

# The News From Native Plant School

October 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](http://shawnature.org/NPS)



SHAW NATURE RESERVE  
a division of the MISSOURI BOTANICAL GARDEN

## Upcoming classes:

### 2013 Schedule

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

### 2014 Schedule

Thur, Feb. 6, 2014, 1-4 p.m.  
RainScaping Fundamentals

March 21-22, 2014  
Partners in Native Landscaping Workshop at MBG  
special guest Doug Tallamy

Friday May 9, 4-7:30 p.m.  
Saturday May 10, 9-4 p.m.  
Shaw Wildflower Market

Please register at [shawnature.org/NPS](http://shawnature.org/NPS)

Email us with suggestions for 2014

## October Native Plant Highlight:

### Persimmon (*Diospyros virginiana*)

Edible persimmon fruits, 1-2" in diameter, mature in fall to an orange to reddish-purple color, and may persist on the tree into winter if not gobbled up by wildlife. Ovate to elliptic leaves are glossy dark green above, and turn yellowish-green in autumn. It is one of the easiest trees to identify in winter because of its distinctive thick, dark gray bark that is broken into rectangular blocks. In Missouri, this tree typically occurs in rocky or dry open woods, limestone glades, prairies, thickets, abandoned fields and along roadsides (Steyermark).



Though we do not know the history of the Whitmire Wildflower Gardens persimmon grove, it appears to be planted with several varieties of native persimmon. Some varieties bear large fruits and some are small. Some ripen in early September, some in October, and even one that ripens in late November.

The fruits are edible raw or cooked and are often used in muffin, pancake, and bread recipes. Genus name, *Diospyros*, comes from Greek *dios* (divine) and *pyros* (wheat or grain) meaning divine fruit. Scott Woodbury recommends the Persimmon Pudding recipe in Field of Greens by Annie Somerville on page 367.

The Missouri Department of Conservation warns that lawn mowers use 580 million gallons of gas each year; Thirty to sixty percent of urban fresh water is used for watering lawns; about 67 million pounds of pesticides are placed on lawns each year; and a lawn mower pollutes as much in one hour as a car driving 20 miles.

## Q&A:

### Question:

Should I till up the ground and amend my soil before planting a bed with native plants?

### Answer:

My take on the conflicting methods...you have old school gardeners who say richer fluffier soil is better and newer native school saying natives don't need anything. Bottom line, how well did your grass grow and have you dug a hole to actually look at your soil? Dig when soil is good and moist not when bone dry. If digging is relatively easy then no need to add anything. If soil is relatively brown and friable and not sticky clay then no need to add anything or till the soil.

Personally I prefer a starved soil over a rich one. Plants stand straight up and aren't so overgrown looking. I think our societal default is to enrich soil always. My recommendation is to plant first and only treat problems if they occur. We tend to think that our soils are worse than they really are.

“Here is your country. Cherish these natural wonders, cherish the natural resources, cherish the history and romance as a sacred heritage, for your children and your children's children. Do not let selfish men or greedy interests skin your country of its beauty, its riches or its romance.”  
~Theodore Roosevelt

## A Landscape Challenge

By Cindy Gilberg



At Chan Mahanta's home about 60% of the mowed turf in the front yard has been converted to prairie. A buffer of turf was kept along the driveway and sidewalk leading up to the house.

The lawn is an All-American icon—expanses of irrigated, fertilized, pest-free, mowed green carpet. In fact, turf is considered the #1 crop (in acreage) in the U.S., with an estimated 40 million acres in cultivation. Most landscapes are primarily or even completely in mowed turfgrass, requiring a lot of resource input in the form of time, water, fertilizer, pesticides and fuel for mowing.

Lawn is important in that it provides pathways for movement through the landscape, is a visual base for the surrounding landscape and a place where people can play and sit. While lawn fits into the human ‘habitat’, it offers very little habitat for nature’s creatures—insects, birds and other wildlife. This is especially true when pesticides are part of the lawn maintenance program. The heat and drought of last summer made it obvious that cool-season turfgrass requires even more water to maintain in extreme conditions. Another fact is that often more water is used to maintain lawns than is used to produce many of our food crops.

Find ways to reduce the amount of lawn by replacing it with resilient and hardy native plants. Accomplish this by identifying areas of your property that are high use and high traffic zones where it makes sense to have mowed grass or a permeable surface such as a flagstone patio or path. Next, look at other areas of your property—under trees, difficult-to-mow slopes or large, open expanses of lawn. These are perfect opportunities for mixed plantings of native trees, shrubs and low-maintenance ground covers using a design style that can be formal, traditional or naturalistic. This approach includes aesthetics while addressing the need for a more sustainable use of the land as well as habitat for our local ecosystems.

For example, identify a few large trees that are close to each other under which you can create a native shade garden. Plant smaller native trees, such as redbud or serviceberry, and add masses of shrubs like wild hydrangea, coral berry or fragrant sumac. Around the edges of these plantings use native perennial ground covers such as oak sedge, wild ginger and *Senecio*. Along the boundary of your property try similar plantings of small trees, for example dogwood, fringetree, or hawthorn. Add large shrubs like hazelnut and viburnum. Finish the scene with low growing shrubs and perennials to visually tie the bed together. Always plant a combination of trees, shrubs and perennials to add visual interest and fulfill habitat requirements. Include plants that provide flowers, seeds and berries in various seasons for the same reason.

Native landscapes such as these, once established, require less water to sustain them and fertilizing is as simple as an annual application of compost. Pesticide use is discouraged in order to maintain a healthy habitat. Cutting and/or pruning is done once or twice a year, depending on which plants are used. Compare this in time and money spent to lawn care which requires ample watering, fertilizing, pesticides and weekly mowing.

“Bringing Nature Home” by Doug Tallamy is an excellent resource on why and how to create native landscapes. For more how-to on a local level, GrowNative ([www.grownative.org](http://www.grownative.org)) and Shaw Nature Reserve ([www.shawnature.org](http://www.shawnature.org)) promote regionally native plants as solutions to many of our landscape challenges and are great resources for more in-depth information.

## Why Use Native Plants?

### To Create Wildlife Habitat:

A native plant garden with a diversity of trees, shrubs, perennials and grasses provides food and shelter for insects, birds, amphibians and mammals throughout the growing season. Leaving seed heads and plant structure throughout winter provides continuing food and shelter for many creatures and provides opportunities to observe nature up close.

## Gardening Tips:

- Pine trees are most successfully planted in fall. Broadleaf evergreens or bare-root plants are best planted in the spring.
- Scout property for invasive bush honeysuckle. Leave are bright yellow with red berries in Oct.
- Mulch where needed to reduce weeding and maintain moisture and protect from winter freezing.
- Remove tree leaves and litter from parking lots and turf areas or mow with mulching mower.
- Prune back any groundcover overhanging curbs or sidewalks.
- Keep dead leaves, stems and seed heads on perennials and grasses over winter to provide food and shelter for birds and overwintering insects.
- Clean out bluebird and other bird houses in fall or winter.

“He is richest who is content with the least, for content is the wealth of nature.”

~Socrates

## Shaw Nature Reserve Natural History Reading Group

How about settling into a comfortable chair this fall with a warm beverage in the Bascom House and join our Natural History Reading Group.

We will meet on Mondays - November 4th, 11th, 18th, and 25th from 1:00 to 2:30 pm and discuss selections from the anthology *AMERICAN EARTH: Environmental Writings*, Edited by Bill McKibben. There is no charge for participation.

To sign up please email Larry Melton at [lcmelton67@gmail.com](mailto:lcmelton67@gmail.com)

Last spring the NH Reading Group explored historical American nature writers from the Age of Discovery to the modern era. Short readings this fall will focus on environmental nature writers of the last 150 years and participants will be encouraged to share their own natural history reading experiences.

Larry Melton is a retired history teacher and enthusiastic SNR volunteer who brings 50 years of vocational natural history reading experience to share.

## Shaw Wildflower Market:



We had a great turnout for our third annual Shaw Wildflower Market on Friday September 6th. It was our biggest turnout yet with 274 visitors and the weather finally cooperated this year.

Our condolences to visitors who showed up towards the end of the evening only to find that their favorite plants were already sold out. Next year we are planning to have more plants available.

Top: Shoppers gather around Missouri Wildflower Nursery's selection of rain garden plants.

Above: Barbara Rieger and Fran Glass enjoy the market.

Right: The Missouri Native Plant Society is ready to kill some honeysuckle!



## Recipe:

### Jodie Fleer's Bacon & Brandy Persimmon Tarts

- Place cooked, small pieces of bacon in bottom of mini phyllo shells (available in frozen section of market)
- Place small chunk of Brie cheese on top of bacon.
- Bake at 350 for 10 minutes until cheese melts.
- Meanwhile, combine 3 heaping tablespoons of persimmon preserves (home made of course!) with 3 tablespoons of brandy and 3 tablespoons of pure maple syrup. Bring to simmer in microwave and continue to simmer until mixture is somewhat thickened, approximately 1.5 minutes (depending on individual microwave).
- Spoon 1 teaspoon of warm mixture over melted cheese
- Enjoy!

A big thank you to our bakers for sharing their treats with us and all their hard work. Thank you to all of you who sampled at the bake off and donated money to the Whitmire Wildflower Garden.

In next months issue we will have another delicious persimmon recipe and an interview with Melinda Twyman, our second place winner.

The 2014 Native Plant Bake Off and fall Shaw Wildflower Market will be held September 5, 2014. Anyone can enter the 2014 contest. You might want to start foraging now!

An archive of this newsletter is available 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-plant-school/the-news-from-native-plant-school.aspx>

## Native Plant Bake Off at the Fall Shaw Wildflower Market: An interview with Jodie Fleer



First Place winner:  
**Jodie Fleer's Bacon & Brandy Persimmon Tarts**

Q-Why did you decide to enter the bake off and choose your recipe?

A-I was excited to enter the bake-off to participate with other like-minded folks in showcasing wonderful recipes made from native plants. I chose the tarts in hopes of creating something unique and tasty that demonstrated the full and complex flavor of our native persimmon. It seems that some people have a negative perception of persimmons because they've tasted them when they weren't fully ripe ... but when ripe, they have a very deep and rich taste.

Q-Do you have any childhood memories of collecting persimmons or other wild edibles?

A-I grew up in Labadie, and just like many of the locals, my family appreciated and used native plants and wildlife as a natural part of our diet. By

default, I learned to cook with native plants by watching and emulating my mom and grandma. As a family of eight, we regularly hunted mushrooms in the spring and picked blackberries in the summer. A great memory I have is listening to my grandpa singing as we picked blackberries in the middle of some remote, hilly, Labadie berry patch, full of chiggers and briars. When finished, we would share in a delicious serving of the freshly picked berries, still warm from the sun and swimming in a bowl of 'purple milk.' My grandma introduced me to persimmons as a teenager, but I didn't really appreciate them until I had my own house with a grove in the back yard. I quickly grew to understand her love for their awesome flavor. Now, each fall I enjoy competing with the wildlife, gathering dropped persimmons every day or so, until I have stashed enough to make a bottle of persimmon brandy and several jars of preserves.

Q-What are your other favorite native plants to cook with?

A-I love making blackberry jelly from our native Missouri berries; their flavor is incomparable. I also enjoy cooking with a variety of native mushrooms, from morels to chanterelles, chicken mushrooms, oysters, and hen of the woods. If I'm fortunate enough to have a large harvest, I like to dry mushrooms for later use, which enhances their rich, woody flavor.

Q-What is your favorite outdoor activity?

A-That would be a toss up between hiking, gardening, and foraging :)

Q-Favorite place to visit to enjoy the outdoors in MO?

A-I enjoy all of the wonderful parks and trails we have locally, but my favorite is definitely Shaw Nature Reserve. It offers a great variety of trails running through a lot of very enjoyable scenery, full of wild flowers, grasses, and other native plant life.

Q-Anything else you want to put in the newsletter?

A-I would also like to thank everyone who sampled the entries and voted. It was a lot of fun and I'll look forward to participating again next year :)