

Promoting Native Plants for Natural Landscapes.

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*Dot Luck and Seed Exchange
Thursday, November 19, 2009*

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

Winter chill is upon us. Snow flurries fluttering in the air as early as mid-October. We are all preparing to “hibernate” through the cold winter months. As we prepare, we can look back on all Wild Ones has accomplished this past year! A new woodland plant sale added over 1,360 new native ferns, grasses, sedges, and forbs to shaded landscape areas. The prairie plant sale added over 1,300 additional plants to the open landscapes around us, while 126 trees and shrubs covering 26 different species were also planted.

Many woodland and prairie plants and shrubs were saved through four different plant rescues. We had informative speakers on a wide range of topics at our monthly meetings with an average of 55 people in attendance at each presentation. Several member yards were a part of the show me/help me events, where we shared ideas and successes with each other.



Many, many volunteers represented and assisted the chapter at events throughout the area, including at Gardening for Food & Fun, Bird Fest, the Renewable Energy Fair, the various plant sales and our first woodland yard tour as part of the Celebrate Earth series of events.

November is a time to celebrate all we have accomplished. Please join us at our *members only* (i.e., members plus partner, significant other, friend, etc.) by coming together to remember our activities and experiences from this year. Although there will be no formal program, there will be an opportunity to exchange native seeds from our yards for those who wish to do so. It is *not* required that you bring seeds in order to take seeds home! Even if you haven't attended

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Articles for the January 2010 newsletter, must be submitted to the Newsletter Editor, at: dkcamps@aol.com by December 23, 2009.

Message from the President Constance McCarthy

Time Flies

I can't believe that we're already coming up on the last chapter event of the year. I hope that you will join us at our annual potluck and seed exchange. Even if you haven't attended many (or even any) programs this year, don't be deterred from coming to the potluck. This is not at all an "in with the in crowd" kind of event, only for a select group. I have yet to meet a stand-offish member; we really are a friendly and outgoing bunch. The social time after our monthly meetings is always lively. Now instead of watching the clock after meetings, trying to be

out of Burpee by 9 p.m., we'll have the whole evening to hang out, catch up, and share stories of what we've been up to (even if your plans to use natives are still in the dreaming stage).

Don't worry if you have no seeds to share. You'll still be able to take some seeds home if you wish. Every year, the selection of seeds amazes me.

So please consider attending our chapter's last chance for fun in 2009. You won't regret it!

Don't Fiddle While the Prairie Burns: Join a Burn Crew!

Were you intrigued after our last monthly meeting about prescribed burns? Are you interested in learning more about burns? Some of our area's environmental organizations might be able to add your name to a list of folks interested in volunteering to help with prescribed burns. You can gain invaluable experience from experts, and help out organizations that are working hard to restore properties in our area.

The only catch is that the exact date of a burn is never known far in advance. Weather conditions must fall within the parameters specified in the burn plan, and we all know how the weather can change so rapidly from one day to the next. If you are on a list of potential burn crew members, you will likely receive a call only a day or two in advance. Something like being "on call"--and when the call comes for you, hopefully you'll be able to respond and join a crew.

Prescribed burns are carried out by all three organizations represented on the panel at our last program. You can contact the organizations directly to find out whether they are taking volunteers for burns, and what their procedures are for participating. You can reach them as follows:

Natural Land Institute: (815) 964.6666
 Winnebago County Forest Preserve District: (815) 877.6100
 Boone County Conservation District: (815) 547.7935

Pot Luck and Seed Exchange (cont'd)

any meetings or events this year, you are very warmly invited to join us at this event.

Details for the Pot Luck and Seed Exchange:

You bring: a side dish to share (salad, vegetable, dessert), a place setting, silverware & cup

We bring: hot main dish, beverages

For those who wish to exchange seed here is how it works: Please bring any native seed you have collected on your property and would like to share with other members. Preferably the seed should be of local species. All seeds should be clearly identified with both the botanical and/or common name on the container. If possible, please indicate if the seed was collected from a local plant or a purchased plant. Seeds do not need to be cleaned and ready for planting. For those who need them, small envelopes will be provided to use in transporting your new seeds home.

Remember: Anyone may take seeds, and you do not have to bring seeds to take seeds! Come whether you plan to participate in the seed exchange or not! All members are welcome.

Come help us celebrate another successful year of introducing the community to the benefits joys of native landscaping.

This program is for Wild Ones members only.

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

Annual Membership Survey Constance McCarthy

By now, members should have received in the mail an annual membership survey. If you are a member and did not receive your survey, please contact me at (815) 282.0316 or kublaikhan@mac.com.

If you haven't already returned the completed form, I'd like to urge you to take a few minutes to help out the chapter by providing valuable feedback. The events and programs that our chapter offers are not dictated from on-high by the board of directors. The results of the annual survey, including members' comments and suggestions, provide invaluable guidance to the board.

The survey also gives members the chance to let the chapter know whether they'd like to be notified about plant rescues, paired up with a mentor, or included in one of our show me/help me tours. There are also many options for volunteering to help the chapter, behind the scenes or at monthly programs and events.

Even if you forget about the survey until after the suggested return-by date, you can still mail it back. On behalf of the board, thank you for sharing your impressions, and your time, with the chapter.

Wild One's Merchandise Update Submitted by Shey Lowman, Coordinator

Last chance this year! Because you all have been such loyal Wild Ones shoppers, merchandise will be for sale at the Chapter Potluck on November 19. So you still have one more chance to shop for your favorite Wild One this season.

How about getting yourself a **Wild Ones Yard Sign** and show your pride in being a Wild One! Pre-drilled holes for mounting on a post. Beautifully silkscreened for only \$24.00.



In a special promotion from national Wild Ones we have **"In Celebration of Nature"** totes available in red, white and blue for only \$5.00 each. These totes have a handy top zipper and are light weight and strong.



Be prepared for spring with your own **Parsnip Predator**. This remarkable tool is useful for killing thistle, Queen Anne's Lace as well as for excising the pestiferous Wild Parsnip, *Pastinaca sativa*, while allowing you to stay on your feet! It's light weight and ergonomic too.



The **Prairie Seedling and Seeding Evaluation Guide** will be back in stock in time for the Potluck. This is a great book to have for identifying those native plants and weeds as they emerge next spring, so you know which ones are the good guys. A bargain at \$12.00.



Please help with the last of our **clothing closeouts!** We have 2 men's large denim shirts with the Wild Ones logo over the front pocket for sale at \$24.00, \$20.00 off the regular price of \$44.00 in Natural and Light Blue. We also have 2 men's XL polo shirts in Sand.



Thank you for your continued support of merchandise for the Wild Ones RRV Chapter! If you have a special request or want any merchandise reserved for you, please send me an email at slowman@niu.edu.

October Meeting Recap

Constance McCarthy

photos by Tim Lewis

What Is a Burn? Why Are Burns Important?

Andy Bacon, of the Natural Land Institute, presented the first part of the evening's program on prescribed burns. Fire is not something unique to our prairies and grasslands, as grasslands around the world tend to carry fire along, including in Africa and Australia. Fire keeps trees from becoming established to the point that they would otherwise be able to withstand fire. When there is no fire, trees become more established, shading the prairie and causing the prairie to shrink. Prairies are thus fire-dependent ecosystems. Woodlands can also depend on fire to keep shrubby undergrowth from taking over.

In 1830, 75% of Winnebago county was prairie. Once settlers began arriving in 1840, the start of our road system was put in place. Where in the past fire had been able to move freely across the prairie, the new roads, homes, and agricultural development began to act as fire breaks. The remnant patches of prairie that remained went unburned for decades. This allowed the woody shrubs to take over, altering the balance that once existed. As trees grew and filled in the canopy, herbaceous plants that once thrived began to fade away. Fire was -- and remains -- an important force in maintaining nature's equilibrium.

When the equilibrium is disturbed, wildlife is also impacted. Birds evolved over time to live with a certain habitat. When their habitat is altered by woody shrubs that have taken over, birds fall victim to nest predation and nest parasite problems. Grassland bird species have been in decline because they are less able to find the proper size and location of their habitat.

The next topic was the ABC's of doing a controlled burn. First, one must have purpose for doing a burn, for example to deter woody growth, reduce invasive and non-native plants, invigorate seed production and germination, and/or site management. The person instigating the burn must be aware of liabilities, as one must take responsibility for the consequences of a fire. Planning for smoke management is one often overlooked factor. In 2007, Illinois passed the Prescribed Burning Act, which reduces liability for those involved in prescribed burns, as long as certain guidelines are

followed. The Act also now recognizes burning as a property right, and defines prescribed burning as being in the public interest.

One must obtain a burn permit from the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), as smoke is recognized as a pollutant. It is also necessary to contact the local fire department, as there are additional requirements that may vary from one locale to the next. For example, the city of Rockford also requires a local permit.

Some things that influence a fire, and thus need to be considered in drafting your burn plan, include:

- ◆ wind: generally should be at least 3 mph, but not more than 15 mph
- ◆ humidity: should be between 20% and 60%; above that range, it will be hard to light the fire, below that range, it will be too dry so that combustion may be difficult to control
- ◆ temperature: the hotter it is, the more combustible the fire can become
- ◆ fuel load: this considers how much old vegetation there is to burn; newer plantings will generally have less fuel load, while an area that has not been burned in many years may have an abundance of fuel
- ◆ slope: fire tends to burn uphill; the steeper the slope, the quicker the fire will move up it
- ◆ time of day: earlier in the day, more dew will be present

A detailed burn plan is a must, and should be prepared by (or with the assistance of) the "burn boss," an experienced person who will be in charge of the burn. The plan will specify that address, the size of the area to be burned, the fuel load, and the weather parameters (weather conditions that must be present for the burn to be carried out).

Notification of neighbors is required, as well, although this can be done with a letter or postcard. The plan must also specify the fire breaks that will be used (e.g., mowed turf grass, roads, paths, tilled agricultural land, or waterways), as well as the number of people who will serve on the burn crew.

Equipment that will be needed for a burn includes the following (but can vary depending on the size of the area to be burned):

- ◆ fire control equipment (water tanks, water containers that can be carried on one's back)
- ◆ rakes, to help move fire along or to smother fire



Guy Smith, Pat Schubert and Eric Bednar

- ◆ chain saw and axe
- ◆ fire broom and flapper
- ◆ drip torch; Andy prefers a mixture of 1/3 gasoline and 2/3 diesel fuel
- ◆ a lighter
- ◆ protective equipment and clothing: if you don't have access to special fire gear, be sure to wear natural fibers; in any case, gloves are a must (leather is good, welding gloves are better); a fire helmet can come in handy, as some folks underestimate how hot the fire can become
- ◆ communications equipment: walkie talkies are helpful, but cell phones may suffice for smaller fires
- ◆ drinking water: the more the better; a dehydrated burn crew won't be much help
- ◆ weather testing equipment: this allows you to document that at the time you start the fire, the weather conditions fall within the parameters specified in your burn plan

On the day of the burn, be sure that you have enough helpers, and then call the fire department to let them know that you are lighting the fire. Review the burn plan with the burn crew and go over roles. A backfire generally should be lit on the downwind side, followed by lighting of the flank fire and the head fire.

After the fire is over, be sure that all flames are extinguished. In the case of a prairie burn, all flames need to be out, whereas in the case of a woodland burn, be sure that there is no fuel remaining that would allow the fire to leave the burn area. Call the fire department to tell them that you are leaving the area. This way they will know to send out fire trucks if someone calls to report that the fire is burning. The final step is to prepare a burn report, noting how things went with the burn. Agencies hold onto these reports for several years; the requirements for homeowners are not so strict. Nevertheless, documenting your actions is one means of trying to limit your liability should something go wrong.

The second portion of the program consisted of a panel discussion. Our distinguished panel of expert burners consisted of Andy Bacon and Greg Keilback, both of Natural Land Institute, Josh Sage of Boone County Conservation District, and Eric Bednar of the Winnebago County Forest Preserve District. The audience was free to pose questions to spark discussion among the panel.

The first question concerned circumstances under which one may burn at night. The panel replied that it is not permitted to ignite a fire after sunset, although it is sometimes necessary for at least some of the burn crew to remain on site well into the evening, depending on weather conditions and the nature of the fire.

One question that was on many minds related to the best



The panelists, from left to right: Andy Bacon - Natural Land Institute; Greg Keilback - Natural Land Institute; Eric Bednar - Winnebago County Forest Preserve District; Josh Sage - Boone County Conservation District

time of year to burn. This depends on the type of vegetation one is dealing with. In the autumn, fallen leaves are full of moisture and thus don't burn well, whereas in the spring they are quite dried out and are easier to burn. Site management goals also can indicate the best time of year to burn. A general guideline is to burn cool season grasses in the spring, woodlands in the fall, and wetlands whenever they are dry enough to burn. Fall burning can encourage forbs.

Another person asked whether it is important to vary the burn schedule, so that one is not burning the same area in the same season each time. The consensus seemed to be that this is indeed a good idea, as one can better manipulate the landscape by being strategic about the timing of burns. There are also insect and wildlife conservation concerns, which can make it a wise idea to burn only part of an area one year, and then wait a few years to burn the other part.

One of our curious visitors from a high school science class asked whether the panelists had experienced any intense or out of control fires. All of the panelists have participated in many, many burns, and even the fires that are especially intense can be learning experiences.

Regarding how many people would be sufficient for a burn crew, the panel said that this can vary depending on the size of the area to be burned. One panelist said he prefers to use a crew of six, which can be split into two groups of three. Another said that he would use four people only on a very simple and small site.

There were a few questions about the permit process. The permit is good for one year, so one need not specify an exact date (indeed, that would be impossible, as the weather conditions on any given day might be outside the parameters specified in the plan). A suggestion was made to apply in November for a burn planned for the

(Continued on page 6)

October Meeting Recap (cont'd) Constance McCarthy

following year, as it takes some time for the Illinois EPA to process the permit request. There are some area groups that might be able to provide guidance in filling out the form, including Wild Ones, Natural Land Institute, and Pheasants Forever in Winnebago county

(according to one audience member).

Finally, burning does not, alas, control reed canary grass. One panelist suggested planting a shrub layer that will shade out the canary grass.

Applying for an Open Burning Permit

By Tim Lewis, Wild Ones Certified Ecoscaper

The presenters at our last meeting told us that before we burn our native landscapes, we need to obtain an Illinois Environmental Protection Agency Open Burning Permit. Although burning of yard waste is allowed in some areas of the state at specific times, Wild Ones has maintained that to set a good example, we should always obtain a burning permit. Burn permits are free and are good for one year, which means you can burn your native landscape when the time and weather are ideal.

For those areas in the county where open burning without a permit is allowed, it is usually for a short period in the fall and the spring. Unfortunately, these times are not always the best time for us to burn our native landscapes. The Illinois DNR recommends that prescribed burns be conducted between October 1 and April 30 for prescribed burns in central Illinois. I generally try to burn anytime between March 15 to April 15. So this is another reason to have a permit. Before you consider burning, check with your local laws and the fire department.

Applying for the Open Burning Permit is fairly easy. You only need to fill it out one time because after you get the permit, you only need to send a letter with a copy of the previous year's permit to request another year's permit. You can download the application, form APC 325, at <http://www.epa.state.il.us/air/forms.html>. You can fill out the PDF form electronically and save it to your computer. After you fill it out, print it out and mail to the address on the application. The Illinois EPA has up to 90 days to process the application so I try to mail mine before the end of November. Many times, they take the full 90 days to send the permit.

Filling out Form APC 325

The following is a guideline for filling out the application. Most parts are self-explanatory, but this will help you with some of the sections.

Section 3, General Justification for Open

Burning: Explain why you prefer to burn rather than mowing or just letting the natives go. I state, "Burning at a regular interval is more beneficial for natives plants than mowing. I do not burn the entire plot each year, but try to burn portions of it each year."

For the second part of this section, I state, "Burning is the natural cycle for native landscapes and promotes a healthy habitat for wildlife and insects."

Section 4, Site: Fill in the blanks. You will need to provide a simple sketch of the site and show the distances to adjacent structures, residences, populated areas, roadways, and so on. I measured my yard and drew it out on one sheet of paper. Nothing fancy is needed. They just need to know what is nearby that could be affected by your burn, such as roadways, hospitals, nursing homes and schools.

Section 5, Duration and Schedule: They want an general idea of when you hope to burn and how long the burn will last. You are not required to burn on the specified day however. For the scheduled date, I put March 15 but for the alternative date, I put a range of March 16 through April 15.

Section 6, Materials to be Burned: I just list my prairie plot, its size, and that it consists of forbs, grasses, and weedy woody volunteer plants.

I skip Section 7.

Section 8, Residue Disposal: I state, "Remaining ash stays on the ground."

Section 9, Abatement: You can check off any of the items listed. I add that my plot is small and that it burns quickly.

For the second part of 9, I check off Controlled Burn.

Section 10, Notification: Put down how you will tell neighbors. I usually try to tell my neighbors in person that I plan to burn within the next two weeks, depending on the weather. I ask if they object to the burn.

Skip Sections 11 through 13.

After you have your permit and before you burn, you **must** call your local fire department ahead of time.

When I call the Cherry Valley Fire Department, they want me to call when I start the burn and they want to know how long it will take. I let them know that I have the permit. Don't forget to notify your neighbors.

If you have never burned before, I highly recommend that you volunteer to be on a burn crew for Natural Land Institute or Boone County Conservation District. You can also ask your fellow Wild Ones who have burn experience to help you.



Photo Contest Winners Do the Chapter Proud

Once again, several members of our chapter have had success in the annual Wild Ones national photo contest. We extend hearty congratulations to the following:

- Linda Winstead won first place for “Coreopsis Up Close” in the Flora category. She also won third place for “Caterpillar Art in the Park” in the Pollinators, Insects, and Bugs category.
- Mark Winstead won first place for “Lupine in the Landscape” in the Residential Landscaping category.
- Tim Lewis won second place for “Chapter Yard Tour” in the Wild Ones Activities category.

This was the first year that voting was done online. If the national office has your correct email address, you should have received a link allowing you to vote online. Please contact Marilyn Heneghan, membership chair, if the chapter and national do not have your correct email address. She can be reached at informationoptions@att.net.

Membership Update Marilyn Heneghan, Membership Chair

171 memberships on November 1, 2009

Welcome New Members:

Jeff and Judy White
Pamela Murphy
Rachel Walters Stefanini

Special Thanks to Recent Rock River Valley Chapter Donators

(any amount about the \$30 basic dues)
Michael and Jean Maloney

74 attended the October program. Thank you to Lisa Johnson and Don Heneghan for greeting members this month.

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 if you change your email address.

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.

2009 Chapter Programs and Events

Date/Time	Program	Speaker	Location
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!		

2010 Chapter Programs and Events

January 21 7:00-9:00 PM	Native Plant Communities of Northern IL Why is biodiversity so important? What we had, where it went, what can we do as homeowners	John Nelson Illinois Department of Natural Resources	Burpee Museum of Natural History
February 18 7:00-9:00 PM	Planning native plantings, incorporating into existing, using cultivars, planning for burns	Patricia Hill Author of <i>Design Your Natural Midwest Garden</i>	Burpee Museum of Natural History

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



NATIVE PLANTS, NATURAL LANDSCAPES

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 **11/1/2009**, 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 (kublaikhan@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)

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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.