Neil Diboll’s State of the Lawn Address

On the last day of the Annual Meeting, a Sunday morning, the closing plenary thoughts were delivered by keynote speaker, and newly nominated Honorary Director Neil Diboll, with enthusiastic audience participation, in what turned out to be a meditative consciousness-raising meeting. You should have been there.

Diboll’s entire 20,000-word address may be read on the Wild Ones web site. For purposes of brevity, and to save a couple of trees, the Journal is pleased to give you the last 2,000 words, which summarize for you the substance of Diboll’s uplifting message.

At this point Diboll had delivered his arguments and was launching into his conclusions:

Which brings us to why oil and water will strongly influence the future of the American Landscape. The four largest crops in America, not necessarily in order of total acreage, are: Corn, soybeans, wheat, and lawn. That’s a lot of lawn. And what does it require to maintain all this lawn? Energy and water.

Lawn and Energy

It has been calculated that the average American lawn receives four times the volume of chemical applications as an average farm field. And where do these fertilizers, herbicides, fungicides, and the like come from? Most pesticides are derived from petrochemicals. The production of nitrogen and phosphorus fertilizers is extremely energy intensive. Add to that the trucking costs for delivery around the country; and then there is the additional energy cost of hauling away the product of all the fertilizing – the lawn clippings to the landfill or community compost pile.

And of course, mowing all that lawn requires a lot of gasoline. People are beginning to balk at paying $4 a gallon to fill up their mowers.

Lawn and Air Pollution

It has been estimated that 25 percent of the air pollution in the state of California is generated by two-cycle engines, primarily lawn mowers, leaf blowers, and other lawn care machinery. The “Mow, Blow, and Go” landscape practices they support contribute significantly to the compromised air quality that so characterizes many urban areas in the western United States where photochemical smog is often a problem.

The inescapable fact is that we simply will not be able to afford to maintain large expanses of lawn in the future, both economically and environmentally.

Why the Preoccupation with Lawn in America? A Short History

Taking an anthropological viewpoint, it is likely that humans have long preferred an open landscape around their dwellings. This allows us to readily determine who might be entering our territory, be they friend or foe. The lawn serves this purpose nicely. You can’t hide in 2-inch tall turf. Mowed lawn can provide a sense of security, both tactically and socially.

Lawn was also a status symbol in England in the 18th and 19th centuries. Only the wealthy owned land and could afford to pay the gardeners that were required to maintain a lawn. With the rise of the American middle class in the late 19th century, and the development of mechanized mowing machines, possessing a lawn became an economic reality for thousands of homeowners. Now, they too, could emulate the lifestyle of wealthy Europeans.

It is easy to see how the great landscape designer Frederick Law Olmsted conceived of the lawn as the “great democratizer” of the landscape. The fenced properties of
Notes from the President

Let's Stop to Enjoy the Accomplishments of the Year

As November and December bring 2008 to a close let’s stop to enjoy the accomplishments of the year.

At the national level Wild Ones made great strides forward, from a 9-inch x 12-inch post office box and file cabinets in the basement of our executive director’s home to a real street address at our new headquarters building, with acreage ripe for planting and educating. Thank you again to all of you who have donated so much to make this dream come true.

Construction to turn the home into the Wild Ones Institute for Learning and Development (WILD) Center began this fall, and we hope to be officially open to the public soon. In August, members got a chance to take a peek at the building and enjoy the annual meeting and conference under the big top tent in the yard. As always, seeing old friends and meeting new ones was uplifting and inspiring.

During our third-quarter National Board meeting at the WILD Center we welcomed four new board members. Kathy Damé, of the Connecticut College Arboretum’s Mountain Laurel (CT) Chapter of Wild Ones, helps bring representation of our most easterly members, along with existing Director Janet Allen of the Habitat Gardening Chapter of Central New York. Other new directors include Chris McCullough from Greater Cincinnati (OH) Chapter, Karen Syverson from Fox Valley Area (WI) Chapter, and Carol Phelps of the relatively new Grand Rapids (MI) Chapter.

We’ve gone from a 9-inch x 12-inch post office box to a new headquarters building.

Already they are bringing new energy, experience and ideas to the table.

What will 2009 bring? On a large scale I certainly hope it brings peace, economic stability, justice, and an end to poverty. One does what one can on those issues, which unfortunately often seem too big to tackle. On the little postage stamp of Earth over which I have most control, my yard, I hope to foster peace between humans and nature by sharing the space freely with the other species.

Justice I can promote by continuing Wild Ones’ message against unnecessary manufacture and overuse of toxic lawn chemicals, and for beautiful, diverse landscapes that are alive and make a stand against the poverty of sterile, lawn-dominated landscapes that deprive children of safe places to be with nature. As for economics – well, I have saved quite a bit of seeds this fall, so I do have some “savings.”

On the National Board we are working hard to make 2009 the year that Wild Ones leaps forward in membership, influence, and recognition. We feel Wild Ones is poised to take off – we have a real HQ, all things green are popular, oil and water are getting scarce, and we’re focusing on marketing. We’d be delighted to hear your ideas. E-mail me at carol_andrews@hotmail.com.

Wishing you a peaceful and Green New Year.

Carol Andrews, Wild Ones National President
president@for-wild.org
Writers & Artists

Neil Diboll, owner of the Prairie Nursery, in Westfield, Wisconsin, and newly nominated Honorary Director of Wild Ones, was the keynote speaker at the Wild Ones Annual Meeting and Conference in August.

Barbara Bray is a Journal Contributing Editor, and President of the Oakland Chapter (MI) of Wild Ones.

Janet Allen is a Journal Contributing Editor and President of the Habitat Gardening in Central New York (NY) Chapter.

Joan Rudolph works as the Administrative Assistant at The WILD Center.

Kathy Dame is the Assistant Director of the Connecticut College Arboretum, and a founding member of the Connecticut Mountain Laurel (CT) Chapter of Wild Ones.

Wild Ones Helping With Fox River PCB Cleanup

Helping GW Partners, LLC, with the cleanup, means a healthier environment, a way for us to own The WILD Center debt free, and no PCBs will be stored on the property.

Wild Ones has signed a lease with GW Partners, LLC, to use 4 acres of upland, part of The WILD Center property, for the next two years. GW Partners will use this area to store the sand they use in conjunction with the capping function related to the PCB cleanup of the Fox River water system. There will be no PCBs stored on our property — and the monetary terms of this lease will allow Wild Ones to own the entire WILD Center site debt free.

Also, upon completion of the project, GW Partners will work with Wild Ones to restore the site as an oak savanna.

The Fox River is the site of one of the largest PCB-contamination clean-up projects in the world. Wild Ones is pleased to be able to play a small part in reverting this river to a healthier environment. Learn more about the PCB clean-up process.

Also, check these web sites for more information about GW Partners and the PCB removal project:

- littlelakecleanup.com
- pubs.acs.org/subscribe/journals/esthag-w/2001/oct/tech/rr_foxriver.html
- epa.gov/region5/sites/foxriver/
- dnr.state.wi.us/org/water/wm/foxriver/pcbhxory.htm
- dnr.wi.gov/org/water/wm/foxriver/

The lease also provides for a driveway, constructed by GW Partners, which we will be able to continue to use as The WILD Center driveway/parking area, upon completion of the project.

EcoScaper

Somewhere between a prairie and a formal planting lies the fertile potential of native plants in an ornamental design, the domain of the Ecoscaper — which is a brilliant synthesis in language of the two concepts, landscaper and ecologist. With this in mind, Wild Ones has developed the Ecoscaper Certification Program. Enhance your knowledge and get credit for your accomplishments. Visit www.ecoscaper.org for more information or to enroll.
STATE OF THE LAWN ADDRESS CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Europe were viewed by some landscape architects of that time as separating people from one another: neighbor from neighbor, American from fellow American. The lawn presented an opportunity to create free, unbroken expanses stretching across property lines and class lines in the fresh new suburbs of a rising nation. The very concept of “lawn” was associated with the closely held American values of freedom and upward social mobility.

So when your neighbors frown upon your “messy” and “weedy” natural landscape, they are probably not reacting solely from the standpoint of imposing their landscape taste upon their neighbor. Those of us who are so bold as to violate the unspoken “Social Covenant of the Lawn” are actually assailing the bedrock values that most Americans hold dear: Social class and assimilation into the greater society. The planting of a prairie in your front yard is not merely a landscaping sin – it is an affront to the greater group, their shared values, and sense of propriety. In some suburban circles the planting of prairie is actually viewed as a serious social faux pas – it requires that action be taken by the authorities to restore the proper landscape order.

Lawn is also the perfect example of our need to control and dominate nature. Don’t let that grass grow up to its natural height. Keep those pesky weeds at bay. And by all means, don’t let those bugs find a home in your yard.

In Olmsted’s day, lawns were not maintained with a witch’s brew of chemicals and loud, smoking machines. The environmental impact of the lawn of a hundred years ago was relatively light. We didn’t have the technological know-how to poison our back yards and water resources back then. The scream of the power mower was not yet available to shatter the sacred silence of a weekend morning. We had yet to progress to the sophisticated level of landscape maintenance that we enjoy today.

Despite our evolutionary attraction to a low-growing landscape around our settlements and the allegedly egalitarian social aspect of the lawn, it is not the answer to every landscape situation. Outside the “territorial safety zone” of our homes and buildings, we have the opportunity to create wilder, more diverse, and healthier landscapes. If these landscapes should conveniently require less maintenance and less money, we now have the answer to many a landscape dream.

An ecologically sound, economically-attractive alternative to mowing the lawn would be welcomed by a host of home-owning weekend warriors, not to mention the cost-conscious captains of corporate America. And what native-plant community is best suited to the wide open spaces presently claimed by the lawns of America? None other than the nearly-extirpated North American prairie.

The Future
Do we dare to hope that people are finally coming to their senses? Now that the “Era of Cheap Energy” is over, will the citizens of our land finally embrace the values of conservation and stewardship? As with almost all human endeavors, change comes painfully and usually as a result of economic forces. The only thing that has gotten people to give up their gas guzzlers is the high price of gas.

The only force that will increasingly push people toward living more sustainable and ecological lifestyles is the increasing cost of pushing nature around. As the price of gasoline, fertilizers, and pesticides increases, the lawn begins to look like a luxury. When it hurts your pocketbook to fill up your riding mower, then more prairies may be on the horizon.

We all know the compelling reasons for planting sustainable, native landscapes: Land and water conservation, wildlife habitat, flood control, reduced chemicals in the environment, lower water consumption, reduced costs, and dynamic, living ecosystems that soothe the soul. But what single other factor may eventually trump all of these benefits? Carbon.

Consider the carbon footprint of the prairie versus the lawn. The amount of energy required to maintain a lawn is astronomical. When you total up the energy required to mow the outdoor carpet weekly, fertilize it two to four times a year, and depestify, defungify and de-weed it, it really adds up.

And the carbon footprint of the prairie? Almost negligible. No fertilizers, no fungicides, perhaps an occasional spot application of herbicide to control a wayward weed, and an annual mowing or biennial burning. The only carbon that comes off the prairie is the smoke from a spring burn. And that carbon is soon absorbed back by the plants during the growing season and converted into new leaves, shoots, and roots.

Prairies are actually net carbon sinks, since much of the carbon dioxide they extract from the air goes into their roots. The average prairie plant has about two thirds of its living biomass underground in its root systems. Approximately one third of the root mass of the average prairie grass dies back every year, adding organic matter to the soil and sequestering carbon from the atmosphere.

All that rich, black soil in what is now the Corn Belt is the accumulation of thousands of years of carbon dioxide, extracted from the atmosphere by solar powered prairie plants. Even though the above-ground biomass of prairie plant – the leaves and stems – is released back into the atmosphere as carbon dioxide through prairie burns or by microbial breakdown, the net effect is that the prairie sequesters more carbon than it releases from year to year, thanks to the exceptional root systems of its many flowers and grasses.

And that may be one of the most compelling reasons to plant prairies and other native plant communities that we will ever have.
But ultimately, the decision as to how to landscape our homes, offices, and parks will come down largely to economics. When it simply becomes too expensive to pay for the fuel and water required to maintain the energy-intensive luxury lawn – (ever notice that the turf fertilizer advertisers always refer to a luxurious lawn?) – then new alternatives will be implemented.

We are slowly starting to see more and more people opting for a native landscape with greatly reduced life-cycle costs, compared to more expensive lawns. The average annual cost of a manicured lawn over a 20-year period is between three and 20 times that of a prairie (depending upon whether the lawn is established by seed or sod, the level of annual maintenance, and whether an irrigation system was installed). As the cost to support this two-dimensional ecological desert continues to increase, simple economics will dictate that viable alternatives must be found.

**However, prairie is not the answer to every landscape application.**

One obviously would not want to plant a prairie right up to the house, especially if burning is the preferred method of management. There are other solutions for areas where lawn is preferable, due to the proximity to buildings, shaded conditions, or alternative uses. (It’s pretty tough to play croquet in the prairie.)

For these situations, many people are seeding a “No Mow” fescue lawn mix. This blend of slow-growing turf varieties is derived from native fescue grasses. It requires little or no fertilizing, is more drought resistant than bluegrass, and has an innate ability to crowd out many weeds. It also has the ability to grow in shady conditions, and tolerates higher salt levels than most other turf grasses. For situations that do not call for the planting of a prairie, this is an excellent alternative to the high-maintenance, costly lawns that consume our precious energy and water resources.

As we come to terms with the new realities of limited oil, water, and other resources, it is inevitable that ecologically sustainable landscapes will replace the old, high-maintenance lawns of the past. Perhaps our future status symbols will be based not on how much we consume, but on how little impact we each have on our planet. Instead of measuring success by how large a house we own, or how big a vehicle we drive, social status will be awarded based upon how little of the Earth’s bounty we consume. Maybe, just maybe, we will someday be measured in terms of how much of the world’s resources and natural beauty we preserve for future generations. Now that’s a horizon I can look forward to seeing.

Photos by Karen Syverson, Kay Lettau, and Eileen Herrling.
My quest began with an eastern box turtle. Box turtles are forest-dwelling turtles with patterned shells resembling the dappled sunlight forest floor. In captivity box turtles eat straw-berries, carrots, cantaloupe, and other fruits and vegetables. In their natural habitat they eat insects, worms, and various fruits, including the egg-shaped fruits of the colony-forming May apple (Podophyllum peltatum). As with all living creatures, the food is digested and the animal excretes the by-products of this process as well as indigestible matter such as certain seeds. May apple seeds passing through a box turtle’s body not only are unharmed, but actually will germinate better. This is because the digestive process reduces the thickness of the seed coat. Eastern box turtles significantly improve the germination of May apple seeds, and they are a primary dispersal agent of this woodland wildflower. Are they perhaps responsible for my small colony of May apples? I wish they were, but my main dung depositor is much larger.

I have a love-hate relationship with deer. Although the deer are beautiful to watch, I hate when they eat my precious few trilliums or all the buds off my columbine as they did this year. They also eat fruits from the forest and backyards. These efficient eaters have a special four-chambered stomach permitting them to eat quickly and then settle down to digest it later. After about 20 hours the food is completely digested and converted into fuel for the deer. Anything leftover – ends up in my back yard. Thanks to these constant and sometimes messy deposits, I have noticed small areas of organically fertilized lawn and new seedlings sprouting here and there. Although deer dung is rumored to carry trillium seeds, I usually get a bunch of wild black cherry seedlings or a bunch of buckthorn.

But the fun doesn’t stop here. If you look closely at a day-old dung pat, you might notice a few holes in it. If your stomach doesn’t turn over, use a stick to flip the dung pat and look for signs of life. I found three different kinds of beetles on the deer dung in my yard. One of them was about 1/4-inch long, with spiny legs perfect for crawling in and around a pile of dung. Why should you care about dung beetles? Dung beetles are an important group of insects that help to decompose animal detritus. There are over 90 species in the United States, and they range in size from 0.1-inch to 2.5-inches long. With adequate populations, dung beetle larvae can completely remove a pile in 24 hours. Isn’t that amazing? Dung beetles were also an important component of prairies. Their tunneling behavior helped to improve nutrient recycling, soil structure, and plant growth. Visit the web site of the National Sustainable Agriculture Information Service and you can learn how to build a dung beetle “farm.” Their research into the importance of dung beetles in cattle pastures is also very interesting.

I hope that you have stuck with me this far because now I must burst that rosy-colored bubble involving our beautiful friends, the butterflies. We all know that butterflies sip nectar from flowers, but did you know that they also are attracted to bird droppings and other feces? Bird droppings and dung contain nutrients like sodium and proteins that apparently help butterflies’ reproductive success. Some people even suggest that dung piles are a good place to find butterflies. I have seen slugs, flies, and beetles enjoying a dung feast, but no butterflies yet. I will keep looking, though, for now I know that dung has a place in nature too. I hope you will join me.
The Northeast is renowned for its fall color – the reds and golds of maples, the yellows of clethra and spicebush, the ruby glow of blueberry and chokeberry bushes. And, since its introduction to the United States, from Asia in the 1860s, the gaudy red of burning bush (Euonymus alata), also known as winged euonymus, winged wahoo, winged spindle-tree, or Japanese spindle-tree, has established itself as part of our fall color. As a young homeowner, I, too, craved that fall color, and it was one of the first shrubs I planted. But when I learned about the threats to ecosystems posed by invasive plants like burning bush, it was one of the first I yanked out.

Burning bush is ubiquitous in my part of the country, found in yards, commercial areas, and public places – sometimes just a bush or two, but often in long hedges. Literally hundreds outline a nearby public park. I’ve even seen it planted in the landscaped areas of our state parks – places that should instead be showcasing our own indigenous plants that support our wildlife.

Like many non-native plants, it has no serious pests, and can tolerate a wide range of growing conditions, including full shade. This adaptability is one of the reasons for its popularity and, by the same token, for its invasive potential. Unfortunately, its popularity also makes its escape into natural areas all the more possible. The bush spreads in its immediate vicinity by means of the “seed shadow,” the blanket of seedlings that germinate right below the parent plant. Berry-eating birds also disperse the seeds to new areas through their droppings. Dense thickets of burning bush shade and crowd out native plants, threatening woodlands, fields, prairies, and coastal scrubland.

So far, its movement into natural areas has been most notable in Connecticut, Virginia, Pennsylvania, and Illinois, but it’s found throughout New England, south to northern Florida and the Gulf Coast, and west to Iowa and Missouri. It has even been reported in Montana. Because of its expansion, it has earned a place on the Red Alert list compiled by The Nature Conservancy’s Global Invasive Species Team.

But – suggest that burning bush may not be a good landscape choice, and you may encounter resistance – even hostility. People love the fall color. Unlike other invasives, like garlic mustard or Japanese knotweed, they are not likely to have noticed it invading nearby natural areas. As anyone who has tried to control a plant invasion will tell you, the time to manage it is before it becomes an obvious problem, not after.

To eradicate burning bushes, you can hand-pull seedlings that may have sprouted nearby and dig up the parent plant if it’s not too big. For the larger specimen, this can be 18-feet tall and wide – just keep cutting it to the ground until it gives up. For large infestations, you’ll probably need to resort to systemic herbicides, carefully following directions for either cut-stump or foliar treatment.

Those still not convinced of burning bush’s ecological dangers might nevertheless be lured away from the plant by discovering the many beautiful native alternatives (see box below). Burning bush in the fall may be eye-catching, but even devotees have to admit that it’s downright plain the rest of the year. On the other hand, many native shrubs not only provide vibrant fall color, but have other good qualities throughout the year: More attractive foliage, flowers, and berries. Further, you’ll have a distinctive landscape: The only one on your block without a burning bush.

**Some Native Alternatives to Burning Bush**

Red chokeberry (Aronia arbutifolia), Virginia sweetspire (Itea virginica), mapleleaf viburnum (Viburnum acerifolium), highbush blueberry (Vaccinium corymbosum), silky dogwood (Cornus amomum), and fragrant or shining sumac (Rhus aromatica or R. copallina).

By Janet Allen
SALT Meets Wild Ones in Connecticut

By becoming an environmental model in energy conservation, recycling, and preserving biodiversity, we mimic those self-perpetuating natural eco-systems – forests, meadows, and wetlands – that have survived for many thousands of years.

– William A. Niering

By Kathy T. Dame

On June 6th of 1997, at a Connecticut College Arboretum gathering, Dr. William A. Niering, a Professor of Botany at the college, announced his latest initiative – the SALT movement – which he hoped would spread nationwide. SALT is an acronym for Smaller American Lawns Today. It was, and is, aimed at reversing the lawn mania in America. In his lecture that evening, titled “Environmentally Designing Your Lawn,” Dr. Niering set forth some of the principles involved in the new movement. Americans, he said, could become the “salt of the earth” by cutting back on the size of their lawns, and having home grounds that are in harmony with nature.

He asked:
Why redesign the American lawn?
There are a myriad of reasons. Cutting back on the size of the lawn means cutting back on the use of pesticides. Pesticides not only can be harmful to people and their pets, but also can destroy species diversity and create monocultures, going against nature’s own tendency towards biodiversity. The use of synthetic fertilizers used on the typical American lawn can also pose real problems, since fertilized lawns have far more nitrogen runoff than non-fertilized lawns. Runoff is a serious pollution problem for wetlands and aquatic systems. All power equipment, especially riding mowers, are fossil-fuel demanding, and they require more energy in their initial construction, maintenance, and operation than hand-operated reel mowers, not to mention the high level of air pollution they generate.

Dr. Niering felt that even the noise pollution from using a power mower was an insult that neighbors should not have to tolerate. Furthermore, why waste time mowing a large lawn when you could be enjoying other activities? These are just a few of the reasons that Dr. Niering outlined that memorable evening.

Niering gave tips to the audience on how they might use land that is not lawn.

Setting aside an area for planting shrubs and trees will begin to decrease the size of the lawn, and will also attract wildlife. By planting native bushes such as viburnum, bayberry, and shadbush, along with other natives, eventually the grass will be shaded out. In the meantime, the homeowner can continue to mow the plantings, add leaves or wood chips to smother the grass, or begin to plant ground covers.

Niering suggested that homeowners convert a portion of their current lawn to a meadow by simply stopping mowing it. It is amazing the diversity of plants that are just sitting there waiting to flower, especially if the owner has not been using weed killers or fertilizers. Colorful native perennials can also be added to the meadow.

And every piece of property should have a vegetable garden and a small orchard with fruit trees. Oh, the joy of growing fresh fruits and vegetables right on your own home ground.

Perennial and annual flower borders lend diversity and require much less maintenance than lawns. Ground covers are a must, especially on steep slopes where mowing is difficult. Evergreen ground covers are especially attractive throughout the year. Planting the borders of the property with trees and shrubs will give the homeowner greater privacy, and permit the naturalistic landscaping to develop with minimal interference from neighbors. Above all, keep the front of the property and paths mowed so that your yard will not be considered simply unkempt.

The concept of naturalistic landscaping was far from new to Bill Niering. Energy

Dr. Niering felt that even the noise pollution from using a power mower was an insult that neighbors should not have to tolerate.

Conservation on the Home Grounds: The Role of Naturalistic Landscaping, written by Niering, was published by the Connecticut College Arboretum in 1976. At this point in 1997, however, he felt urgently compelled to bring it to the American homeowners, and to provide them with suggestions to help them begin to make the transition toward more ecologically sound home grounds.

SALT was an immediate hit with homeowners, many of whom wanted to get started on this transition. As word of SALT spread, people from throughout the country called or wrote to the Arboretum expressing interest and wanting to “join SALT.” But, there has never been a formal SALT membership.

Enter Wild Ones
Small wonder that I was excited when I discovered Wild Ones, an organization that promotes concepts similar to those promoted by the Arboretum – concepts that were the focus of the SALT movement.
While Wild Ones champions the use of mostly native species, SALT is tolerant of some non-invasive exotics – the two groups meet in the common goal of “Less Lawn.” My own yard has always been a Wild Ones/SALT paradise.

In 2006, Donna VanBuecken, knowing that I had a keen interest in starting a Wild Ones chapter in Connecticut, told me that Nancy Livensparger from Wild Ones of Ohio had moved to our state. Nancy and I met and began planning for our public announcement of the first meeting of Wild Ones in Connecticut, now proudly known as the Connecticut Mountain Laurel Chapter of Wild Ones. The area was ripe and the ground was fertile for the new chapter, and many people with an interest in SALT joined forces with our newly formed chapter. Earth Day and the annual SALT all-day seminar (which started in November of 2002), are two times when the two groups walk hand in hand.

Recently our Wild Ones chapter adopted the Arboretum’s Native Wildflower Garden as a community project. While the Arboretum itself must focus its attention on many aspects of the natural world, Wild Ones presents an exciting and well-developed movement that provides not only membership, but also a forum for members to share information and solve problems regarding their individual home grounds. The Mountain Laurel Chapter is also a group from whom the public can get help with their own yards.

In many respects, Dr. Niering’s dream that the SALT movement be spread throughout the country, has been fostered through SALT’s partnership with Wild Ones. SALT/Wild Ones are frequently mentioned together in local newspapers and beyond. Recently one of our Wild Ones member’s yard was featured in a local newspaper, and Wild Ones and SALT have been spoken of in the New York Times and, more recently, in The New Yorker.

By joining together with other like-minded homeowners, Americans can, and will, have biodiverse lawns that are in harmony with nature.

Dr. William A. Niering (1924-1999) was not only a beloved teacher and colleague at Connecticut College, but was also an internationally renowned environmentalist. He was not an armchair environmentalist, but rather walked in every aspect of his life. His career and accomplishments were very much linked with the Arboretum as he served as the Arboretum Director from 1965 to 1988.

W I L D C E N T E R

Wish List

Many of you have been asking about things we might need at the The WILD Center – besides money for the remodeling – so we’ve put together a list for you.

First aid kit • Gardening tools (trowels, shovels, pruners, pruning saw(s), etc.) • Garden tractor and small trailer • Benches for outdoor seating • Ladder (16-foot extension and five-rung step) • Trailer for hauling debris with car • Heavy-duty shredder or chipper • Rain barrels • Conference-type table(s) • Conference-type stackable chairs • Floor pads for desk chairs • Double bed or twin bed or better yet, one set of bunk beds • Dressers (two each) • Lighting fixtures (energy efficient).

Next spring we’ll be looking for small maple and oak trees.

Contact the National Office (execdirector@for-wild.org) or by phone at 877-394-9453 if you have these or other items which may be suitable for use at The WILD Center.

We now have someone at The WILD Center from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., Monday through Friday. Or, you can call for an appointment 877-394-9453.

Want to Read the Journal Online?

Would you like to save some postage and paper costs for Wild Ones?

Members have been asking for some time if we could make the Journal available via the Internet. So this is what we’re thinking about doing, if you feel this would be a worthwhile endeavor.

Receiving the Wild Ones Journal will continue to be a benefit of membership, we can make the Journal available through the members only web pages. Those of you who would prefer not to get a mailed hard copy can receive notification via e-mail when the copy is available. Those who would prefer a hard copy can continue to receive a mailed copy as usual.

Please let us know if you find this arrangement appealing and whether or not you want to receive only an electronic copy of the Wild Ones Journal by either e-mailing execdirector@for-wild.org or calling 877-394-9453. This endeavor will not save us any money in the long run, but it may reduce our carbon footprint.

Could your gift be the one that saves the Earth?

A Wild Ones Gift Membership

If you’re tired of handing out loud neckties, plaid socks, and wooly underwear, why not give something fun that also shows how much you care about the future of our planet?

Can’t think of anyone who would enjoy a Wild Ones membership?

How about those new neighbors down the street who aren’t sure what to do with their yard? Or maybe those relatives who keep borrowing your lawnmower. And what about the local “weed inspector” who keeps eyeing your prairie? Better yet, just think what a Wild Ones membership will do for the kids at your neighborhood school.

Those neckties and socks will just end up in the back of a drawer, and those underwear – well, we don’t even want to know. But your gift of a Wild Ones membership might be the start of a journey that leads someone to saving the Earth, or at least a small part of it.

Three levels of membership are available, and each new gift membership gets one or more Wild Ones promotional items along with the standard benefits and a subscription to the Journal. We’ll even send them a holiday gift card so they’ll know it’s from you.

Helping to save the Earth, and your favorite Wild organization, has never been so easy. The journey starts at www.for-wild.org/joining.html.

Go there now.
As I sit in the shade of 60-foot willow trees, on the shore of Trippe Lake, at the south end of a bit of land I call Green Gables, it is a sunny Labor Day, 2008. In spite of the 86-degree temperature, a cool breeze off the lake makes it an ideal setting for writing about our prairie garden. With the steady wind at my back, blowing away any mosquitoes in the area, I am looking at the golden glow of the blooming meadow in the center of our back yard.

I have called it “our prairie garden”: A brief discussion of semantics may be in order. “Perennial prairie planting” has a poetic rhythmic sound which is appealing to one’s ears. Pragmatically speaking, it points out to a gardener reading this article that this is a planting of perennials, not annuals – and in fact an intended planting, not a natural occurrence. One of my fears while planning the yard, envisioned a city zoning officer responding to a neighbor’s complaint of my yard being full of weeds, to which my planned response would be, “This is a flower garden of perennials, no different from any other flower garden.” Then I would let the city employee try to figure out how to discredit my choice of perennials in comparison to another citizen who might choose all European or Asian perennials. An additional comment about patriotism in purchasing American-made plants might also be in order.

I did receive a notice in the mail one time, no doubt prompted by a complaint from my lawn-obsessed neighbor to the east who has a $12,000 tractor with a three-point-hitch mowing deck for the large areas of his lawn, a $2,500 riding mower for tighter areas, and a $350 push mower for working around trees. The official communication stated I must remove all weeds in my yard or the city would do so and charge me for the cost. Since the notice was in no way specific as to which plants were in question, I replied in writing that the exotic weeds growing along the edge of my property were actually on city land and then indicated a willingness to pull them. No reply from the city ever materialized.

Now for a brief discussion of Pragmatics: The term “prairie garden” is most appropriate when used for small prairie plantings in yards. Early on, I once referred to “my back yard prairie” – and a professional, who collects seed from prairie remnants, told me in no uncertain terms it was only a “prairie garden.” Feeling like I had been told, “You’re no Jack Kennedy,” I humbly apologized for the error of my exaggeration. Of course he was correct. Real prairies are thousands of square miles in size, and have many more naturally growing species of forbs and grasses than any yard can accommodate. Or they may even be tiny “prairie remnants” of an acre or two of unbroken land, land that has never experienced a plow. And mine is neither. Mine is an intentional planting, on severely modified soil, of species of plants that may, long ago, have grown on a prairie.

Speaking as an insecure male, I prefer the term “prairie planting” to “prairie garden.” It just sounds more masculine.
Members Support Wild Ones Mission with Generous Gifts & Contributions

Wild Ones is deeply grateful to the hundreds of individuals, corporations, foundations, and other organizations that made contributions in 2008 – and we are committed to being a good steward of all financial resources entrusted to the organization.

While every contribution is so important, we want to take special note of a $275,000 gift from a donor who wishes to remain anonymous. Without this one major donation, it’s unlikely that we would have been able to fulfill our dream of purchasing The WILD Center.

So we are pleased to send our thanks to all the members and friends who have supported us financially and otherwise this year. Your generosity has made this a very exciting year for us, and we thank you all so much for your support.

While continuing the development of our existing educational and advocacy promotional programs, we have also begun to develop the Wild Ones Institute of Learning and Development (The WILD Center), which should be the most effective piece in our promotional arsenal.

Please watch our progress on the Wild Ones web site by clicking on The WILD Center link.

Every effort has been made to assure the donor lists are accurate and reflect gifts made from October 3, 2007 to October 10, 2008. However, should there be an error or omission, please contact: Donna VanBuecken • Executive Director • Phone (toll free) 877-394-9453 E-mail execdirector@for-wild.org.

Thank you to all whose gifts are planting the seeds for native landscaping!
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In addition to financial support for the various Wild Ones project funds, this year we also received the benefit of many volunteer hours not only toward the development of The WILD Center, but also this year’s annual meeting/conference, which was held at The WILD Center.
Wild Ones Page 4

Wilder and Wildest Members Give Extra Support Through Higher Levels of Membership

Bur Oak Circle
This will be the first year we are honoring our Bur Oak Circle of Donors – donors that contribute $1,000 or more annually to Wild Ones efforts.

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## Higher Levels of Membership Give Extra Support (continued)

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Wild Ones Page 6
When we moved into Green Gables 14 years ago, the back yard open space was all lawn, for which I had very definite intentions. A friend, Mark Kuhnke, with his Ford tractor and a three-point hitch cultivator turned over the thick sod and continued to cultivate the soil throughout the growing season of 1994, each time a new crop of weeds germinated. For a brief time, Roundup was judiciously used in spots to eliminate persistent weeds. Finally a prairie mix of seed was scattered and raked into the soil. Volunteers like daisy fleabane quickly appeared. Over the years rooted plants and additional seeds have been added. When common milkweed and goldenrod spread excessively they were uprooted around the edges of each colony, and other prairie seed spread in the place they had occupied. Each year Virginia creeper (Parthenocissus quinquefolia), spreads from the woodland planting at the front of the house, and needs to be removed each fall.

A total of 30 species have been incorporated. Grasses were not included, as I had read they tend to dominate over time; I may like to rethink this. The focus is on color rather than replication of a true prairie. [Ed. Note: Grasses in a prairie garden setting not only add to the diversity of the planting, both above the soil and in the root zone, but also lend structural support to the flowering plants and habitat.]

Just prior to Thanksgiving, but after the birds have emptied the seed heads, we cut down the dry, dead forb stems instead of burning. Being in the city and having many evergreen trees surrounding the prairie garden discourages the use of fire. This year I will be trying a new approach in order to avoid the intensive labor of cutting and hauling to the city compost site. To chop the biomass a weed whacker will be used, starting at the top of the still-standing plants and working down the stems. This upper growth will be left to compost or reseed on site. A foot or two of standing stalks will provide continued habitat through the winter for both furry creatures and insects.

The prairie garden has required more time and effort than the forest plantings in other parts of our yard – especially to get started. Inclusion of sun-loving alien weeds is the primary cause of all the problems related to planting a meadow.

Of course a traditional exotic-flower garden requires the same amount of effort and for the same reason. In a natural meadow planting, however, the native perennials, in time and with help, become dominant and begin to outgrow the weeds. Intervention and continual long-term maintenance will always be required by both. However, the continuous color and the wildlife activity in the prairie garden are worth the extra effort.

At least it doesn’t have to be done behind or on the seat of a loud lawnmower. The work can be accomplished while listening to the sounds of nature. Even while we work in the yard, the prairie provides an ambience we prefer to the machine-intensive maintenance required by a lawnscape.

Definitions

**Lodging** occurs when the upper portion of plant growth, typically the seed head, becomes too heavy to be supported by the stem, and the plant bends toward the ground. In a prairie planting, tall grasses and forbs with substantial stems assist in preventing lodging.

**Ecotone:** A transitional zone between two communities containing the characteristic species of each.
Missing the Mysteries? 
Gripping About the Grapevine?

Because we had so much important content for this issue, we had to leave out Maryann Whitman’s ever-popular “Grapevine” column and her interesting “Mysteries Explored” article. But don’t worry. Both features will be back next time.

Meanwhile

Is there anything you’d like to write about? Something on your mind? Please contact our editor, Maryann Whitman, and let her know you’re interested. Getting your thoughts into the Journal may be easier than you think. Contact: journal@for-wild.org.

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Natural Connections
2008 Photo Contest: Better Than Ever

By Joan Rudolph

This year’s annual photo contest exceeded last year’s total of 82 with a grand total of 99 entries. The photos taken by Kids’ category were down, with only eight entries by three children. The Flora category had the most entries again this year with 35, and the Scenery category was next with 20 entries.

Eileen Herrling, who judged the contest, gave a wonderful critique with many tips for improving our photos. An Appleton, Wisconsin, resident, Eileen has over 30 years experience in photography, for which she has won awards. Her philosophy is to show nature’s beauty to encourage appreciation and protection of our fragile environment.

When it came to voting for the People’s Choice Award, there were many excellent competitors. Linda Winstead’s photo titled “Burr Oak Surprise” was selected by vote of those attending the conference. Honorable Mentions went to Harold Vastag, Laura Hedien, and John Arthur.

This contest shows us the variety of nature through multiple photographic eyes. From individual insects and flowers, to prairies, forests, and Wild Ones activities, it tells us what Wild Ones is all about. Photos will be put on the Wild Ones web site (www.for-wild.org). Wild Ones also will use some of the photos in promotional materials.

The photo contest was judged at the new WILD Center overlooking the woodland behind the center. We thank Eileen Herrling for her invaluable help in critiquing and judging this year’s contest.

The Winners

The winning entrants received ribbons and prizes. Photos were judged on:
1. Technical merit (composition, sharpness, exposure, color).
2. Appropriateness to category.
3. Presentation (mounting neatness).

People’s Choice Award
Linda Winstead for “Bur Oak Surprise”

Flora
Heather Holm for “Geum triflorum – Prairie Smoke”
Clayton Oslund for “Lupinus arcticus – Arctic Lupine”
Harold Vastag for “Moccasin Flower (Cypripedium acaule – Pink Lady Slippers)”

Scenery
John Arthur for “Lotus on the Mississippi”
Ron Johnson for “Oregon Rain Forest”
Michael Nordin for “South Dakota Badlands”

Pollinators, Insects or Bugs
Heather Holm for “Monarch Butterflies & Stiff Goldenrod”
Vicki Bonk for “Bee Balm”
Vicki Bonk for “Autumn Monarch”

Child or Children
Mary Kuller for “Enjoying the Wild Grasses at Sunset”
Kay Lettau for “Starting ‘em Young”
Michael Nordin for “Anna in Tall Grass”

Landscaping – Residential
Linda Winstead for “Bur Oak Surprise”
Karen Schulz for “Down at the Cabin”
Tony Hilscher for “Prairie Renewal”

Wild Ones Activities
Lenae Weichel for “Inspecting a Mason Bee Box in Peterson’s Prairie”
Tim Lewis for “Show Me Help Me at John Peterson’s”
Heather Carter for “Digging for Buried Treasure”

Landscaping – Non-Residential
Clayton Oslund for “Pagoda Dogwood, Maidenhair Fern & Woodland Geranium”
Linda Winstead for “Wild & Wooly”

Kid’s Photos
Erik Vastag for “Searching for Honey”
Erik Vastag for “Lots of Green”

See all contest winners on our web site: www.for-wild.org

Congratulations to Our Newest Lifetime Members

Marty and Jeff Rice
Twin Cities (MN) Chapter
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Local chapters will still receive their annual dues reimbursement for lifetime members. One address per membership.

Contact the National Office, toll-free at 877-3944-9453 for details.
We are pleased to report that environmental education won a major boost on Friday, September 19th when the U.S. House of Representatives approved the No Child Left Inside Act of 2008. The bill received bipartisan support, and was approved by a vote of 294 to 108. (www.nclicoalition.org)

This is only one step in the process, but it is a major one, and gives the NCLI Coalition enormous momentum to keep working to pass the bill in the months ahead. The vote represents a victory for everyone who cares about environmental education. The grassroots interest and energy of coalition members across the country – your calls, visits, e-mails, and letters – made an enormous difference. Thank you.
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Meet us online at www.for-wild.org/calendar.html
WILD ONES NATIONAL QUARTERLY BOARD MEETINGS

All members are invited and encouraged to attend the quarterly meetings of the National Board of Directors. If you’d like to participate in the meeting by conference call, please contact the National Office (toll-free) at 877-394-9453 for instructions.

Second Biennial Native Plant Symposium

September 27, at The Center, Purdue University-Calumet, 2300 173rd Street, Hammond, Indiana. Doors open at 7 a.m. for a day of education, camaraderie, and fun. Sponsored by the Gibson Woods (IN) Chapter. Call Joy at 219-844-3188 or Pat at 219-865-2679.

35th Natural Areas Conference

October 14-17, 2008 at the Doubletree Hotel in Nashville, Tennessee. Sponsored by the Natural Areas Association and the National Association of Exotic Pest Plant Councils. The conference will focus on ecological management themes with an emphasis on invasive exotic species and the effects of climate change. The NAEPPC will bring its invasive species expertise to the conference and the two organizations will provide synergy in organizing an outstanding event. Sessions will address the conference theme, “Tuning into a Changing Climate and Biological Invasion.” Field trips and workshops will provide training opportunities for participants. Join us for an informative and rewarding experience. Call for papers deadline April 22, 2008. For details visit www.naturalarea.org/08Conference.

Stewardship Network


Wildflower Association of Michigan

March 8, 9, 2009, Kellogg Center at MSU, East Lansing, Michigan. For registration information go to www.wildflowersmich.org and find “Wildflower Conference.”

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**How You Can Help.** When planning a long vacation, or a move, please mail your address information to Wild Ones, P.O. Box 1274, Appleton, Wisconsin 54912, call toll-free at 877-394-9453, or go to the Wild Ones members-only pages at www.for-wild.org. Click on item 2 (Update Personal Membership Info) and enter the appropriate changes. Thanks!

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**THANK YOU**

**Matching Donations**
Sharon Duerkop of the Fox Valley Area (WI) Chapter received a 1:1 match from Thrivent Financial for Lutherans matching gift program.

**Seeds for Education in Honor of Lorrie 89th Birthday**
In September, Lorrie Otto, naturalist and Wild Ones’ inspirational leader, a pioneer in the natural landscaping movement in the United States, celebrated her 89th birthday. Over the past several years, we have encouraged chapters and members to honor this very special lady with their donation to the SFE Grant Program. So far this year we have received $816 from several members and one chapter.

- **Dave & Mariette Nowak** and **Jean Hancock**, Milwaukee-Southwest/Wehr (WI) Chapter
- **Donna & John VanBuecken**, Fox Valley Area (WI) Chapter
- **Annie C. McNitt** and **Nancy Aten**, Milwaukee-North (WI) Chapter
- **Cliff Orsted**, Door Landscape Door County (WI) Chapter
- **Maryann Whitman**, Oakland (MI) Chapter
- **Fox Valley Area (WI) Chapter**

**General Donations to Seeds for Education**
- **Janet Sternfeld**, Toledo (OH) Chapter
- **Catherine Skocir-Stehr** and **Donna Gager**, Milwaukee-Southwest/Wehr (WI) Chapter
- **Martha & John Lunz**, Milwaukee-North (WI) Chapter
- **Mary L. Johnston**, Partner at Large from Iowa
- **Hildy Feen** and **Linda Dolan**, Madison (WI) Chapter

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**Fox Valley Area (WI) Chapter**
**WILD Center Challenge**
A huge thank you to the Fox Valley Area (WI) Chapter for their generous donation of the entire $20,000 that had been offered as a 2:1 grant challenge to the rest of the chapters. The Fox Valley Area Chapter is one of our oldest and largest, and they are much appreciated for stepping up. This $28,219 donation from the chapters will give a generous boost to the funds we will need to complete the development of our WILD Center.

**Amazon Commissions**
Amazon commissions for the past two months total $134.55. Thanks to everyone who goes through the Wild Ones bookstore to get to Amazon.com.