

# The News From Native Plant School

January 2013



Native Plant School is a partnership between Shaw Nature Reserve, Grow Native! and Wild Ones Natural Landscapers. Classes are held in the Whitmire Wildflower Garden at Shaw Nature Reserve.

Please register and pay [online](#)



## Upcoming classes:

Please register and pay [online](#).

### 2013 Schedule

Thur, Jan. 10, 1-4 p.m.  
Control & ID of Common Invasive Plants (Woodbury)

Thur, Feb 14, 1-4 p.m.  
Conducting Small Controlled Prairie/Woodland Burns (Woodbury)

Thur, Mar. 14, 1-4 p.m.  
Native Plant Propagation from Seed (Brandt/Woodbury)

Thur, April 11, 1-4 p.m.  
Practical Gardening with Native Plants (Woodbury)

Thur, May 2, 1-4 p.m.  
The Art and Function of Combining Native Plants (Woodbury)

## Nature Connection: The Year of Food

*"Plants allow insects and birds to eat sunlight"*  
Doug Tallamy

### Top Six Shopping List for Plants that Feed Insects

Based on Dough Tallamy's Book Bring Nature Home and observations in the Whitmire Wildflower Garden



**Swamp White Oak**  
Oaks feed 534 species of butterflies and



**Wild Plum**  
Plum and wild cherry feed 156 species of



**Marsh Milkweed**  
Feeds butterflies, milkweed bugs

Thur, May 2, 1-4 p.m.  
The Art and Function of Combining  
Native Plants (Woodbury)

Sat, May 11, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.  
[Shaw Wildflower Market](#)

Thur, June 13, 1-4 p.m.  
Garden Archaeology and  
Ethnobotany (Woodbury)

Fri, Sept. 6, 4-8 p.m.  
Shaw Wildflower Market

Thur, Oct. 10, 1-4 p.m.  
Low-maintenance Ground Cover  
Gardening

Thur, Nov. 7, 1-4 p.m.  
Pruning, Training and Transplanting  
Trees, Shrubs and Vines

**Please register and  
pay [online](#).**

## Gardening Tips:

During winter drought periods, water newly planted trees and shrubs, especially evergreens. Tree bags work well when temps are above freezing. Double check moisture in raised planters.

Check that gardening supplies of materials, tools, and equipment are in good repair—sharpen and repair hand tools, saws, garden hoses, etc.

Check for erosion issues and freeze damage to hardscapes and repair before spring rains.

Look for the invasive evergreen winter creeper euonymus (*Euonymus fortunei*) and hand pull it when the ground is not frozen

*“It is not enough to understand the natural world. The point is to defend and preserve it.”*

*Edward Abbey*



**Swamp White Oak**  
Oaks feed 534 species of butterflies and moths.



**Wild Plum**  
Plum and wild cherry feed 456 species of butterflies and moths.



**Marsh Milkweed**  
Feeds butterflies, milkweed bugs, assassin bugs, bees and wasps Aug and Sept.



**Prairie or Silky Willow**  
Willows feed 456 species of butterflies and moths.



**Aromatic aster**  
Feeds butterflies, bees, flies and wasps in October and November.



**Wild Columbine**  
Feeds hummingbirds in early spring.

## Partners for Native Landscaping: A Workshop for Homeowners

Dear St. Louis Homeowners and Gardeners:

We are excited to offer you the opportunity to learn about Native Landscaping, meet fellow homeowners and gardeners, and purchase native plants. At this all-day workshop you will learn about:

- Landscaping for birds and butterflies
- Alternatives to non-native plants and turf
- Designing a native garden
- Planning a rain garden

The event will be **Saturday, February 23, 2013 at Powder Valley Nature Center in Kirkwood, Missouri.**

\$20 registration fee includes lunch and Native Landscaping Guide. See link below for details.

Register now at <http://stlouisaudubon.org/PNL/>

## January Native Plant Highlight:

### Native Witch Hazels

## Native Witch Hazels

### RainScape Rebates:

Landowners in participating municipalities are eligible to take part in a RainScape Rebates program set to launch on January 7, 2013. RainScape Rebates is a voluntary program that financially assists landowners in the Deer Creek Watershed wishing to landscape their yards to improve stormwater management. Seventy-five percent of the funds will be reserved for residential landowners; the remaining 25 percent will be available for schools, churches, businesses, and parks.

Applications and more information about the program will become available on January 7, 2013; an optional training workshop or webinar for residents and a required workshop for contractors will be available in February, and the application deadline for residents is March 1, 2013. The maximum rebate per site is 75 percent of documented expenses up to \$2,000.

**Find out more at...** <http://deercreekalliance.org/rainscaperebates.aspx>

On warm winter days in late January-February, a sweet honey-like and almost spicy scent drifts on gentle breezes in some gardens and woodlands. True spring is still a couple of months away, yet follow the scent and find an enchanting small tree in full bloom—the Ozark witch hazel. Even more surprising is that, despite the wintery time of year, small native bees, moths and flies venture out on these occasional warm days to forage, and thus pollinate, witch hazel flowers. Because of the cold temperature, Ozark witch hazel remains cloaked in its yellow,



fringe-like flowers for many weeks, a plus for both insects and for the aesthetic value it adds to the winter garden scene.

There are two native witch hazels in our region. Mentioned above, Ozark witch hazel (*Hamamelis vernalis*) has horizontal branches at maturity with fragrant winter flowers. In its native range, it grows along creek banks and low, wooded areas. Common witch hazel (*Hamamelis virginiana*) has a more upright habit and blooms in October and November. It also attracts insects, active on warm days searching for a bit of pollen and nectar before winter. This species is more widespread, with a native range from Nova Scotia to Florida and west to Missouri. Ozark witch hazel grows in wet to average garden soil and while common witch hazel will tolerate very dry locations. Both adapt well to either shady or sunny sites. Growing to a height of about 12-20 feet, they are excellent options for adding color in the wintery months as well as offering habitat value for insects and for birds that come to nest in their branches. Witch hazel can be used to visually fill the vertical middle of the landscape—the space between the perennials at the ground level and the tall trees. A diversity of plant types (perennials, shrubs, small and large trees) creates not only a more interesting scene, but also provides the best habitat for birds and other wildlife.

Though not a true hazel, witch hazel does have leaves that resemble our native hazelnut. The origin of its strange name is in the Anglo-Saxon word “wych” (bendable, supple or pliant) and the Middle English word “wicke” (lively). Early British settlers noted that Native Americans used its forked and crooked branches as divining rods to find underground water, similar to the European practice of using hazel branches. The branch would bend when it passed over a source of water. Also called dowsing, this practice remained a popular method for

branches as divining rods to find underground water, similar to the European practice of using hazel branches. The branch would bend when it passed over a source of water. Also called dowsing, this practice remained a popular method for well-diggers into the 1900's. Some American tribes valued the wood for making bows. The seeds produced by witch hazel are inside a hard capsule and are shiny, black and edible with a flavor reminiscent of pistachio. Both species of witch hazel were important medicinal plants for many Native American tribes. Highly astringent due to tannins, it was used to curb bleeding, treat inflammation, and as a skin treatment for insect bites, burns, cuts, and bruises. Witch hazel is still used today as a popular ingredient in many skin lotions, soaps and in hemorrhoid cream. As with any medicinal plant, be sure to identify the plant properly, the part of the plant that is used, the proper preparation and the correct amount to be used in treatment. Or just buy it already prepared!

Witch hazel plants are readily available at most garden centers and nurseries. While there are also Asian species as well as hybrids and cultivars, the native species is just as showy and desirable in our landscapes. Plant them where you will be sure to appreciate them during the winter months.

## Natural Beauty for Winter

By Cindy Gilberg

As the leaves and temperature drop in autumn, gardens take on a new look. Many gardens are designed for warmer seasons with flowers, foliage and fruit in mind. Yet the essence of a great garden is one with year-round structure and interest, especially in the fourth and often overlooked winter season. Native plants with winter interest in the form of intriguing branching structure, colorful berries and attractive seedheads are also essential for a healthy habitat garden. Visual interest includes not only plants, stone and garden structure but also the color and animation of our winter bird population. Look out your window. What do you see? Perhaps a better question would be: What don't you see? Consider where there are missed opportunities for adding plants and structure that will offer opportunities to see the beauty of winter.

Many native plants add both winter interest and winter bird habitat. Consider, for example, plants that offer ripe fruit at this time of year. Perhaps the best known are the hollies: evergreen American holly (*Ilex opaca*), winterberry (*I. verticillata*) and deciduous holly (*I. decidua*). In late fall brilliant red berries ripen along their branches. Note that only female holly plants bear fruit so it is necessary to plant one male plant in close proximity to ensure fruit production. Hawthorns are small to medium trees with bright red berries that also ripen in fall. There are about fifty naturally occurring species in Missouri, one of which is our state flower. One in particular is green hawthorn (*Crataegus viridis*) that not only has attractive white flowers followed by red fruit but also beautiful mottled tan and olive green bark, a plus for winter interest. Beautyberry (*Callicarpa americana*), only named

about fifty naturally occurring species in Missouri, one of which is our state flower. One in particular is green hawthorn (*Crataegus viridis*) that not only has attractive white flowers followed by red fruit but also beautiful mottled tan and olive green bark, a plus for winter interest. Beautyberry (*Callicarpa americana*), aptly named for its uniquely colored amethyst berries, is a 4-5 ft. shrub with fruit that lasts through December. Our native *Viburnums* are large shrubs with white flower clusters followed by dark blue fruit in late fall into winter.

Evergreen plants are always desirable for winter gardens. In addition to the American holly, look to native evergreen perennials. A few woodland sedges offer green foliage in winter, specifically oak sedge (*Carex albicans*) and cedar sedge (*C. eburnea*). Another woodland plant, Christmas fern (*Polystichum arcostichoides*), can be seen through the end of January. Even some of the native alum root (*Heuchera spp.*) have ground-hugging foliage that remains green in all but the coldest of winters.

Later in winter, around February, the fragrant yellow flowers of witch hazel (*Hamamelis vernalis*) open and tease us with the anticipation of spring. This small tree is an important early source of pollen for insects that brave warm winter days to forage.

Don't be so quick to deadhead and clean up the garden in late fall. Seed heads and dead foliage of native grasses and perennials are critical habitat for birds, overwintering insects (butterflies!) and small mammals, offering food and shelter. The colors of these dormant plants, tones of tan, orange, gray and brown, soften the winter garden.

Winter allows gardeners the opportunity to sit back, appreciate what the winter garden offers and to reflect not only on the past year in the garden but also to anticipate what might make the garden even better next year. Relax now, peruse garden catalogs and by spring you will no doubt have a list of new plants and ideas

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