

The News From Native Plant School

October 2014



Native Plant School is a partnership between Shaw Nature Reserve, The Missouri Department of Conservation, 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:

Thur, Oct. 9, 1-4 p.m.

Small Flowering Trees and Shrubs

This class will explore trees that fit under power lines and in small gardens. Trees and shrubs that have showy flowers and multiple seasons of interest. We will discuss how to prune branches and rejuvenate an old shrub.

Thur, Nov. 13, 1-4 p.m.

Control and ID of Invasive Plants

Invasive plants are a threat to native ecosystems and landscapes because they compete with native plants for light, nutrients and moisture. Many natural and landscaped areas have become severely infested with invasive species due to several years or decades of neglect. Control methods described in this class are designed for both homeowners who are having problems with bush honeysuckle and several other invasive plants.

Thur, Feb. 12, 1-4 p.m.

Naturescaping Beyond Beauty: The Art and Function of Native Landscaping

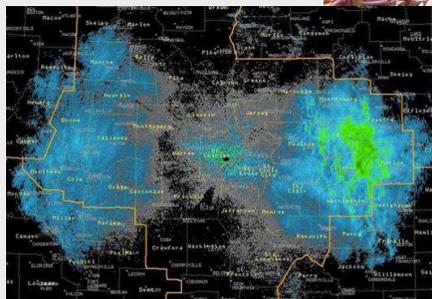
Please register at shawnature.org/NPS

Monarchs over Missouri:

It seems that there are many more monarch butterflies around this year. I'm not sure if I'm just noticing them more because of all the monarch awareness initiatives going on or if they are responding very quickly to all the milkweed we have planted this year. Just two weeks ago the national weather service reported that they were picking up large migrating groups of monarchs on their radar over St Louis. The overwintering population in Mexico will not be counted until December when populations bunch together in the Oyamel forests but there are reports that the butterflies have already begun to arrive, a good sign. Regardless, I'm thrilled to see this beautiful creature outside my office window and I hope their populations are on the rebound.

National Weather Service image

<http://news.discovery.com/animals/insects/cause-of-mysterious-butterfly-shaped-radar-blob-found-140924.htm>



Reading Group Forming:

As autumn colors fade and a crisp chill is in the air the Natural History Reading Group will once again gather in the Bascom House on November 5th, 12th and 19th to discuss the works of Edward Abbey. (November 5th will be a Power Point presentation on Abbey's life and writings.) There is no charge to participate.

Please contact Larry Melton for more information at lcmelton67@gmail.com or 636-583-2013.

Native Plant Swap and Sale:

Oct. 18th from 9am-3pm
Schlafly Bottleworks Native Plant Swap and Sale. St. Louis Audubon Society's own Susan Pang has arranged for two dates in the parking lot at Schlafly's in Maplewood to support a native plant swap and sale. Everyone's got too much of SOME plant and looking for something new. Pot up some of yours and bring it on over. They'll have Forrest Keeling and Ozark Berry Farm providing retail sales—just in case the swap doesn't have the right plant. A portion of their sales will support Bring Conservation Home!
<http://www.stlouisaudubon.org/calendar/content/native-plant-swap.html>.

Project CommuniTree:

Forest ReLeaf is now accepting applications for free trees: Free, 3-gallon trees and shrubs available for planting on public or not-for-profit property in Missouri and surrounding communities. Over 90,000 trees distributed since 1993. Ideal for plantings by neighborhood associations, schools, Scouts, churches, and other community groups. Applications are accepted once the season is announced, typically in January for spring plantings and in August for fall plantings; this is subject to change based on weather, inventory or Forest ReLeaf's schedule. Trees are awarded to qualified applicants each spring and fall on a first-come, first-served basis. Recipients must have permission to plant from property owner or governing agency, and pick up the trees at CommuniTree Gardens, Forest ReLeaf's community nursery located in Creve Coeur Park in Maryland Heights, MO. Volunteers are needed year-round at the nursery!
http://www.moreleaf.org/planttrees_projectcommunitree.php

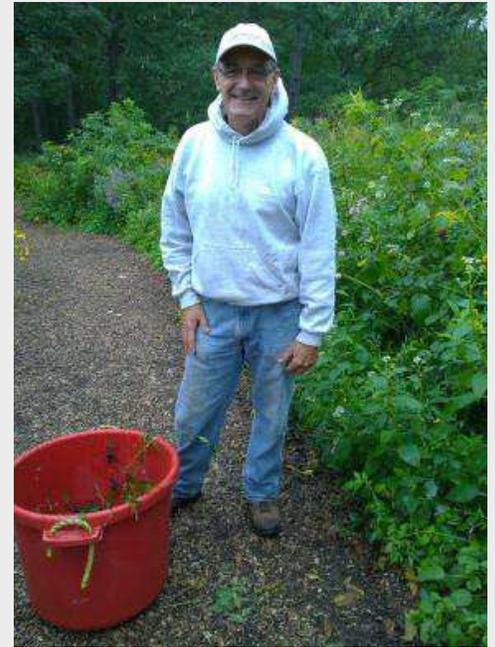
Volunteers in the Garden:

Pictured: Horticulture volunteer Brian McKenna weeding in the Whitmire Wildflower Garden

With all this rain the weeds have been growing rapidly but luckily the moist soil also makes them easier to pull out. Our volunteers have been very busy keeping the wildflower garden looking good for our late summer visitors.

We are looking forward to cooler weather and beautiful fall colors. Seed collecting is already in full swing as we try to keep up with the bounty of the garden.

"I'm so glad I live in a world where there are Octobers."
– L.M. Montgomery



Friday Greener Garden Series:



The 2014 *Friday greener garden series* in the Whitmire Wildflower Garden is a new opportunity to learn about native plants and native landscaping. Shaw Nature Reserve Staff will be leading round-table discussions and tours along with Missouri Department of Conservation staff and Wild Ones members. Nurseries will be on hand to speak with gardeners and sell plants and seeds. Come enjoy the company of gardeners and assorted plant nuts in this informal outdoor setting.

October 24, 2014 Celebrate Autumn Color! What better time than autumn to discover the beauty of Missouri native trees and shrubs. On hand to talk about Missouri's showiest woody plants are Missouri Department of Conservation, Shaw Nature Reserve and Forrest Keeling Nursery. Many trees and shrubs will be in full autumn color and will be for sale. 4:30 -7 p.m.



Friday events are free but you must register in advance. Participants are encouraged to bring food to share. Drinks will be provided. Registration is limited to the first 40 people. Register by emailing besa.schweitzer@mobot.org

Gardening Tips:

Scout property for invasive bush honeysuckle. Leaves are bright yellow with red berries in Oct.

Mulch where needed to reduce weeding and maintain moisture and protect from winter freezing and drought.

Remove tree leaves and litter from parking lots and turf areas or mow with mulching mower.

Trim back any groundcover overhanging curbs or sidewalks.

Keep dead leaves, stems and seed heads on perennials and grasses throughout winter to provide food and shelter for birds and overwintering insects.

Clean out bluebird and other bird houses in fall or winter.

Art Show:

The Honeysuckle Project
Bauhaus Botany
featuring local artist Martha Younkin

Art Exhibit Opening & Reception
Friday, Oct 17
7–9 p.m.
Interactive Art Show & Vendors
Saturday, Oct 18
10 a.m.–2 p.m.

What is Bauhaus Botany?
Maryville students, faculty and staff are working to raise awareness about invasive species and the importance of protecting biodiversity. As part of an interdisciplinary approach, art and other goods were made from honeysuckle.

Family Weekend Saturday events include pumpkin painting, an open honeysuckle workshop, and goats demonstrating green invasive species management

Maryville University - Art & Design Building | 611 Maryville University Dr. Town and Country, MO

Plant of the Month:

Jewelweed, *Impatiens capensis*, is as much jewel as it is weed. My 7-year old boy can't stop popping the seed pods and neither can I. Pop, pop, pop they go. If we can catch the dark-chocolate-brown seeds before they hit the ground, we peel away the dark seed coat to reveal the robins-egg blue shiny seed inside. Then we enjoy popping them in our mouth for a taste of English walnut. My brother was told as a scout that he could survive on them if he was ever stranded in the woods.

I doubt it. The seeds quickly explode and shatter every which way when fully ripe. The flowers are tangerine orange and are fought over by hungry buzzing hummingbirds. Its remarkable that this plant possess three colors that I would equally enjoy painted on a kitchen or bathroom wall. Right now in the Whitmire Wildflower Garden, they are blooming with swamp aster, *Aster puniceus* and rough goldenrod, *Solidago rugosa*. Oh, and don't forget that they are as much weed as they are jewel!



A Discussion about Missouri Prairies and Native Plants with Scott Woodbury

Below is an excerpt from the transcript at the August 28, 2014 Danforth Plant Science Center “Conversations” Event, A Discussion about Missouri Prairies and Native Plants with Scott Woodbury, Toby Kellogg and moderator Vijay Chauhan.



Link to event video:

<http://www.hectv.org/programs/conversations-from-the-donald-danforth-plant-science-center/>

Q: Describe the picture and what are some of the striking aspects of the picture? What is tall grass prairie and what is its history?

A: This illustration is by Paul Nelson, forest ecologist for the USFS. It was published in The Tallgrass Restoration Handbook and is the artist's impression of the original tallgrass prairie landscape. The illustration comes to life when you read the words of Henry Shaw (Founder of Missouri Botanical Garden) who wrote in his diary “When I first visited these grounds (MBG and Tower Grove Park) in 1820, they were called The Prairie at the Denoyer Fence, (Louis Denoyer lived at and kept the gate of the fence by which the commons of the old village of St. Louis were surrounded). For a distance of nearly two miles from where Tower Grove Park is now laid out, no trees were growing, except two or three venerable cottonwoods in the low ground...the prairie was grown over with a tall natural grass and an occasional patch of the wild strawberry”...

“I trust in nature for the stable laws of beauty and utility. Spring shall plant and autumn garner to the end of time.”

~Robert Browning

Monarchs and Climate Change:

Canary in the Cornfield: Why the Fuss about Monarchs?

Monarch populations face a multitude of threats and stresses. Not only are monarchs being impacted by a sharp decline in available habitat (which is milkweed), but also the disastrous effect of temperature and precipitation shifts in their overwintering grounds. Midwest milkweed, the plant that the majority of North American monarchs depend on to begin their life cycle before hibernating in Mexico, is estimated to have been reduced by 58% since the introduction of glyphosate resistant crops to agricultural fields—hence making them a ‘canary in the cornfield’. But once the butterflies arrive in Mexico to end the season, primarily in the Michoacán’s reserve, changes in climate disrupt the stability required to remain in a hibernation-like state of diapause. Warmer temperature will waken monarchs to search for nectar, and butterflies rarely survive cold events like the record 2002 freeze that killed off 75% of monarchs wintering in the area. Monarch populations may be relocating to warmer territories year round, raising vulnerability to the deadly *Ophryocystis elektroscirrha* parasite by skipping seasonal migration.

<http://blog.nature.org/science/2014/02/26/cornfield-monarch-butterfly-decline-pollinators-agriculture/>

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>

Q: As custodians of our planet, why should people care about tallgrass prairie and native plants?

A: Today, less than 1/10th of 1% of native prairies remain in Missouri and less in other states. The lower 48 is 40% agriculture, 55% cities and suburbs and 5% in undisturbed habitat. Many if not most bird, amphibian, mammal, fish and insect species are in steep decline since the advent of modern agriculture because we have taken away the prairies, wetlands, savannas and woodlands they once lived in.

Q: When most of us see “out-of-control” or wild vegetation what do you see when you see prairie grass? Share with audience your passion for prairie grass and the beauty you see and exists in its ecosystem.

A: The tallgrass prairie is pleasing to me because I understand the balance of nature that exists within it. I am aware that to many people, the prairie is little more than a patch of weeds. Jim and Alice Wilson sum it up nicely in their book *Grassland* writing “There is a mysterious something about the native grasses – a power, a spirit, a mystique that both stirs and quiets the soul”.

Q: What are the changes and benefits one can receive when replacing traditional lawns and gardens with prairies or native plants? Tell us about the Albirici project and/or other projects?

A: There are over 40 million acres of land in turfgrass in the US. That’s more area than any single crop and more than all of our national parks combined according to *Bringing Nature Home* author Doug Tallamy. Tallamy surmises that cities and suburbs may be the main place where habitat enhancement can take place in our country. If we begin replacing some of the turfgrass (let’s start with a goal of 25%) with native landscaping full of prairie, wetland and woodland plants, we would begin to see an increase in wildlife populations. Kudo’s to the Alberici group for reducing their turfgrass footprint by upwards of 95% and planting all native plants at their world headquarters in Overland, Missouri. Did you know their landscape costs have been reduced by more than 50%. I’m looking forward to seeing the new landscaping plans for the Danforth Center unfold. The Danforth Plant Science Center landscape will consist of just 10% turfgrass, a huge reduction from its original landscape layout.

Q: What advice do you have for people considering introducing prairie grass in their gardens?

A: Start small, prepare the site thoroughly and prepare your neighbors even more. Public perceptions of the prairie landscape and native landscaping are unfortunately negative and exaggerated. More education is needed if we are to reach a goal of 25% turfgrass reduction. Be prepared to look at mowed weeds for the first year or two. The prairie seedlings are tiny in year one, the weeds by comparison can get huge and need to be mowed regularly in year one and sometimes year two as well.

Q: Tell us about native plants supporting native herbivores supporting native birds and the impact of destroying native plants and replacing them with “foreign” plants? Link this to the concept of sustainability.

A: Do you know how many caterpillars it takes to feed one clutch of chickadees? (Tallamy states about 5,000) Do you know where to find 5,000 caterpillars? On hosta’s? On daylily? On turfgrass...nope. According to Doug Tallamy there are 112 species of caterpillars (butterflies and moths) that feed on native asters, 115 species eat goldrods, 73 on sunflowers, 42 on Joe Pye and 36 on our native prairie sedges and the numbers are growing as research expands into this area. If we are to develop our urban and suburban landscapes sustainably, we must begin to ask ourselves How can I produce 5,000 caterpillars, not how can I get rid of them. We can begin this journey by planting native plants and native prairies in our homes, in our schools, in our parks and at our places of work and worship.