A POND," I SAID

... for two years. "Can't you imagine the personality the water will have—the life it'll support—all that we'll learn because it's right in our yard?" At the time, friends and neighbors just stared. Now their "oh!" and "wow!" outbursts reveal their faith to have been lank.

Our pond measures about 20 by 25 feet, with a center well near 3 feet deep. With the foreknowledge of underground utilities' whereabouts, I began by stripping the topsoil from the areas that would become the pond and swale. During heavy rains I observed where water gathered to verify my engineering plans. Then, I just kept shoveling, moving the dirt to build a berm between our yard and the asphalt lot next door. Before building the berm, oily water from the parking lot pooled in our yard.

THE POND HAS THREE ZONES:

1) A center lambchop-shaped well intended to confine waterlilies and offer deep hibernation muck for amphibians. 2) A long, shallow crescent for shoreline plants. 3) A round 'cool tub' (as opposed to a hot tub) where we dangle our feet or slide in to soak. Between the sections, I built up ridges to hold back the soil and roots in the two planting zones.

Eight friends helped us roll the 30-mil polypropylene liner into a long cigar shape and carry it over the thick, cushioning bed of newspapers, dampened to stay put. After pushing the liner in place and filling it with water, I turned under the edge and buried it with soil. At the risk of offending many, I must say I find rocks encircling a pond (intended to hide the liner edge) to look highly contrived and unnatural.

I relied on JoAnn Gillespie to get me started with the water plants as I am unfamiliar with that tribe. She set me up with Burreed, Blue Flag Iris, Sweet Flag, Water Plantain, Softstem Rush, and Flowering Rush (*Butomus umbellatus*, a pretty non-native Aldo Leopold favored). And, as JoAnn had assured me, the plants 'biofiltered' sufficiently so no pump is needed.

By running drain tile from our downspouts, water is carried away from the house, flushes the pond, and then flows to the swale which harbors Swamp Milkweed, Marsh Marigold, Obedient Plant, Ironweed, Jewelweed, Cardinal Flower, Blue Lobelia, Sweet Grass, a Tamarack and Musclewood trees.

Much of the pond's edge is dry, but I wanted the species growing there to blend with the blades and reeds of the water plants, so my plantings included Wild Onion and Spiderwort. A land-lubber sedge neighbors the pond's Tussock Sedge.

Between the house and the pond, I wanted low-profile plants that would not obstruct our view of the water. Transplanting our bed of rhubarb there filled the bill. Although not a wetland species, its large leaves look at home within the marshy setting that seduces our gaze daily. —Joy Buslaff



A plank bridge over the drainage

swale intensifies the impression that this is a wetland. I recline awaiting liner-toting volunteers.



A project you can do today

"Resistance to the organized mass can be effected only by the man who is as well organized in his individuality as the mass itself."
—Carl Jung, 1875-1961, Swiss psychiatrist

A YARD BROCHURE

When guests walk away from a tour of your yard, will they remember the names of the plants you showed them? Will they be able to explain to their friends why you have a natural landscape? Will they know how to join Wild Ones? Probably not, unless you write down some of that information for them. You need a personal yard brochure.

WHAT CAN YOU PUT INTO YOUR HANDOUT?

Paul, Holly and Sam Olsen provide a vegetation map. The children in Bret Rappaport's family inventoried their one-acre prairie and woodland. Jeremy, Conor, Chandler and Cassidy also noted the criss-crossed trails and other high-

lights, such as the bird house, or the creek, or the brush pile. They wrote up a trail guide for those who visit the yard. Each of the children also has a garden that is his or her own.

A personal yard brochure would be the ideal venue to reveal the results of your research about the presettlement conditions of your

neighborhood—identifying former plant communities and describing how and when the landscape changed.

You can also include a list of all the species currently growing in your yard (it may surprise you), or type up a list of all the species of birds to have visited your property, if that's your fascination.

Should your situation allow, set up a small mailbox stuffed with brochures along with a sign encouraging passersby to help themselves. Of course, this would be a great spot for a Wild Ones yard sign, too.

Another spice to add to your brochure is a quotation from a favorite author who sums up your philosophy ...

"If there is one lesson I have drawn from my travels, it is that cultural and biological diversity are far more than the foundation of stability; they are an article of faith, a fundamental truth that indicates the way things are supposed to be.... There is a fire burning over the Earth, taking with it plants and animals, cultures, languages, ancient skills, and visionary wisdom. Quelling this flame and reinventing the poetry of diversity is the most important challenge of our times."

—Wade Davis,
Shadows in The Sun

Our Natural Yard

We are using native plants which existed in Wisconsin thousands of years before farming, logging, and homesteading changed the native landscape dramatically. Today, prairies are found only in tiny remnants comprising 1% of the original prairies and oak savannas. Our forests lack the diversity of native species they once enjoyed only 100 years ago.

Our yard consists of a woods, prairie, and oak savanna. The wildflowers, ferns, grasses, trees and shrubs have many textures, colors, and heights. The flowers and grasses move with the wind and catch water droplets which sparkle in the sun after a mid-summer rainstorm. We find beauty in the frost that lines the leaves of the Gray-headed Coneflower on a crisp Fall morning. Our yard is always changing.

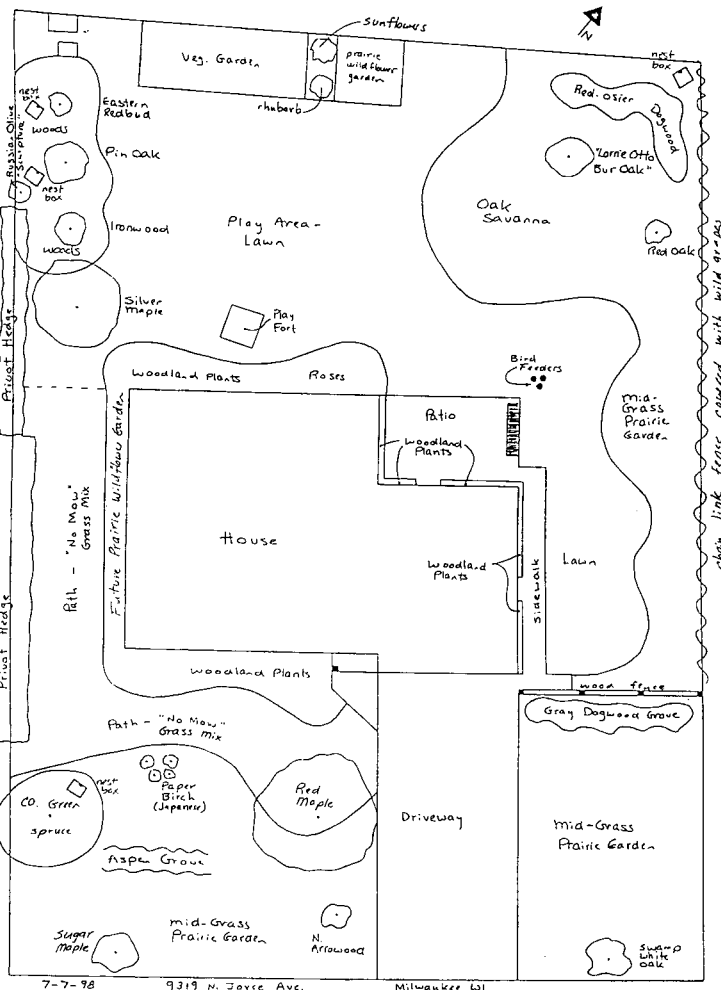
Natural landscapes provide food and shelter for a variety of interesting wildlife. We've had Kestrels, Goldfinches, squirrels and rabbits nesting on our property. We've also had Hummingbirds, Moths, Monarchs, and Admiral butterflies slipping right by the wildflowers. Spiders spin delicate and intricate webs. The small rounded hills in the prairie are actually ant mounds in which thousands of ants are busily improving our soil.

Maintenance is minimal. Native plants have been adapting to the stresses of our midwestern climate since at least the last ice age, ten thousand years ago. Most of the plants are either perennials or biennials and form a tight knit plant community. Natural landscapes do not need fertilizers, herbicides, or pesticides to keep them growing. We don't even need a water! By re-establishing plantings of native wildflowers, ferns, grasses, trees and shrubs we have created a safe and interesting environment.

Paul, Holly, and Sam

The Olsen Residence • Site Plan

Illustrations courtesy of Paul Olsen



Within my yard brochure I've included this essay about what my property means to me.

WHAT IS THIS PLACE WITH MY NAME ON ITS DEED?

This place before you is my **reference library**, regularly consulted with queries about nature. It also serves as a **dance floor** to courtship rituals for countless species, including my own. It is a **living perfumery**, no doubt, and a veritable **gift shop** supplying bouquets, plants and seeds, teas and nibbles. It must be some kind of **market**, too, as it has brought forth rhubarb pies and berry jellies and State Fair first-place wines. At times, it is nothing more than a **canvas for a creative mind** laying traps for flattery, and thereby it becomes a **match-maker of friends** who began as admirers.

This landscape works as a **demonstration of bioengineering** as it baffles noise, prevents erosion and channels winds. It further acts as an **agent of the environment** as it builds soil, filters pollutants and generates oxygen.

The assessor would appraise it as a **property of increasing worth**. The meter-reader would record it as an **energy-miser**. An Iraqi dictator, finding no power mower, would write it off as a **fossil fuel-free zone**. Those who own native plant nurseries, on the other hand, would find economic prosperity in a **half-acre consumer**.

The life scientist might regard its diverse species as a **pharmacopoeia of medicinals** or simply a **garden resisting infestation**. The patriot or historian would applaud its **tribute to provenance**. A wise teacher would recognize it as a **classroom**. Any child would see it as a **playground**. An artist would perceive it as an infinite series of **picturesque scenes**.

The contemplative would see this as a **holy place**. Those who fear God would think it a **veneration of His creation**; those who fear mankind would see it as an **act of preservation**. The people of third-world countries would see a **land of plenty** ... unsquandered.

Oddly enough, the very best definition for this **wildlife habitat** may be that it is our **home entertainment system**. The colors advance in



their performance so as never to rerun a season quite the same way twice. The melodies hum, trumpet, whisper in improvisational collaboration.

From this **vantage point** we have beheld meteors and fossils, herons and hummingbirds, maggots and manure, hail and human tears. We have pond-soaked during July's heat, gazing up at hundreds of yellow blooms, and cross-country skied upon December's snow, admiring thousands of white-capped stems.

This **oasis** that rewards the senses and lifts the mind and comforts one's body is all things to this family. We have envisioned the grandeur of its **presettlement landscape** and resuscitated it to the best of our amateur abilities. We invite you to visit our **piece of Earth** and encourage you to restore the place to which you hold the deed. ☺

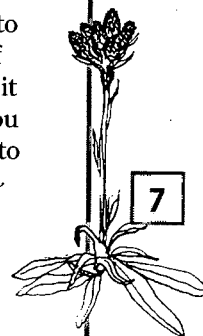
—Joy Buslaff

"Surely it is an error to banish the orchard and the fruit-garden from the pleasure-grounds of modern houses, strictly relegating them to the rear, as if something to be ashamed of."

—Richard Jeffries
(1848-1887)

Wild Life in
A Southern
Country

*The more I simplify inside my home, and the more I diversify outside it,
the happier I am, and the fewer the chores.*



WILD GINGER (*Asarum canadense*)

Family: Aristolochiaceae (Birthwort)

Other Names: Little Brown Jugs, Little Pig's Feet, Canada Snakeroot, Indian Ginger, False Colt's Foot, Heart Leaf, Wild Spikenard, Colic Root, Sturgeon Plant, Vermont Snakeroot, Southern Snakeroot, Ginger Root.

Habitat: In rich woods and somewhat shaded calcareous ledges. It is usually propagated by root divisions.

Description: A single dark red-brown to greenish-brown flower appears in the crotch between two leafstalks. The flowers are 1½ inches wide, cup-shaped with three pointed lobes. The pair of large, heart-shaped, hairy leaves are 3 to 6 inches wide and almost obscure the flower. **Approximate height** is 6 to 12 inches. **Flowering:** April to May.

Comments: Before the first explorers came to this continent, the roots of Wild Ginger were used by the American Indians in much the same way as ginger was used in Europe—as a flavoring and to disguise tainted meat. The ginger on our spice shelves today comes from the tropics and is derived from a different plant, *Zingiber officinale*.

George Washington Carver had a great interest in wild plants and wrote an essay on Wild Ginger. He claimed that one could pick the leaves, dry and powder them fine (same with the root) and “*shake over the food as eaten or drop a few leaves into the food while cooking.*” The name, Heart Leaf, came from him.

As their most important seasoning, the Meskwaki Indians kept the roots on hand at all times. Mud Catfish, caught in the Iowa River which flowed through their reservation, were seasoned with Wild Ginger. This destroyed the mud taste and rendered them palatable. They also chewed the root and spit it upon bait to improve the chances of catching their fish.

Medicinal Use: Modern research has found that Wild Ginger contains aristolochic acid which has proven antimicrobial action against a broad spectrum of bacteria and fungi. This explains why American Indians valued it for indigestion, coughs (including whooping cough), heart conditions, female ailments, throat problems, nervous conditions, and cramps. They also thought its use eliminated danger of poisoning when eating an animal that had died of unknown causes.

In 1830, a doctor claimed to have cured a patient of tetanus with this plant. In 1923, H. Smith recorded, “*The fresh or dried root is used by the Menomini as a mild stomachic. When the patient is weak or has a weak stomach and it might be fatal to eat something he craves, then he must eat part of this root. Whatever he wants then may be eaten with impunity.*”

Mountain women used the root to ease the aches and pains of pregnancy, ginger has always been associated with childbirth, hence the family name, Birthwort.

Name Origin: Genus name, *Asarum* (ASS-a-rum), is from the Greek word *a*, meaning “not,” and *sairo*, meaning “I adorn,” because it was rejected from the garlands used by the ancients. The species name, *canadense* (KAN-adense), means “of Canada.” The word ginger, comes from the Sanskrit word, which means “horn body,” referring to the shape of the blossoms. The blossoms are called Little Brown Jugs or Little Pig's Feet. The family name, is pronounced aris-toe-loe-ki-AY-see-ee.

Author's Note: Wild Ginger once grew profusely throughout the woodlands of eastern North America. Unfortunately, it is becoming quite scarce due to the loss of its natural habitat. I feel very fortunate to be living in an area that is so abundant in wild flora and to own land in Door County which is also rich with native flora. I fear that the children of today will not find these wonderful wild places when they reach my age. I sincerely hope I'm wrong, but unless we all begin to take steps to slow the wanton destruction of our woodlands, wetlands and roadsides, our natural beauty will no longer be ours to view, study and just enjoy. Future generations will only see these species in the private wild gardens of people like Wild Ones and the plantings which have been developed around schoolyards (when they are allowed to flourish from year to year and not demolished by school officials who have no regard for, and actually fear, things of the natural world). [See Jan./Feb. Journal.]

I hope it isn't my generation that is responsible for the final demise of our wild lands—denying our children's children the delight of finding that elusive Little Brown Jug of the Wild Ginger, the “Jack” in the Pulpit, the spadix hidden inside the spathe of the Skunk Cabbage, the unfurling leaf of the Bloodroot, or the intricate, uncoiling fiddle head of a fern in early spring. It has been a joy and a privilege to live in a time when these wonders of nature are still waiting to be discovered after a long, cold winter. ♫

© 1999 Janice Stiefel, Plymouth, Wis.

PROPAGATING WILD GINGER



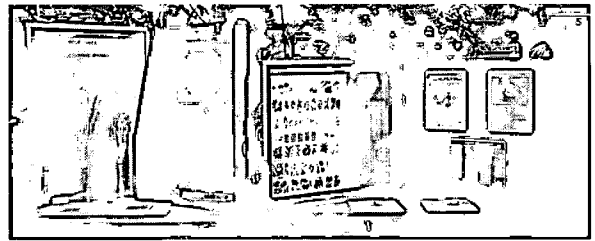
Collecting and germinating the seed of many woodland wildflowers can be tricky, but Wild Ginger is among the easiest. The seeds are ready to collect when they have turned brown, and, unless woodland critters beat you to them, they can be leisurely collected over a two- to three-week period in June. About 10 to 20 seeds can be squeezed from each flower-like capsule. This is a quick job, but will leave your fingers temporarily stained.

Seeds must be sown immediately. If waiting a few days, keep the seeds in a sealed, refrigerated container. Seeds sown *in situ* will germinate the following spring, but true leaves might not appear until the second growing season. To hasten growth, sow seeds in flats or pots. Keep these well watered the first summer, leave outside until late winter, then take in to a heated greenhouse or another warm, bright situation. Germination will occur within a few weeks and seedlings will likely begin developing true leaves by mid to late spring.

Wild Ginger forms a lovely groundcover in moist and mesic shade. Large colonies can be easily divided, and rhizome cuttings root well; but rootstocks shouldn't be taken from natural areas unless it is part of an organized plant rescue. ☸

—Maria Urice
Ion Exchange
Harpers Ferry, Iowa

Chapter news — Oklahoma —



NATURE DAY 1998

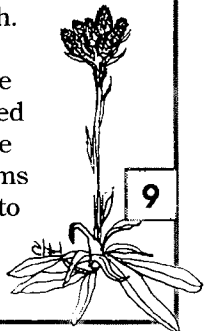
The Oklahoma Chapter's Nature Day 1998 activities took place at Sanborne Park this past summer. The event was arranged by the Payne County Audubon Society. The activities and demonstrations were designed for children, however, most of the events also captured the attention of the adults. The programs included face painting, backyard bird workshops, nature walks, and a scavenger hunt. Other displays provided access to fragrant herbs, growing mushrooms, honey and beeswax candles.

Wild Ones was represented by Michelle Ragge who displayed native flowers and grasses and prepared two identification contests (one for habitat and another for native plants). Michelle also set up a table where children could make their own butterflies.

Several groups affiliated with Oklahoma State University offered a wide variety of information. Phil Mulder from the Entomology Department brought a variety of insects that could be touched. Jodie Whittier and Day Liggor represented the Zoology Department with an impressive Red-tailed Boa weighing about 35 pounds. Phil Lienesch, also from the Zoology Department, demonstrated the different types of lake algae—organisms that cannot normally be seen. Jason Andrews represented the Geology Department with a display made up of fossils, bones, rocks and minerals. The highlight of the display was dinosaur bones and teeth.

Volunteers associated with Caring for Planet Earth brought water displays. The first was a model of a stream that included fish and water spiders. The displays were designed to show how different organisms reveal the water quality of a stream and to demonstrate the effects of erosion. ☸

—Pat McDonald



Classrooms without walls

The Lorrie Otto Seeds for Education Fund of the Milwaukee Foundation awards grants to places of learning for projects whose efforts best reflect our message of creating natural landscapes using native plants and environmentally sound practices, and appreciating humankind's proper place in the web of Nature.

The Lincoln Prairie plot at Lincoln School in De Pere, Wis., was one of the recipients of a 1997 Seeds For Education grant. Follow-up is their report.

—Nancy Aten, Seeds For Education director

SPRING 1997 ☞ Mr. Farnsworth, the prairie coordinator, prepared the site. He eliminated the grasses and weeds and rototilled the site. That was not an easy job. We decided that we would take the grant money along with some additional funding from our PTO and order plants instead of seeds.

OCTOBER 1997 ☞ The plants arrived and we planted them as quickly as possible since October was a very warm month. Two days is all it took us and we planted nearly 100 plants. Unfortunately it filled about one-third of our prairie.

NOVEMBER 1997 ☞ Mr. Farnsworth went to the Wild Ones' Green Bay Chapter meeting to present our progress to its members. The group was so impressed by our efforts and undertaking that they donated to our prairie many prairie seeds. So, in the cool days of November we planted the seeds. Boy, that was much easier than planting plants.

MARCH 1998 ☞ We anxiously wait for the spring weather to see what will come up. Nicolet Papers



The Lincoln Prairie
West De Pere School District

approached our superintendent and expressed interest in aiding us with our prairie. They wanted us to come up with a wish list. We brainstormed and came up with the list (including more plants, a gate, tools, birdfeeders, and birdhouses). We also got Group 500, a design firm in Racine, to design a logo for our prairie free of charge. We e-mailed artwork of prairie plants and wildlife to be incorporated into the logo.

SUMMER 1998

See the photo! Black-eyed Susans, Ox-eye Sunflowers, Purple Coneflowers ... garden spiders and grasshoppers.

NOVEMBER 1998 ☞ Students collected seeds from plants that bloomed this year and purchased additional seeds from Prairie Nursery. Seeded remainder of original prairie, and completed and seeded a new plot. Added birdfeeders and houses built or donated by teachers' grandfathers. Students are collecting cans to raise money for birdseed.

We, the students and staff, thank you for your grant and interest in our project. It really got us started. ☞

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10

Wild Garden, the first national gardening magazine to focus exclusively on gardening with native plants, is now offering Wild Ones members a special subscription rate: \$12.50 for four issues (one year). This low rate will save members \$7.50 off newsstand prices. Wild Ones members who already have a subscription may extend it at the lower rate.

Wild Garden supports your efforts to plant and maintain native landscapes, and our goal is to help keep you informed about national, regional, and local events related to this exciting topic. Every issue of *Wild Garden* contains regional wildscaping tips, as well as articles about specific plants and wildlife indigenous to your area of the country.

This year the publisher of *Wild Garden* also will be launching a national magazine for professionals who want to use native plants on a

large scale in the public or private sectors. The magazine is called *Professional Wildscaping*, and it will present case histories and how-to information from people who are actively involved in using natives. The magazine's purpose is to encourage more land developers to conserve native vegetation when possible and to replace vegetation they remove with locally indigenous varieties. If you know of someone who is a landscape designer or architect, building contractor, land developer, landscape consultant, or government professional whose job involves land planning in any form, call us, and we will be happy to send them a sample of *Professional Wildscaping* free of charge.

For more information about either of these offers, please call our new toll-free number:

1-877-NATIVE-2 (877-628-4832). ☞

—Joanne Wolfe, Publisher

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-root' 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.



ILLINOIS

GREATER DUPAGE CHAPTER

Chapter meets the third Thursday of the month at 7 p.m. at the College of DuPage, unless otherwise noted. Call (630) 415-IDIG for info.

MARCH 18—Check hotline number for location. Jeff Rugg, from Nature's Corner, will teach us "How to Add Water Interest to Your Natural Garden."

APRIL 16—Christ Lutheran Church, Rt. 83 and 55th St., Clarendon Hills. Third annual potluck dinner. Honored speaker Dr. Bob Betz.

LAKE-TO-PRAIRIE CHAPTER

Meetings are held on the second Tuesday of the month in the Byron Colby Community Barn at Prairie Crossing, Grayslake (Rt. 45 just south of Ill. 120). Visitors welcome. Call Karin Wisiol for info, (847) 548-1650.

MARCH 9—Jim Steffen, ecologist, Chicago Botanic Garden, presents "Planting And Managing Natives in Your Dream Yard."

APRIL 13—Valleri Talapatra, Kerry Leigh and Frank Haas, landscape architects, present "Designing A Spot for Native Plants in Your Dream Yard: A Workshop for Wild Ones Members."

NORTH PARK CHAPTER

Meetings are held the second Thursday of the month at 7 p.m. at the North Park Nature Center, 5801 N. Pulaski, Chicago, unless otherwise indicated. Call Bob Porter for more info, (312) 744-5472.

MARCH 11—Doug Anderson, past president of the Chicago Audubon Society and the Chicago Ornithological Society, will speak about birds of the Chicago region and plants that attract them.

APRIL 8—Speaker to be announced.

ROCK RIVER VALLEY CHAPTER

Meetings held at Jarrett Prairie Center, Byron Forest Preserve, 7993 N. River Rd., Byron, unless otherwise noted. Call (815) 234-8535 for info.

MARCH 18—7 p.m. Heather Swenson, research management specialist for the Natural Land Institute, discusses "Invasive Plants in the Winnebago County Area."

APRIL 15—7 p.m. John Larson, Taylor Creek Restoration Nurseries, presents a program on "Wetlands and Wetland Restoration." Note: This meeting

will be held at the Severson Dells Environmental Center of the Winnebago County Forest Preserve District, 8786 Montague Rd.

KANSAS

Chapter meets monthly. Call Michael S. Almon for info, (785) 832-1300.

KENTUCKY

FRANKFORT

Meetings are held on the second Monday of the month at 5:30 at Franklin County Extension office unless otherwise noted. Call Katie Clark at (502) 226-4766 or email herbs@kih.net for info.

LOUISVILLE CHAPTER

Meetings are held on the third Tuesday of the month at 7 p.m. at the Louisville Nature Center, 3745 Illinois Avenue, unless otherwise noted. Call Portia Brown at (502) 454-4007 or e-mail Light@entrekyn.net for info.

MARCH 16—(Tentative) Era MacDonald will speak on being a conscientious consumer when buying plants for your site.

MICHIGAN

ANN ARBOR CHAPTER

Meetings are held the second Wednesday of the month. For info contact Dave Mindell, (734) 665-7168 or plantwise@aol.com; or Bob Grese, (734) 763-0645 or bgrese@umich.edu.

MARCH 10—7:30 p.m. Pioneer High School, 601 W. Stadium. A workshop, "Design Solutions," will address members' landscaping concerns.

APRIL 14—Prescribed burn 6 p.m., lecture 7:30 p.m. Cobblestone Farm, 2781 Packard Rd. "Conducting Burns in An Urban Setting" presented by Dave Borneman, program coordinator, Ann Arbor Natural Area Preservation.

MINNESOTA

OTTER TAIL CHAPTER

Meetings are held at the Prairie Wetlands Learning Center, 7 p.m., unless otherwise noted. Call Tim Bodeen for info, (320) 739-9334.

MISSOURI

ST. LOUIS CHAPTER

Meetings are held the first Wednesday of the month. New chapter is developing program schedule. Contact Scott Woodbury for info, (314) 451-0850.

MARCH 3—To be announced.

APRIL 7—Possibly Bill and Nancy Knowles' woodland garden.

OHIO

COLUMBUS CHAPTER

Meetings are held the second Saturday of the month at 10 a.m. at Inniswood Metro Gardens, Inniswood House, 940 Hempstead Rd., Westerville, unless otherwise noted. Call Martha Preston for info, (614) 263-9468.

MARCH 13—"Backyards for Wildlife Using Native Plants" by Sara Jean Peters. Ms. Peters supervises the Backyards for Wildlife program for the DNR Division of Wildlife. Phone 771-9215 for more info.

APRIL 10—Work Project: Continue landscaping at our Habitat for Humanity House.

OKLAHOMA

COYLE CHAPTER

Meetings are held on the last Saturday of the month at 10 a.m. at the Stillwater Public Library, Rm 138, unless otherwise noted.

WISCONSIN

FOX VALLEY AREA CHAPTER

Meetings are held at UW-Extension office, 625 E. Cnty Rd. Y, Oshkosh, 7 p.m., unless otherwise noted.

MARCH 18—Kate Redmond, educator and naturalist, presents "Native American Uses of Plants for Food, Medicine and Other Life Needs." Meet on lower floor of Oshkosh Public Museum with Winnebago Audubon group (use High St. entrance).

APRIL 22—Rick Buser, UW-Fox Valley teacher, presents "Maintenance of Natural Landscapes."

GREEN BAY CHAPTER

Meetings are held at the Green Bay Botanical Garden, 2600 Larsen Rd., 7 p.m., unless otherwise noted. Call Bonnie Vastag for info, (920) 494-5635.

MARCH 10—Randy Powers, Prairie Future Seed Co., discusses "Landscaping with Native Plants."

APRIL 14—Paul Smith, Oneida tribe, presents "Preserving The Oneida Horticultural Heritage."

MADISON CHAPTER

Meetings are held the last Thursday of the month at Arboretum McKay Center, 7 p.m., unless otherwise noted. Public is welcome. Call Joe Powelka for more info, (608) 837-6308.

MARCH 20—See next page for conference info.

APRIL 29—"Plant identification." Speaker will be Cheryl Habberman who works with the UW Arboretum and is responsible for planning the Native Landscaping Conference each year.

MENOMONEE RIVER AREA CHAPTER

Meetings are held at 6:30 p.m. at Gloria Dei Lutheran Church, W180 N7863 Town Hall Rd., Menomonee Falls. Call Judy Crane for info, (414) 251-2185.

March 16—Bill Reichenbach, Johnson's Nursery, presents "Native Landscaping Design Concepts."

APRIL 20—David Kopitske discusses the habitat and public lands of the lower Wisconsin River.

MILWAUKEE—NORTH CHAPTER

Meetings are held at the Schlitz Audubon Center, 1111 E. Brown Deer Rd., Bayside, second Saturday of the month, 9:30 a.m., unless otherwise noted. Call voice mail message center at (414) 299-9888.

MARCH 13—Kit Woessner will tell us how she used natural landscaping for her home landscape.

APRIL 10—Richard Barloga will speak about "Prairies of Southeastern Wisconsin."

MILWAUKEE—WEHR CHAPTER

Meetings are held at the Wehr Nature Center, second Saturday of the month, 1:30 p.m., unless otherwise noted. Call voice mail message center at (414) 299-9888.

MARCH 13—Same program as North Chapter. Non-members are welcome for a fee of \$2.

APRIL 10—Same program as North Chapter. Non-members are welcome for a fee of \$2.



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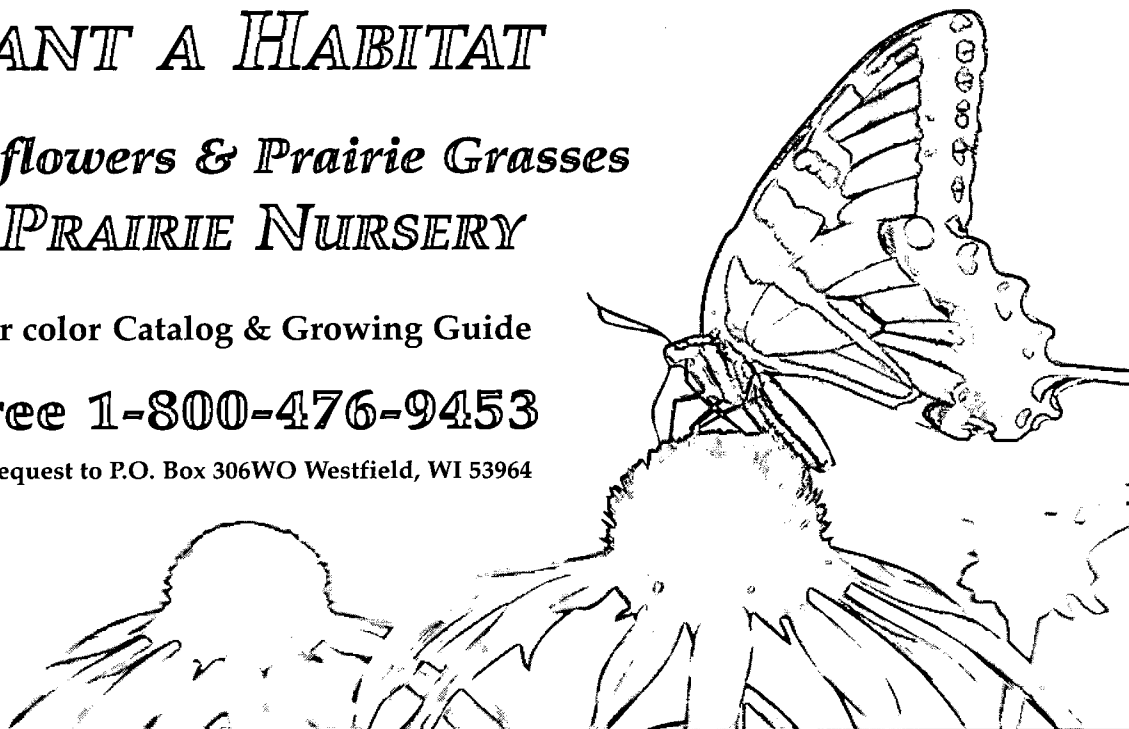
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

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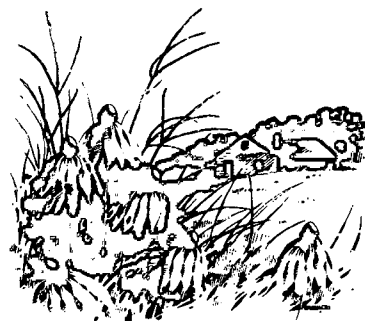
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Pat Armstrong sends us this beautiful scene from Naperville, Illinois. Her yard sign is nestled among Blue Star Amsonia, Stiff Goldenrod, and wild raspberries beneath a blooming Cockspur Hawthorn. Thanks, Pat. Aluminum yard signs proclaiming "this land is in harmony with nature" are available from your local chapter or send \$21 to: Wild Ones Yard Sign, P.O. Box 23576, Milwaukee, WI 53223-0576.

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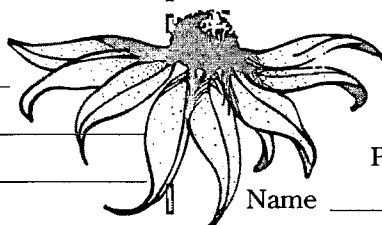
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KATIE CLARK
(502) 226-4766

LOUISVILLE
MIKE SMILEY
(502) 243-2208

MICHIGAN
ANN ARBOR
TRISH BECKJORD
(734) 669-2713

MINNESOTA
OTTER TAIL
TIM BODEEN
(218) 739-9334

MISSOURI
ST. LOUIS
SCOTT WOODBURY
(314) 451-0850

NEW YORK
LONG ISLAND
JANET MARINELLI
(718) 622-4433
(ext 254)

OHIO
COLUMBUS
MARTY PRESTON
(614) 263-9468

OKLAHOMA
COYLE
MICHELLE RAGGE
(405) 466-3930

WISCONSIN
FOX VALLEY AREA
CAROL NIENDORF
(920) 233-4853
or DONNA
VANBUECKEN
(920) 730-8436

GREEN BAY
JULIE MACIER
(920) 465-4759

MADISON
JOE POWELKA
(608) 837-6308

**MENOMONEE
RIVER AREA**
JUDY CRANE
(414) 251-2185

**MILWAUKEE-NORTH
& MILWAUKEE-WEHR**
(414) 299-9888