

The News From Native Plant School

June 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 at shawnature.org/NPS



SHAW NATURE RESERVE
a division of the MISSOURI BOTANICAL GARDEN

Upcoming classes:

Please register at shawnature.org/NPS

2013 Schedule

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 at shawnature.org/NPS

Native Plant Highlight

Indian pink
(*Spigelia marilandica*)

The magnificent red, tubular buds of Indian pink (*Spigelia marilandica*) open in early summer to reveal bright yellow star-shaped flowers. When in bloom, it attracts the attention not only of visiting hikers but that of hummingbirds as well. *Spigelia* grows about two feet tall and is native to woodlands in the Ozark region of Missouri. It is a well-behaved, clump-forming shade perennial that is deserving of a prominent place in woodland gardens.



Backyard Sustainability Tour

Backyard Sustainability Tour

Sunday June 23rd: Check out this third annual regional self-guided tour of residential sustainability practices, including native landscaping habitat gardens. *If you enjoy sharing your own experiences and practices, consider being a stop on the tour!* Margy Terpstra and Robert Weaver showed off their spaces last year—both have received Bring Conservation Home certification. Of course, that's not required to be a stop, and you may have other practices you want to share like veggies gardening or chickens or energy practices. For all the details <http://www.sustainablebackyardtour.com/grassrootsgreenstl.com/Home.html>.

Gardening Tips:

Vigorous, unwanted limbs should be removed or shortened on new trees. Watch for forks in the main trunk and remove the least desirable leader as soon as it is noticed.

Cultivate and mulch. Mulching will reduce about 70 percent of the summer yard maintenance.

Continue to water new plantings deeply as needed. Apply at least one inch of water each time.

Softwood cuttings from new growth of many shrubs will root if propagated in a moist shady spot.

Nature Connection: The Year of Food

Incorporating native plants into your landscape creates a ripple effect...plants attract insects and insects feed most birds. In fact, 96% of birds rear their young on insects. According to author Doug Tallamy, it takes 4,800 caterpillars to feed one clutch (5-8 nestlings) of Carolina chickadees.

Read more...

<http://www.wbez.org/blogs/chris-bentley/2013-02/reuniting-nature-nations-backyards-105473>

On the right is a sparrow nest nestled among Pennsylvania and cattail sedges in the SNR plant storage area. When you are doing yard work watch out for hidden nests and try not to disturb them.



Here's What You Missed:



The Spring 2013 Shaw Wildflower Market was a great success bringing in a record 1,808 visitors. Shaw Nature Reserve, Missouri Wildflower Nursery, Andy's Native Plants, DJM Ecological Services, Forrest Keeling Nursery, Ozark Berry Farm, Pan's Garden, and St. Francis Mountain Natives sold native plants.

“The more clearly we can focus our attention on the wonders and realities of the universe about us, the less taste we shall have for destruction.”

– Rachel Carson

Editor’s Notes

We are looking for fresh ideas for the newsletter.

Do you have questions you want answered? Send us your native plant questions and our experts will answer them. Try to stump us.

Are you proud of your native landscape? Send us a story about your garden. Funny stories about garden catastrophes are welcome.

Who is your inspiration? Tell us about why you use native plants in your landscape. Send us a special quote or poem that comes to mind when you are out in your landscape.

Please send your comments and suggestions to Besa.schweitzer@mobot.org

“Adopt the pace of nature: her secret is patience.”

– Ralph Waldo Emerson

Rock Gardening with Native Glade Plants

By Cindy Gilberg

Perhaps the most surprisingly beautiful encounters I have had in the plant world was the first time I visited Crescent Glade at Shaw Nature Reserve. Here, there and everywhere were thriving colonies of Missouri evening primrose, glade coneflower, rock pink with various grasses tying it all together. All this beauty rooted in the thinnest soil and rock, the antithesis to conventional garden soil prep of years past.

A glade is an open area within a woodland or prairie where bedrock is close to or at the soil surface, resulting in a small, desert-like environment. Soil is thin, water is scarce and plants have adapted by losing less water and/or by growing long roots to reach down in search of water. Glades are a fragile environment in the wild, needing full sun without heavy grazing or foot traffic. For these reasons and more, some glade species are in danger of losing their place in the world.

This translates to creating a garden that requires very little water, compost or subsequent mulching. In fact, glade plants depend on a special rock and gravelly soil. In richer, organic soil of most gardens they wither and die. Begin the design process by choosing a full sun site either on a gentle slope or where a raised bed would be a desirable garden feature. Decide whether you want a path running through it or if it will be an island bed. Next, perhaps most important, is choosing the stone that will emulate the exposed native rock so typical of Missouri glades. At this point, I recommend visiting a glade such as the one at Shaw Nature Reserve or at least looking at some photos of glades and how stone is arranged. Weathered limestone or sandstone is the most likely choice and the one that fits the plant list here. While there are some glades in Missouri that have igneous rock (i.e. granite), the plants are more difficult to come by in the nursery trade. Choose the stones and stick to the same type of stone, varying only the size and shape.

The key to great drainage so necessary to the growth of these plants is to work on a slope or create a raised bed. For maximum drainage the soil mix should be scree - a highly porous mix of mostly rock consisting of 60 – 75% rocky gravel with the balance comprised of topsoil. Use a limestone gravel of varied sizes, from crushed limestone to larger, two and three inch rocks. Mix 10-20% Turface (high fired clay particles) into the topsoil for additional drainage. As the large stones are set, begin to backfill with layers of gravel and topsoil. Believe it or not, gravel will be your mulch as well.

Some plants listed here are familiar from use in other garden settings while others may be new to most gardeners. As I have preached in the past (and will continue to do so!) keep foliar contrast in mind when arranging plants in the garden. Exposed stones help provide textural contrast and visual interest as well. For example, the spring-blooming feathery bluestar combines quite well with the unique and fragrant American aloe. Add in some rose verbena along the edges for early color. Create maximum foliar contrast with a planting or two of prickly pear cactus. It not only has gorgeous, large yellow flowers but also bright red fruit in fall. Provide a backdrop of taller yellow Missouri coneflower, large-leaved prairie dock and fall-blooming blue aromatic aster. Include occasional highlights of false indigo, coneflowers and wild quinine, then weave in plantings of grasses such as little bluestem or prairie dropseed to complete the tapestry.



Q&A:

This inquiry came in last month from one of our readers. She is just beginning her native wildflower garden and has so many opportunities before her.

Question:

“We are moving into a new home and for the first time ever I have a blank slate since it is new construction. However I'm a little overwhelmed since I have never designed from scratch. We will be in wildwood with my new friends (deer's and others) and would love a contact to help design. I also am trying to encourage the home builder to grow native for the entry and future walking trail. I may also be interested in volunteer opportunities since I'm feeling a new passion starting to surface. Thanks for any direction you can provide. I would love for our home to be a poster child for native gardening.”

Answer:

It sounds like you are an ideal candidate for the bring conservation home program. <http://stlouisaudubon.org/BCH/> They will send an expert to your yard to help you create a habitat garden with native plants.

If you want to hire a private consultant we have a list of people we recommend on our site at <http://www.missouribotanicalgarden.org/visit/family-of-attractions/shaw-nature-reserve/gardens-gardening-at-shaw-nature-reserve/native-landscaping-for-the-home-gardener/native-landscaping-manual.aspx#2106>

The Wild Ones organization would be a good resource for you. You could meet people with similar interests in your area. <http://stlwildones.org/> They have monthly meetings and like to visit each others gardens.

If you are able to come to Native Plant School, shawnature.org/NPS, bring your planting plans and we will go over them with you and give you feedback.

Endangered species conservation in the Wildflower Garden.



Ouachita mountain leadplant, *Amorpha ouachitensis*, is a deciduous shrub that is becoming increasingly rare because of logging operations in its natural habitat of open woodlands in the Ouachita Mountains of West Central Arkansas. This pea/bean family member is a somewhat ungainly shrub growing 3-6' tall featuring slender, dense, 4-8" spike-like clusters of tiny, purplish flowers with gold anthers which bloom in May-June. Also features alternate, pinnately compound leaves with grayish green leaflets. This plant is a candidate for inclusion on the Federal Endangered Species list.

More info at:

<http://plants.usda.gov/java/profile?symbol=AMOU>

