

The News From Native Plant School

January 2014



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



Upcoming classes:

2014 Schedule

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

Thr, Mar. 13 1-4pm
Greenhouse Propagation

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

Thur, April 10, 1-4 p.m.
Top Performing Plants

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

Thur, May 15, 1-4 p.m.
Container Gardening

Thur, June 12, 1-4 p.m.
Landscaping with Sedges

Friday Sept. 5, 4-7:30 p.m.
Fall Wildflower Market

Thur, Sep. 11, 1-4 p.m.
Landscaping with Vines

Please register at
shawnature.org/NPS

Nature Connection: Dried seed heads in the garden:



Hairy mountain mint (*Pycnanthemum pilosum*, grey), wild bergamot (*Monarda fistulosa*, light brown), and New England aster (*Aster novae-angliae*, white fluffy) seed heads are showy in winter and feed winter-resident birds like sparrows, titmice, junco's and finches.

Throughout the Whitmire Wildflower Garden the floral show of the seasons changes to the more subtle colors of winter. What becomes obvious is the abundance of interesting seed heads that linger on many of the summer and fall blooming plants. In the prairie can be seen the black pods of white indigo (*Baptisia alba*) in contrast to the orange-tan grasses. Round seed heads of rattlesnake master (*Eryngium yuccifolium*) and chocolate-colored seed clusters of the round-headed bush clover (*Lespedeza capitata*) are both intriguing additions for a winter bouquet. Another prominent plant is the rose mallow (*Hibiscus lasiocarpus*) with its unique round seed pods arranged in clusters atop tall stems, each sporting a fuzzy halo in the winter sunlight. Goldfinches reveal the location of purple coneflowers (*Echinacea purpurea*) as they glean the seed from the spiny seedheads. Soft fluff of asters and goldenrods blows around in the wind and the first snow rests atop the dome-shaped flower structures of wild hydrangea (*Hydrangea arborescens*).

Insects in Winter:

By Dr. Douglas Tallamy

Across the nation, homeowners, landscape designers, and land managers are recognizing the critical role our managed landscapes now play in sustaining the plants and animals that run our ecosystems. Traditional landscaping practices that have been pursued for generations have not left enough natural areas to do the job. We must change our approach to landscaping in order to provide what nature needs in our gardens and yards. And what nature needs most right now are diverse and complex food webs.

Insects are an essential component of complex food webs because so many other animals eat them. All amphibians, many reptiles and mammals, and nearly all birds get much or all of their protein by eating insects. If insects were to disappear, our nation's food webs and all the animals they support would vanish as well. We humans cannot tolerate the disappearance of other species because it is precisely these species that run our ecosystems. We must pay attention to what our insects need.

Keeping insects happy when it's warm is easy. All we need to do is supply the herbivorous insects with the plants that they eat: Native plants. Plants from Asia or Europe are typically toxic to our local insect herbivores, but these same insects are well equipped to avoid the toxic defenses employed by local native plants. If we have large and diverse communities of insect herbivores, we will have large and diverse communities of the insect predators and the parasitoids that eat them.

Read the rest of this fascinating article on the Wild Ones website.

<http://www.wildones.org/download/tallamy/insectsinwinter.html>

"It is not enough to be industrious; so are the ants. What are you industrious about?" — Thoreau to H.G.O. Blake, 16 November 1857

Seen in the Garden:

The November Native Plant School class focused on Pruning, Training and Transplanting Trees, Shrubs and Vines. We learned how to plant the right tree in the right place. Scott demonstrated the proper way to cut off a branch without damaging the trunk of the tree. We even dug up a red buckeye and moved it to a new location in the Whitmire Wildflower Garden.



To the left Scott Woodbury stands on a ladder and demonstrates the proper way to prune a vine on the roof of the home landscaping shelter.

Below shows the cut of a branch that had to be removed because it was rubbing on another branch. This pruning demonstration was on a magnolia near the Bascom House.



Proper pruning technique



Make the first cut from beneath. This is as shallow cut that will prevent bark from peeling when making second cut. When pruning branches under one inch in diameter only two cuts are needed. When pruning larger branches, make cuts one and two about two inches away from the third and final cut which is just outside the swollen collar region at the base of the branch.



Edgar Denison:

Over the next few months we will be remembering Edgar Denison for his many contributions to native landscaping in St Louis and Shaw Nature Reserve. Edgar Denison will be celebrated this spring as part of Kirkwood's Earth Day observances and his art will be on display at Powder Valley Nature Center.

Edgar Denison died Aug. 14, 1993. Excerpts from his obituary:

Before retiring in 1969, Mr. Denison made a living as a cost engineer for Union Electric Co. But he made a life as an amateur botanist.

His book, "Missouri Wildflowers," illustrated by Mr. Denison himself, is in its fourth edition and has sold 85,000 copies since its first printing in 1962. Proceeds benefit the Missouri Conservation Department, to which Mr. Denison gave the rights.

The book's organization is unique - by color, and, within colors, by month of blossoming. That system allows users to pinpoint a species quickly and painlessly.

After coming to this country from Germany, Mr. Denison lived on East Adams Avenue in Kirkwood for 56 years. His garden was a showplace, with more than 1,000 varieties of plants. Mr. Denison grew all his plants from seed; he abhorred the thought of digging a plant from its native habitat.

In the off-season, he passed his time painting pictures of the state's wildflowers. Just last month, the Missouri Botanical Garden displayed 36 watercolors that he had donated.

Mr. Denison had long, close ties with the botanical garden. At his urging, the garden planted a section of Missouri prairie flora at its arboretum in Gray Summit.

The Missouri Botanical Garden's former director, Peter Raven, said, "An old-fashioned European gentleman in many ways, Edgar Denison exceeded most of our citizens in his deep love for the plants that enrich and beautify Missouri."

Add Winter Interest with Native Color By Cindy Gilberg



Most gardeners think of winter as down time. The only thing that's down are the leaves, allowing the opportunity to view the more subtle beauty of the garden. Look outside your window. What do you see? Perhaps a better question would be what don't you see. Yes, gone are the colorful flowers of spring and summer. Is color missing from your winter garden? Get to know some of our native shrubs and trees that have bountiful crops of berries in the fall and winter months. Adding these into your landscape will provide the sparks your garden may need in this season.

These native plants produce autumn crops of berries with the sole purpose of attracting birds and small mammals. Animals depend on this late fall and winter source of food and the plants depend on the animals for seed dispersal – it's a win-win situation. Because of this relationship, the berries are noticeable and colorful. Additional color and animation will be introduced into the garden in the form of Missouri's many winter songbirds that forage for these small fruits.

Perhaps the best known is the deciduous holly, also called winterberry (*Ilex verticillata*). Many horticultural cultivars have been introduced in recent years including 'Red Sprite' (a dwarf form), 'Winter Red' and 'Winter Gold'. The native winterberry is spectacular, sporting many brilliant, red clusters of berries on its branches from late fall through the winter months. It forms a dense shrub that can grow to twenty feet or so.

The possum haw (*Ilex decidua*), a close relative of winterberry, is a multi-trunk, small tree that grows taller, to a height of about thirty feet. This is the more commonly encountered species in Missouri. In appearance and culture, possum haw is very similar to winterberry.

Yet one more *Ilex*, though wild populations are rare, is the American holly (*Ilex opaca*). The red berries are set against evergreen leaves making it doubly attractive and quite desirable in the winter landscape. Hundreds of horticultural varieties of this species exist and its branches are a common and welcome sight during the winter season.

All hollies (*Ilex*) tend to be dioecious, in other words the plants are either predominantly male or female. To ensure an abundant crop of fruit, locate a male plant in close proximity to the female plants. The various species are similar in their cultural requirements – they prefer an average to moist location and are tolerant of light to partial shade locations.

Hawthorns (*Crataegus*) are members of the rose family (*Rosaceae*) and are represented in Missouri with up to fifty naturally occurring species. The downy hawthorn (*Crataegus mollis*) is the official state flower of Missouri. All hawthorns have clusters of white rose-like flowers in mid-spring and can be quite showy. Like their cousins, the roses, all have thorns so use caution if you are in the

Gardening Tips:

Water during winter drought periods. Trees and shrubs planted in the previous season may suffer if not kept watered, even in winter.

Check that gardening tools and equipment are in good repair—sharpen mower blades, sprayers, hand tools, saws, replace washers in garden hoses as needed, etc.

Check on supplies of materials such as fertilizer, herbicide, garden equipment, etc.

RainScaping Prize Drawing:

For a limited time Missouri Botanical Garden is offering a **RainScaping Prize Drawing**. Go to www.mobot.org/rainscaping by February 11, 2014 for a chance to win a \$500 gift certificate for Shaw Nature Reserve's Spring Wildflower Market in May or one of five other rainscaping prizes valued at \$350 to \$1,000. In addition, landowners in 19 participating municipalities, including residents, schools, churches, and businesses are eligible to take part in a **RainScap Rebates Program**. This voluntary program financially assists landowners in and near the Deer Creek Watershed wishing to landscape their yards to improve stormwater management. Rebates of up to \$2,000 are available, and the application deadline is February 12, 2014. Visit www.deercreekalliance.org/rainscaperebates.aspx to learn more.

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>

pruning mood. It is in the fall and winter months that these small (to twenty feet) tough trees show off with bright orange or red berries. These fruits, not tasty when eaten raw, do make excellent jam or jelly if the birds don't beat you to them. Native populations of hawthorns are typically found in open woodlands (light to partial shade) and are tolerant of average, dry soil. One of the hawthorns however, the green hawthorn (*C. viridis*), occurs naturally in low, wet areas and so grows happily in moist soils.

Most gardeners associate the name Euonymus with the evergreen ground cover that has lost popularity and become a nuisance in recent years. Yet *Euonymus atropurpureus*, known as wahoo, is not only fun to say but also an intriguing plant in the garden. In early fall, pink capsules appear, suspended on long stems like dangling earrings. After the first frost, these capsules pop open to reveal the scarlet fruit. Wahoo will sprout from the roots and produces a multi-trunk shrub-like form. This thick suckering habit makes it useful as a hedge in light shade. Growing naturally on wooded slopes and along streams, it is at home in the shade garden in both dry and moist soils.

So next time you meditate over a cup of coffee and gaze at your garden, imagine some of these native plants embellishing the winter scene. Imagine also the abundance of birds outside your window, enjoying a profusion of natural foods.

January Native Plant Highlight:

Easter red cedar
Juniperus virginiana

Mocking bird photo at right by
Danny Brown



Unlike a traditional landscape which has many evergreen trees and shrubs to choose from, there are few evergreen choices for the native landscape. Highlighted for January is the Eastern red cedar. Plants are either male or female so plant several to get some that produce berries. Berries tend to be eaten late in winter after the juicier, ephemeral fruits (like beautyberry, Carolina moonseed, Indian cherry and gum bumelia) are gone. Listen for the subtle "see-see-see" calls of cedar waxwings in female cedars in mid to late winter. Also look for mocking birds who tend to hoard a single tree for themselves all winter, ensuring a constant supply. The other woody evergreens include shortleaf pine (*Pinus echinata*) and giant cane (*Arundinaria gigantea*). A fourth is cross vine (*Bignonia capreolata*) which can grow into treetops and hold on to its leaves all winter. All of these native evergreens provide winter cover for wintering birds and good nesting areas during the growing season. Don't miss the Shaw Wildflower Market May 9-10, 2014 where you can find all of the mentioned plants for sale.

