

Promoting Native Plants for Natural Landscapes.

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Identifying Prairie and Savanna Plants
Thursday, May 21, 2009

Location: Burpee Museum of Natural History
737 N. Main St., Rockford, IL
Time: 7:00–9:00 pm

Native flora is showing up in more and more areas – nature preserves, business landscapes, rooftop gardens, and the gardens of many homeowners. While people recognize many plants they encounter as native, it becomes challenging to identify *which* native a plant is, especially between species within the same plant family. Is this showy goldenrod or Riddell’s goldenrod, smooth blue aster or sky-blue aster? Not to mention ‘Is this an aster or a goldenrod?’ When the plant is not in bloom the challenge is greater.



Photo provided by Dr. Steven Hill

Dr. Steven Hill, field botanist and plant systematist with the Illinois Natural History Survey in Champaign, Illinois will present our program on how to identify native vascular plants, including some of the standard plant family characteristics. The audience will also receive some hints on identifying immature, not currently in bloom, vascular plants that may help in plant identification during other seasons.

While there is no substitute for experience, there are specific features on most plants that may allow the gardener and naturalist to narrow down the possibilities to a few choices. Not only is the form and structure of plants and knowledge of the names of plant parts and variations important, but also so are such common sense habits as ‘scratch and sniff’. Even the structure of tiny plant hairs can narrow down the possibilities tremendously.

Even the experts have trouble distinguishing many asters from many goldenrods, when the plants are immature, but Dr. Hill will discuss some of the ways to get as close as possible to a ‘correct’ identification. He will also discuss the limits of our knowledge related to plant identification.

Feel free to bring a sample of any plant you are having trouble identifying and join us in this interactive ‘stump the chump!’ workshop on identifying our native prairie and savanna plants.

This program is free and open to the public.

For more information, please contact Kim Risley at (815) 962-4584.

Submitted by Kim Risley,
V. Pres./Program Chair



Articles for the June 2009 newsletter, must be submitted to the Newsletter Editor, at dkcamps@aol.com by May 23, 2009.

Message from the President Constance McCarthy

Reseeding

As I admire some of my native woodland plants that are sprouting up and even blooming, I notice that a few have reseeded themselves or otherwise expanded. It made me think about our chapter and the Wild Ones mission. Just as each one of us can be a strong plant on our own, doing our own things for our landscapes, we could be stronger if we reseed.

Consider bringing a friend to our next Wild Ones meeting. Pass along your newsletter to someone who might be interested. Tell local friends in your email

network about our upcoming woodland walk day (and plant sale) on May 9 as part of the Celebrate Earth program of events. Or advocate for the use of native plants in public plantings in your neighborhood or subdivision. Spread the word about our chapter's plant sales and tree sale.

Unfortunately, just like a reseeded plant, we never know which seeds will fall on fertile ground, so to speak, but if everyone does a little something, good things are bound to come from it.

Hooray for Carla Womack!

Submitted by Constance McCarthy

I recently learned that Carla Womack, a member of our chapter, was awarded a \$500 grant to install a garden of native plants at Hinckley Big Rock High School, where she teaches special education. After hearing from her superintendent that (then) Lt. Gov. Pat Quinn's office had an initiative to support rain gardens in Illinois, she applied in early March 2009.

How wonderful that her application was selected among the 20 winners from across the entire state! The garden will initially be around 30 feet by 10 feet, and planting and maintenance will be done by Carla and her disabled students. To report back to the state, they will be documenting the planning, planting, and upkeep of their garden. Carla also aspires to start a sort of Green Club at her school to help teach kids about the need to take care of the environment and to appreciate the natural world around them.

Three cheers for Carla and the great work she is doing to make the world and her school community a better place!

Board of Directors in Action Shey Lowman, Secretary

Highlights of activities of the Board of Directors, as discussed at the April 9, 2009 meeting, include the following:

- There are 165 chapter members down from 176 in December, invite a friend to join.
- Woodland Plant Sale has done very well with 25 orders to date. 11 species are already sold out. Order early next year!
- Prairie Plant Sale has 15 orders so far.
- Rock River Valley Wild Ones has renewed its membership in Four Rivers Environmental Coalition (FREC). Be sure to pick up your FREC Calendar of Events booklet at the next meeting and plan your summer.
- Volunteers are needed to help at several events, please contact Ed Kletecka at (815) 389-0120 or fieroz@charter.net for opportunities to meet the public and promote Wild Ones!

The next board meeting will be Thursday, June 11, 2009, at Aunt Mary's on State Street in Rockford. The meeting officially starts at 6:30 p.m., but many come at 5:30 to purchase their dinner. All chapter members are welcome and invited to attend board meetings.

Prairie Plant Sale submitted by Dianne Stenerson, Co-Chair

Friday, May 15, 5:00-7:30pm for order pick-up
Saturday, May 16, 9:00am-5:00pm for order pick-up and open sale

At the home of Dianne Stenerson, Co-Chair
 7399 Ryebrook Road
 Rockford, IL, 61114
 815-636-9930

Please notify a co-chair in advance if you can't pick up your plants during the regularly scheduled time. If you don't have access to the internet and need help getting to Perryville and Spring Brook, feel free to call.

From the intersection of Perryville and Spring Brook, take Spring Brook east (between the Mobil station and Woodman's Grocery) for 3/10 mile; there will be a sign for 'The Meadows of Spring Brook' subdivision. Turn left (north) onto Springwheat Road and follow for 2/10 mile. Turn right onto Ryebrook; the house is the third on the right—look for the wagon wheels on either side of the driveway. The drive is large and circular—should be plenty of room to pull in. If we're swamped, there's also plenty of parking along the road.

Upon your arrival, pull as far as you can into the driveway (no double parking!). There will be a large white canopy where you check in. There an assistant will be assigned to locate your order and check it over with you. If it's so busy you have to wait for an assistant, you can spend the time checking out the extra plants available for sale or trade!

TRY CARPOOLING! If you know anyone else in your vicinity getting plants, don't forget to carpool. We want to reduce pollution from lawnmowers, not increase it with unnecessary car fumes! If you don't know anyone, you can contact Dianne Stenerson (815-636-9930 or dstenerson@comcast.net) or Kathie Ayres (815-877-0324 or kathieo211@comcast.net). We will be glad to see who else ordered from your area and try to hook you up.

THANK YOU VOLUNTEERS! A big thanks to all who have already volunteered by the time this is in print. Your contribution of time translates into big savings for the chapter. If you have not volunteered, and find you have some time to do so, go ahead and call Dianne Stenerson (815-636-9930) or Kathie Ayres (815-877-0324), in case we have any holes left to fill.

OPEN PLANT SALE FROM 9:00AM TO 5:00PM SATURDAY, MAY 16

If you don't have the space in your yard or the funds to purchase your plants a flat at a time, all is not lost! Because we purchase the plants in full flats, there will be extra plants available for individual sale. Besides the 53 species on the original flyer, we should have these additional plants available from special orders:

Anemone cylindrica	Thimbleweed
Anemone patens	Pasque Flower
Asclepias sullivanti	Sullivan's Milkweed
Ceanothus americanus	New Jersey Tea
Coreopsis palmata	Prairie Coreopsis
Euphorbia corollata	Flowering Spurge
Koeleria cristata	June Grass
Lupinus perennis	Wild Lupine
Parthenium integrifolium	Wild Quinine
Pycnanthemum virginianum	Mountain Mint



If there are any remaining plants from the Woodland Plant Sale, those will also be available. Prices will vary with size and species. All prairie sale plants will be 1/2 pint size, at a maximum of \$3. Quantity discounts available.

April Meeting Recap Lenae Weichel



Professor John Harrington

Photo by Tim Lewis

A Seasonal Walk in the Woods: Shaded Landscapes, Their Ecology, and the Plants that Grow Within Them

Professor John Harrington, from the Department of Landscape Architecture at the University of Wisconsin – Madison, presented us with some interesting information regarding native woodland landscaping. He began by asking us, “What is so wrong with a traditional lawn?” He did admit that bluegrass is the best surface for kids to run

on but it also results in pollution on many levels. As you may know, traditional lawns consume many negative inputs (such as fossil fuel energy, water, fertilizers, pesticides, and seed or sod) for which the outputs do not improve the impact (carbon loss, increased surface runoff, nutrient loss in drainage water, applied substances shed into the water supply, and nutrients removed with bagged grass clippings). Not surprisingly, he also cited a consequential loss of diversity of plant, insect, animal, and bird life. Happily, there are native alternatives that use naturally and locally-occurring inputs with outcomes including retained nutrients, biodiversity, net carbon accumulation, water evaporation into the atmosphere, little surface runoff, and far less negative environmental impact.

Throughout his talk, Professor Harrington presented us with five principles or considerations for good native woodland landscape design.

Principle 1: Learn the ecosystems and ecology of your landscape. Northern Illinois falls somewhere between prairie and woodland and it should be your primary concern as a home landscaper to determine what you have (or would have had a few generations ago) and what types of plants your lot is best suited for. From wettest to driest, here are the basic ecosystems in our area: maple woods, oak woods, savanna, and prairie with the woodlands containing over 80% trees and shrubs and the prairie containing less than 10%. Your landscape ecosystems may differ from one part of your yard to another and moisture (more for woodland, less for prairie) is not the only indicator. Other important indicators include: soil texture (which impacts drainage and root oxidation), pH, and nutrient content.

Trees roots need oxygen, and therefore drainage, maple woods prefer acid soils while oaks prefer alkaline, and maple woods require a high quantity of quality soil nutrients while oaks can exist successfully on varied soil nutrition.

Principle 2: Understand your lawn’s role in contributing to the environment: natural landscaping focuses on the use of native plants in community-like groupings. Storm water is a big challenge in urban areas. Mostly compacted soils, hardscaping, and runoff all contribute to storm water problems. In addition to improving this with native landscaping, Professor Harrington recommends mulching leaves but leaving them (no raking!) and creating native plant communities that will positively impact wildlife as they will help to provide linked greenways between natural habitats.

Principle 3: Consider Historic Perspectives: follow natural landscaping models. We viewed a number of historic landscape plans, many of which were created in the early 1900s (that’s pre-ecology!) in which Jens Jensen and the like were using design principles with native and naturalized plants. If you don’t already have your own vision for your landscape, review historic plans for ideas and considerations such as sequenced spaces (closed then opened, short views followed by long vistas), “borrowed” landscape views (site a bench where you can enjoy a neighbor’s view as well as your own), layering colors and textures, and planning for seasonal attributes of plantings.



Professor John Harrington talking to guest Rachel Johnson

Photo by Tim Lewis

April Meeting Recap continued Lenae Weichel

Principle 4: Consider aesthetics and design.
 You will find it beneficial to have a clear image of the desired result. Good designs should include: regional character and forms; continuity, diversity, and variety of elements; structure, color, and texture (emotion and dynamics); consideration of garden entries; direction and movement; resting spots (patios or benches); support plants for local wildlife; and ephemeral opportunities such as creating vantage points for light (think sunset or light streaming through branches) and brief seasonal attributes.

Principle 5 (actually 6 but 5 was skipped due to time constraints): Take opportunities, set goals and objectives, and plan accordingly. Take stock: what do you have? What can you accomplish? What are your priorities?

To help us with planning, Professor Harrington shared a series of photos of various woodland trees, shrubs, and plants and included salient details and needs. He also provided information detailing the differences between maple/mesic woods and oak woods/savannas.

These lists are too long to include here but if you would like a copy of notes from the meeting, please e-mail lenaeweichel.org or call 815-282-5482.

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Guest Hosts Needed

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Wild Ones – Rock River Valley chapter strives to provide topics that are of high quality and informative for its’ members and guests at monthly meetings. Sometimes presenters who live more than a few hours drive away are invited to speak to the chapter. As these people are provided a small honorarium to aid in offsetting their cost of traveling to Rockford, the chapter frequently offers overnight accommodations to the presenters who travel quite a distance. Rock River Valley chapter is in need of volunteers who would be willing to provide overnight accommodations for these speakers.

Imagine going to a yard tour and wishing your yard was as well laid out. Now imagine the yard tour is your own and it is just a one-on-one with your overnight guest, an expert, who can offer suggestions to improve your landscape. These interesting people are typically eager to talk about their area of interest and make sociable, outgoing guests. Such are just some of the benefits to hosting a guest speaker.

If you would like to help the chapter through this fun experience, please contact Kim Risley, program chair at 815-962-4584 or email her at rip-cord01@comcast.net.

Submitted by Kim Risley and Virginia Watson

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Membership Update Marilyn Heneghan, Membership Chair

171 memberships on May 1, 2009

Welcome New Member

Merritt Schuneman

**Special Thanks to Recent
 Rock River Valley Chapter Donators**

(any amount about the \$30 basic dues)

Sue & Bob Jordan

Jeff Stack & Kathy Mielke

Bill & Sherrie Snyder

April 16 program attendance was 66.

A thank you to the program greeters Lisa Johnson , Linda and Terry Mohaupt.

Note: It is preferred that renewal donations be sent directly to the Chapter’s Membership Chair, Marilyn Heneghan, rather than to the national office. Processing goes quicker this way for the chapter. Your expiration date is on your newsletter and your Journal address label. Thank you.

“NEW EMAIL ADDRESSES”
 Please notify Marilyn Heneghan at informationoptions@att.net when your Insight email address has changed.

Dues payments can be sent either directly to the National Office or to the Chapter Membership Chair, Marilyn Heneghan. Forty percent of the dues paid, regardless of the amount, are shared with Rock River Valley Chapter. Members wishing to make donations specifically for the local chapter, should make a separate payment or so note on their membership application under “Chapter Contribution” and mail to the Chapter Membership Chair. Dues payments, regardless of amount, are considered a donation and are tax deductible.

Buy Natives and Support our Business Members

Submitted by Constance McCarthy

Did you miss our chapter's two plant sales this spring? Fear not! Here is some information from our chapter's three business members regarding their spring availability of native plants.

The nursery at **Pizzo & Associates** is typically open from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., but a call ahead would be good, just to be sure that they have in stock whatever plants you might be looking for. Their plants are sold in 38-plug flats, although half-flats (19 plugs) are available for an additional fee. If you'd like to check availability or have any questions, call Jenny Pawlak at (815) 495.2300, x102 or jennyp@pizzo.info. They are offering a special whereby anyone who mentions that they are a Wild Ones member, will receive a free plug/plant from a selected list. They are located at 10729 Pine Rd., Leland, Illinois.

Red Buffalo Nursery will be open to the public Friday through Sunday, May 8 to May 10; May 15 to May 17; and May 22 to May 24, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. each day. They're located at 10502 Seaman Rd., Hebron, Illinois. You can download a plant list at www.RedBuffaloNursery.com. They also will be selling at the Edgebrook Farmers Market in Rockford on Wednesdays from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. If you call in advance, you can make arrangements to have them bring certain plants to the market for you.

At **Taylor Creek Nursery**, from May 8 through September 11, their hours are Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., and Saturdays by appointment only. They are located at 17921 Smith Rd., Brodhead, Wisconsin, and can be reached at (608) 897.8641. You can find at plant list at www.appliedeco.com/tcrn.

Want bluestem?

Dee Witte, a chapter member, has a small prairie that has been taken over by the grasses. Due to health problems, they are unable to do any digging. However, they would like to offer big blue stem and little blue stem to chapter members willing to dig them up. This might be especially welcomed by those among us who are involved in restoration work at schools, public gardens, etc. After all, free plants are the best friend of those on a budget! If interested, call Dee or Bert at 815.623.6167 or email at SpinCasting.Dee@gmail.com.



Andropogon gerardii Big Bluestem

The most prevalent and widely distributed of all the prairie grasses, Big Bluestem was largely responsible for the formation of the famous prairie sod. Growing five to eight feet tall, it thrives on a tremendous range of soils, from wet, poorly-drained clay to dry open sand. In late August it produces its distinctive three-part seedheads, which resemble a turkey foot. The lush green of the leaves and stems change with the first frost to an attractive reddish-bronze color that provides landscape interest well into the winter.

Schizachyrium scoparium Little Bluestem

A native American prairie grass. It is also known as "Sagegrass" or "Beard grass". It can reach up to 3-4' and has a blueish hue to the leaves. The leaves turn a rich orangy wheat color in fall. It will tolerate poor soils. A great plant for mass plantings. Flowers are scattered along the upper parts of the stem branches, with long hairs creating a feathery appearance. There is a single, white, hairy flower cluster at the tip of each stalk.



2009 Chapter Programs and Events

Date/Time	Program	Speaker	Location
May 9 1:00-4:00 pm	Woodland "Open Yard" Tours Event open to the public, self-guided, Woodland Plant Sale table at Gerrond's.	Lenae Weichel 815-282-5482 lenae@weichel.org	3727 Corbridge Lane (Beebe) 4960 Birch Ave. (Gerrond) Rockford
May 21 7:00-9:00 PM	Identifying Prairie & Savanna Plants	Dr. Steven Hill IL Natural History Survey	Burpee Museum of Natural History
June 18 7:00-9:00 PM	Welcoming the 'Bee' Pollinators to Our Landscapes	Cynthia McConnell Entomologist Univ. of IL - Champaign	Burpee Museum of Natural History
July 15 – September 12	Native Shrub and Tree Sale Orders taken during this time.	John Peterson Native tree & shrub Sale Chair	
July 16 7:00-9:00 PM	Yard Tour/Evening Social	John & Judy Peterson	14037 Baker Rd Durand, IL 61024 815-248-2110
August 20 7:00-9:00 PM	Secrets to Identifying Our Native Trees	Guy Sternberg Starhill Forest Arboretum	Burpee Museum of Natural History
September 19	Native Tree & Shrub Pickup See brochure for complete details	John Peterson Native Tree & Shrub Sale Chair	Riverfront Museum Park parking lot
September 17 7:00-9:00 PM	Underground Ecology-or, How I Learned to Love Dirt	Dr. Teri Balsler, Assoc. Prof. Earth Sciences	Burpee Museum of Natural History
October 15 7:00-9:00 PM	What is a Burn? How Does Burning Help Our Landscapes?	Andy Bacon Natural Land Institute	Burpee Museum of Natural History
November 19 7:00-9:00 PM	Pot Luck and Seed Exchange <u>All Members only</u> welcome with or without seeds		Burpee Museum of Natural History
December	No Meeting-Happy Holidays!		

Please check future newsletters for remaining 2009 Events and Activities

Unless noted, programs are free and open to the public. Programs are subject to change.

Please contact Kim Risley (815) 962-4584 for more information. 7:00-9:00 PM





ROCK RIVER VALLEY CHAPTER NEWSLETTER

c/o Pambi Camacho
6680 Hartwig Drive
Cherry Valley, IL 61016

Don't become extinct!

If the expiration date on the mailing label is **5/1/2009**, this is your last chapter newsletter and you have received your last *Wild Ones Journal* until you activate your membership

You may receive a renewal notice from both the National organization and your chapter. Your membership information will be updated quicker if you renew through your chapter so you won't miss an issue of the chapter newsletter.

Mail your renewal to Marilyn Heneghan
P.O. Box 114, Roscoe, IL 61073

Wild Ones - Rock River Valley Chapter

Board of Directors

President: Constance McCarthy 815-282-0316 (kublai@mac.com) *Newsletter Editor:* Pambi Camacho 815-332-7637 (dkcamps@aol.com)

Vice President: Kim Risley 815-962-4584 (rip-cord01@comcast.net) *Plant Rescue Chair:* John Peterson 815-248-2110 (tacmot@msn.com)

Secretary: Shey Lowman 815-757-4456 (slowman@niu.edu)

Show Me/Help Me Chair: Lenae Weichel 815-282-5482 (lenae@weichel.org)

Treasurer: Janet Giesen 815-899-6139 (giesen@niu.edu)

Youth Education & Grants Chair: Kim Lowman Vollmer 815-397-6044 (kimlowvol@aol.com)

Membership Chair: Marilyn Heneghan 815-389-7869 (informationoptions@att.net)

Regular meetings are held the third Thursday of the month at 7:00 pm at the Burpee Museum of Natural History, 737 North Main St., Rockford, IL

Special meetings, outings, and events are scheduled periodically and sometimes replace the regular meeting time/place. Contact any officer to confirm information about our next meeting.

Wild ones Annual Membership: Family \$30, Limited Income/Full-Time Student \$20, Business \$200
Entire membership contribution is tax deductible. Contact Membership Chair for additional information or to join.

Visit our Web site at www.for-wild.org/chapters.html

Wild Ones Mission

Wild ones: Native Plants, Natural Landscapes promotes environmentally sound landscaping practices to preserve biodiversity through the preservation, restorations and establishment of native plant communities. Wild Ones is a not-for-profit environmental education and advocacy organization.