

Promoting Native Plants for Natural Landscapes.

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*Program: Panel Discussion:
Controlling Invasive Plants
Thursday, February 16, 2012*

Location: Burpee Museum of Natural History
737 N. Main St., Rockford IL

Time: 7:00 pm

Invasive plants threaten our natural areas and even our yards. Garlic mustard, Dame's rocket, Japanese honeysuckle, common and glossy buckthorns, and more show up in our yards without being invited. Invasives push out native plants and because many of them do not have natural controls such as they would in their native habitat, can quickly take over. Eventually we end up with a monoculture that does not attract the diversity of insects, birds and wildlife we expect.

Natural area restoration practitioners use an arsenal of tools to fight back and reclaim lands infested with these invaders. Prescribed fire, spraying herbicides, mowing, tilling, chain sawing and biological controls all are useful options in this war on weeds. Each weed and site needs specific treatments in order to achieve a successful outcome. Before we use any controls to keep invasives in check, we need to understand what is best for each plant and site. Using the wrong tools can create more damage than do good.

Come and hear a panel of experts as they describe the tools and methods they use in area natural areas. You will be able to apply techniques to controlling invasive plants in your own yard. The panel will include Nathan Hill of Kishwaukee River EcoSystem Partnership, Greg Keilback of Natural Land Institute, and Andy Stahr of the consulting firm, Ecology+Vision, LLC, from Jack Pizzo and Associates. The members of the panel are well experienced managing natural areas and sustainable landscapes; and they are willing to share their tips and tricks, failures and successes battling weeds. Come at 6:30 p.m. to socialize before the 7:00 meeting, browse the merchandise tables, or check out the library and Wild Ones information booths.

This program is free and open to the public. For more information, please contact Terry Mohaupt at 815-399-8432 or e-mail mohaupt@comcast.net

Submitted by Terry Mohaupt, Program Coordinator.



Articles for the March 2012 newsletter, must be submitted to the Newsletter Editor, at: dkcamps@aol.com by February 23, 2012 .



Message from the President Constance McCarthy

Dues to increase, but benefits abound



You may have already read in the e-newsletter from the national office that Wild Ones dues will be going up effective 1 March 2012. There was a bit of a kerfuffle when this was first proposed, but I was not concerned.

First, dues have not been increased since 2001 – eleven years ago! That is an incredibly long time for dues to have remained at the same level.

I also thought that members get a large number of benefits in exchange for their dues. Even just a subscription to the chapter newsletter (11 issues per year) and the national journal (quarterly) seemed to me like a good deal for only \$30. Our chapter offers plenty of other membership benefits, including:

- borrowing privileges at our chapter's lending library. The collection of books continues to grow every month, it seems, and Ginnie Watson and her crew of library helpers have shaped this into a pretty slick operation.
- invitations to Show Me/Help Me events, the annual yard tour and social, and plant rescues. These are all great opportunities to learn more about native plants and trees from other chapter members.
- the possibility to request a mentor for planting natives on your own property. While the mentors don't do any physical labor, they are willing to share their

knowledge and experience with members who are newer to landscaping with natives.

- an invitation to the annual potluck and seed exchange. And it's not even necessary to bring seed in order to take some home!

Besides, your dues help to support a national organization that advocates for the promotion of natives in home and business landscapes, and the restoration and protection of native habitats. For some folks, this alone is worth the cost of membership dues. Plus, a portion of your dues help support the chapter and the super educational programs we offer each month.

An increase of only \$7 for individual / household memberships is rather modest, considering how long it has been since the last increase.

You can renew your membership prior to 1 March 2012 at the current \$30 rate for individuals / households. Your renewal period will be tacked on to your current expiration date, so you'll get the full bang for your buck. You can send your renewals to Marilyn Heneghan, Membership Chair; her contact information is noted in this newsletter.

There will also continue to be a membership category for students and those with limited income (this is self-determined; no one will enquire into your circumstances). Dues for this category will remain at \$20.

Membership Update Marilyn Heneghan, Membership Chair

166 memberships on February 1, 2012

Welcome New Members

Ron Hendrickson
Krina Goss

Special Thanks to Recent Rock River Valley Chapter Donators

(any amount about the \$30 basic dues)
Lowell & Betty Edwards
Carla Womack

50 attended the January program. Thank you to Lisa Johnson for helping to greet members.

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.

Chapter Board Retreat By Kim Lowman Vollmer

On January 14, twelve of our chapter's board members and coordinators gathered at the home of Kim Lowman Vollmer to share and brainstorm to find and develop strategies and ideas that will help improve our already outstanding chapter.

In August, Ginnie Watson (Librarian), Constance McCarthy (Chapter President), and Tim Lewis (National President) attended the Wild Ones Annual Membership Meeting and Chapter Development Weekend at the WILD Center in Neenah, Wisconsin (just outside of Appleton). There were numerous workshops, some of which were facilitated by our chapter's three representatives, as well as networking opportunities. They shared things that are working well for our chapter, and brought back wonderful and exciting strategies to help us grow, many of which we hope to implement.

At the board retreat in January, we worked on developing plans for growing membership, partnering with other organizations, and promoting volunteer opportunities and recognition, among other topics. You may notice some positive changes as we implement these

ideas, and we welcome your feedback during the process. Nothing radical, fear not! Just improving on many of the things we're already doing.

Volunteering is important to all of us and it is a way to put into action our environmental beliefs, to help the earth, to make connections with others, and even just to have fun. We hope that you will find some of our volunteer opportunities appealing, make connections with others who share your interests, and learn more about native plants along the way. Next time the chance to volunteer comes up (and there will be many), consider saying yes!



Board of Directors in Action

Shey Lowman, Secretary

Highlights of Board of Directors meetings:

October 13, 2011-

- A motion was passed to pay for radio ads on WNIJ to promote the Doug Tallamy presentation, two weeks for \$379.05. The ads attracted attendees from a wide area of northern Illinois.
- Annual \$1,200 room rental for the Burpee Museum was approved to pay.
- National Wild Ones had a policy change and now requires that they sign off on all Chapter expenditures over \$2,000, primarily affects plant sale purchases. They are also a signatory on the Chapter checking account.
- Board members are writing their job descriptions and procedures to ensure future continuity.

December 8, 2011-

- Constance McCarthy and Lenae Weichel are attending the Winnebago County Forest Preserve District board meetings and reporting the information in the newsletter as many members are impacted by WCFPD decisions.
- The Chapter donated \$480 (\$3 per member) to the national Wild Ones Seeds for Education grant program.
- Instead of using sign-up sheets at events for people to get three complimentary newsletters, a coupon was developed for interested people to hand or mail in.

The response is good and eliminated interpretation of handwriting.

January 14, 2012 Board Retreat-

Special meeting to discuss National Wild Ones August membership meeting at the Wild Center in Neenah, WI attended by Constance McCarthy, Ginnie Watson and Tim Lewis.

- Discussed ways to support members and to promote membership
 - Engage members at monthly meetings and through newsletter
 - Acknowledge volunteers that make meetings and events possible
 - Develop membership brochure/bookmark to promote Chapter
 - Expand publicity in local area newspapers and magazines
- Partnering with other environmental organizations to provide education opportunities and avoid duplication of efforts.

The next board meeting will be Thursday, February 9, 2012, 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.

January Meeting Recap by Constance McCarthy

Photos by Tim Lewis

Ferns to Know and Grow



Emily Sessa, of the Botany Department at University of Wisconsin Madison, gave an extremely informative presentation to the chapter in January on many aspects of ferns.

Introduction

When thinking of where ferns grow, people tend to think of moist, shady areas. Actually, ferns are very diverse, and they grow in a variety of habitats. Some even grow on the face of rocky cliffs and in full sun. They are also very diverse in size, ranging from only a few inches tall, to “tree” ferns that grow in tropical and subtropical areas, to ferns that lay flat on the ground, like a carpet of green ribbons.

To help convince dubious undergraduates that fern are indeed cool, Ms. Sessa tells them about the flora of Jurassic Park, as there are plenty of ferns in that movie. Ferns did exist at the time dinosaurs roamed the earth, in fact as far back as over 300 million years ago. Today there are around 12,000 known fern species, and ferns are the second largest group of plants after angiosperms (flowering plants). Coal that is used for electricity comes, in part, from ferns that were alive in the Carboniferous Period.

Fern Anatomy

Ferns consist of roots, a rhizome (like a stem), and fronds (leaves). Generally, only the fronds are seen above ground. The fronds usually have pinnae (singular, pinnule), which are leaflets, although some ferns have simple (undivided) leaves. Leaf division is often a key factor when using fern identification keys.

A question was posed about how tree ferns protect themselves without bark. Indeed, ferns do not produce wood. Rather, the rhizome turns upright and comes out of the soil, and this structure provides support. The bases of the leaves also provide support even after fronds die off; a substance in the base of leaves can be as hard as rock, and also supports the plant. Tree ferns can grow to be up to 20 meters tall!

The reproductive structure of the plant is seen on the underside of a fern leaf. These small bumps are not eggs from a pest, a fungus, or bugs. Unfortunately, people unfamiliar with fern anatomy will think that they are helping to rid a fern of disease by scraping these off, when in fact what they are doing is neutering the poor fern.

Another factor in identifying ferns is the appearance of the sori (singular, sorus). These are ring-like reproductive structures consisting of clusters of

sporangia (singular, sporangium), which contain the spores, and their appearance varies greatly. The umbrella-like structure that usually covers the middle of the ring is the indusium. When the spores are released from the fern, they can be flung up to one to two meters from the plant. The spores are extremely tiny and appear almost like dust.

Life Cycle of Ferns

Ferns don't have flowers or seeds, and thus produce no fruit. They reproduce by spores.

A spore that falls on soil or a rotting log will germinate if the conditions are right. The gametophyte is what emerges, and is about the size of a pinkie fingernail. These gametophytes can produce both eggs and sperm. The fertilized egg will grow into a sporophyte, which is what we typically think of as a fern plant. The gametophyte is ephemeral and eventually ceases to exist, and the sporophyte is what remains. The sporophyte (the fern) is perennial.

Fiddleheads, which are very beautiful and diverse, are relevant only to sporophyte phase of the lifecycle. The technical term for the unfurling of the fiddlehead is circinate vernation. Among fiddleheads there is much variety in structure and color. Some have a fuzzy structure to keep herbivores and insects from eating them.

The ostrich fern is only fern the fiddleheads of which are considered safe to eat. Ferns produce a huge variety of secondary compounds (chemical byproducts), and turn those byproducts into nasty things. For example, one such compound, when ingested by an insect, causes the insect to instantly molt, while other compounds are thought to be carcinogens for humans. In parts of Asia where Bracken fern fiddleheads are widely consumed, there is a higher incidence of stomach cancer. While the fern uses these compounds to protect itself, the organism at the receiving end can really suffer. To reduce the effects of these secondary compounds, it is recommended that fiddleheads be first boiled in multiple washes of water, and then sautéed. Be careful!

Ferns don't need fertilizer in the garden. They tend to be slower growing, and fertilizing them won't cause the plant to grow any faster.

A question was asked about the ability of ferns to survive in flooded woodland areas. Gametophytes won't do well, as they are rather fragile. However, the root systems of ferns are tenacious, and allow them to hold on to the soil. Once established, ferns can withstand a periodic flood.

Another questions concerned how long it takes for ferns to reach maturity and produce spores. They are slow growing at first, and it generally takes two years from

January Meeting Recap (continued)

the “birth” of a fern before it will produce spores of its own. Spores do survive through the winter, and just as we speak of a seed bank in the soil, there are also spore banks in the soil.

Landscape and Conservation Use of Ferns

Most know that ferns are shade tolerant, but even more importantly to some of us, they are also deer resistant. They are insect resistant, generally because of the secondary compounds that insects have evolved to avoid.

Some ferns are evergreen, such as the Christmas fern and the intermediate fern. They don't remain upright all winter; the fronds will fall and lay on the surface of snow, but will stay green.

Certain ferns spread quickly, which most gardeners know can be a double-edged sword. While a fern may be easy to grow in even tough conditions, once well established, the fern could be near impossible to eradicate if your garden plans change.

In addition, ferns can help with specific environmental problems. They can be used for erosion control, such as cinnamon fern, interrupted fern (both of which need moist feet), and ostrich fern.

Ferns are used for phytoremediation, which is a process for removing toxins (e.g. heavy metals, arsenic, cadmium, formaldehyde) from the soil. The chemicals tend to concentrate in the rhizomes and are not taken up so much into the leaves. Although not native, the Chinese brake fern (*Pteris vittata*) is being used in the southwest to help clean up superfund sites.

Although the Illinois DNR lists endangered and threatened ferns, in Ms. Sessa's opinion many of the ferns on this list are there because Illinois is at the very edge of their range and the ferns are just not found that often here (rather than being truly endangered, for example by human activity). However, there are many ferns that like wetlands, and humans tend not to like wetlands (“let's turn that into a parking lot!”). Thus, we do need to be concerned about habitat for ferns, more than worrying about a particular species.

Gardening with Ferns

The usual factors apply when choosing ferns for your home garden, including light, water, and type of soil. No matter the garden or site, there is almost always a fern that can grow there. Propagating ferns from spores is not as difficult as it seems, but does require some patience. Two highlighted resources are:

- www.HardyFerns.org/fern-info-propagation.php
- www.CrowDogNativeFerns.com/propagation.html

Ms. Sessa also recommends the William Cullina book on ferns in our chapter's lending library.

Place a fern frond in a manila envelope to collect the spores. You can use plastic deli containers with lids for germination. It is very important to be sure that your growing medium is sterilized (moistened, then microwaved, for example). Jiffy pellets are one option; pour boiling water over them. Sprinkle spores on the medium, mist gently with water. In a few weeks to one month, gametophytes will appear. You'll need to thin and separate the gametophytes onto more medium or more Jiffy pellets so that they have enough room to grow. Continue misting, and they'll keep growing.

The American Fern Society (<http://amerfernsoc.org>) even has a spore exchange! The website lists the species available, and there is a very minimal charge to have the spores sent to you.

Illinois Ferns to Know and Grow

For areas that are consistently moist:

- bulblet bladderfern: delicate, lacy, with red petioles.
- horsetails and scouring rushes (*Equisetum*): these are indeed ferns (reproducing by spores), even though they don't have fronds as we imagine ferns to have.
- ostrich fern: separate sterile fronds and reproductive fronds; looks like ostrich plumes.
- sensitive fern: also grows in fairly dry areas, and some will grow in full sun. The leaves turn brown at the first hint of cold weather. They can colonize, but at a slower pace than ostrich fern.
- cinnamon fern: has separate fertile and sterile fronds; named from the rusty color that is seen when the spores mature.

For moist to mesic areas:

- maidenhair fern: very well known, with distinctive fronds.
- lady fern: can grow to be large in the right habitat; can also grow in dryer/upland areas.
- Goldie's wood fern: the largest fern in our part of North America; a lush, beautiful fern.
- interrupted fern: appears similar to cinnamon fern; the sterile and fertile parts of plant are separated on the same leaf.
- royal fern: a less “ferny looking” fern.

For mesic to slightly dry areas (typically forests, so these may be harder to adapt to home gardens)

- intermediate wood fern
- marginal wood fern (good for rocky, well drained soil)
- Christmas fern (evergreen)

For mesic to dry areas:

- Bracken fern: This is the champion in this category. It is found around the world, often growing in conifer forests. It is best for areas where there are challenges

Native Woodland Plant Sale Begins

Included with this newsletter is the brochure for the 2012 Native Woodland Plant Sale. There are some familiar favorites and several new choices among the flowering plants, ferns and sedges. As always the plants are native to Winnebago County (with one exception from neighboring Ogle County). The brochure has descriptions of each plant, general information about woodland plant culture and an order form with prices.

Many of us were at the January meeting and heard the great presentation on native ferns. At April's meeting we'll hear another fine talk on woodland plants. These lovely plants are so welcome in our yards. Some are very early and then go dormant; their fleeting beauty is all the more welcome. Others we will enjoy throughout the summer with their colorful berries, singular growth habits and fall flowers. Each species benefits bees and other insects and birds and small mammals in its own way by providing nectar, pollen, larval food or cover for the most humble of insects to the lovely butterflies and amazing hummingbird.

All inquiries are most welcome. Please let the sale coordinator know if there is a plant that you would like which is not on the list.

Barbara Flores, Sale Coordinator • 815-289-8602 • bafheartland@yahoo.com

January Meeting Recap (continued)

getting something to grow. Be warned: its rhizomes can grow six feet into the ground! Thus, it's hard to get out once established.

- broad beech fern: a smaller fern that can do well in dry and rocky conditions, but can also handle more moist conditions.

Fern Resources

Ms. Sessa recommends the following books:

- ***Ferns***, by Cobb et al. (Houghton Mifflin): be sure to get 2nd edition
- ***Fern Grower's Manual***, by Hoshizaki and Moran (Timber Press, 2001)(2nd edition): a real tome that includes some non-natives, but provides very extensive coverage of natives
- ***Ferns for American Gardens***, by Mickel (Timber Press, 2003)
- ***Native Ferns, Moss and Grasses***, by Cullina (Houghton Mifflin)

Several of these can be found in our chapter's lending library. Check with Ginnie Watson, Librarian, for availability.

She also recommends the following web resources:

- search Google for "Pteridophytes of Wisconsin" (the URL is rather long)
- the site of the Wisconsin State Herbarium (www.botany.wisc.edu) has photos of all species
- Ms. Sessa's own fern blog: <http://noseeds.blogspot.com> ("No seeds, no fruits, no flowers: no problem"). She says to feel free to email her with any questions.

Barbara Flores & Janet Giesen

Questions and Answers

The challenges sometimes faced in growing ferns in urban gardens can result from wind, human disturbance, salt and chemicals, all of which can be damaging to the start of the life cycle of ferns.

Regarding the impact of climate change on ferns: Range changes will happen as a result of climate change. Increases in average yearly temperatures will cause some plants to come off endangered list, while an increase in catastrophic events (e.g., major storms) could have a local impact. Ferns are good at colonizing newly exposed surfaces, so some ferns may take advantage of these conditions. For example, ferns are sometimes the first plants to start growing on volcanic islands.

Regarding soil pH and ferns: Ferns tend not to be picky, but they don't like the extremes of acidic or basic soils. Slightly acidic soil is perhaps best, but ferns are not fussy in this sense.



2012 Chapter Programs and Events

February 16 7:00 p.m.	<i>Controlling Invasive Plants</i>	Nate Hill, Greg Kielback, and a representative from Jack Pizzo & Assoc.	Burpee Museum of Natural History
May 1	<i>Last Day Prairie plant orders will be accepted</i>	Lenae Weichel Prairie Sale Coordinator	(815) 282-5482 lenae@weichel.org
May 18 & 19	<i>Pick Up Prairie Plant Orders</i> See flier for full details	Lenae Weichel Prairie Sale Coordinator	1438 Collingswood Dr. Rockford, IL 61103 815-282-5482
March 15 7:00 p.m.	<i>Native Forbs and Grasses to Attract Birds</i>	Lee Johnson Sand Bluff Bird Observatory	Burpee Museum of Natural History
April 19	<i>Native Woodland Plants for Shady Areas</i>	Dan Boehlke Horticultural Advisor, Frenz Garden Center, Milwaukee	Burpee Museum of Natural History
May 17 7:00 p.m.	<i>Native Insects in Our Landscapes</i>	Phil Nixon University of Illinois Extension-Urbana	Nicholas Conservatory
June 21 7:00 p.m.	<i>From Seed to Flower, Growing Your Own Native Plants</i>	Connie Ramthun Natural Landscaping Consultant Kettle Moraine Natural Landscaping	Burpee Museum of Natural History
July 19 7:00 p.m.	<i>Yard Tour/Evening Social Members Only</i>		TBA
August - Sept.	<i>Native Shrub and Tree Sale Orders taken during this time</i> See brochure for complete details	John Peterson Native Tree & Shrub Sale Coordinator	(815) 248-2110 tacmot@msn.com
August 16 7:00 p.m.	<i>Native Shrubs</i>	Corrine Daniels Principal Nursery Manager AES Restoration Nurseries	Burpee Museum of Natural History
September TBA	<i>Native Tree & Shrub Pickup</i> See brochure for complete details	John Peterson Native Tree & Shrub Sale Coord.	14037 Baker Rd Durand, IL 61024 (815) 248-2110
Sept. 20 7:00 p.m.	<i>How to Naturally Landscape and Please Your Neighbors and Village Officials—All at the Same Time</i>	Bret Rappaport Legal expert assisting natural landscapers	Burpee Museum of Natural History
October 18 7:00 p.m.	<i>Photo Yard Tours</i> A visual tour of native planting projects		Burpee Museum of Natural History
November 15 7:00 p.m.	<i>Pot Luck and Seed Exchange</i> Members only – all members welcome with or without seeds. Bring a dish to share.		Burpee Museum of Natural History
December	<i>No Meeting-Happy Holidays!</i>		

Unless noted, programs are free and open to the public. Programs are subject to change.
Please contact Terry Mohaupt, at 815-399-8432 or mohaupt@comcast.com for more information.



NATIVE PLANTS. NATURAL LANDSCAPES

ROCK RIVER VALLEY

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 **2/1/2012**, 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 and Chairs

President: Constance McCarthy 815-282-0316 (kublai@mac.com)
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Prairie Plant Sale Coordinator: Lenae Weichel 815-282-5482 (lenae@weichel.org)
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Youth Education & Grants Chair: Kim Lowman Vollmer 815-397-6044 (kimlowvol@aol.com)
Volunteer Coordinator: Guy Smith (815) 633-5293 guysmith99@hotmail.com
Booth Coordinator, FREC representative: Tim Lewis (815) 874.3468 natives.tim@comcast.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.

815-627-0344 • Visit our Web site at www.WildOnesRRVC.org

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.