

# The News From Native Plant School

October 2015



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



## Upcoming classes

Thursday, October 8, 1-4 p.m.

### Gardening with Asters and Goldenrods

**This class is full**

Asters and goldenrods provide vital fuel in the form of nectar to monarchs during their migration to Mexico in late September and October. They also add beauty to the garden and feed a wide variety of other butterflies, skippers, bees and wasps. Come learn about the many different species for sun, shade, rain gardens, hedges, etc.

Saturday, October 17, 1-5 p.m.

### Celebrating 10 Years of Greener Gardens: Native Plant School's 10th Anniversary!

See article in this issue.

Thursday, November 12, 1-4 p.m.

### Growing Native Trees and Shrubs from Acorns, Nuts and Berries

Growing native trees and shrubs is a challenge but it is well worth the effort. Entomologist Doug Tallamy states that the best trees for wildlife are oak, willow, plum, wild cherry, river birch, cottonwood, hickory, hawthorn and walnut to name a few. Come learn how to propagate these and other trees and shrubs that are vital food for insects and birds.

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

## Nature Connection: Predation in the Garden



Photo by Penny Holtzmann

These Monarch butterfly wings were brought to the Webster Groves Nature Study Society meeting by Mark Peters who collected them on a six acre restored prairie in north Jefferson Co. He picked them up off the ground below where Chinese mantises had been perched on blazing stars. The Chinese mantis (*Tenodera sinensis*) is a species of praying mantis native to Asia. In 1896 this species was accidentally introduced and has spread throughout the Northeast United States. The Chinese mantis feeds primarily on other insects, but sometimes can catch small vertebrates including small reptiles, amphibians, and even hummingbirds. Pictured above is the invasive Chinese mantis and below is a native mantis. At this time of year the native mantis is smaller and all brown. The Chinese mantis is no longer welcome in our garden.



Chinese mantis  
(5 inches long)



Carolina mantis  
(2.5 inches long)

## Seed collecting

For those of you collecting seeds for next years garden, we have a special cheat sheet for you at <http://www.missouribotanicalgarden.org/Portals/o/Shaw%20Nature%20Reserve/PDFs/horticulture/Propagation.pdf>

If you never have collected seeds before, now is the time to start. Find a few favorite species in your yard and start propagating.

You can trade seeds with other native plant enthusiasts at the Nov. 4 Wild Ones seed exchange at 6:00 pm at The Heights community center in Richmond Heights.

*“That gifts were being offered was evident in the general hum and flutter of insect life. The meadow was audible with bees and crickets; the mowed grass was silent. The meadow waved and nodded in the wind; crowds of leaf hoppers leapt to the brush of a hand. The lawn was deadlly still.”*

~ Sara Stein



Carpenter bee robbing nectar from Obedient plant

## Celebrating 10 years of Greener Gardens: Native Plant School's 10th Anniversary!



Keynote speaker Alan Branhagen (director of horticulture at Powell Gardens) will be introducing his new book *Native Plants of the Midwest*. (Timber Press).

Saturday, October 17, 1-5 p.m.

Free to the Public with RSVP at [besa.schweitzer@mobot.org](mailto:besa.schweitzer@mobot.org)

### 10th Anniversary Schedule:

- 1 p.m. Tour the Whitmire Wildflower Garden and visit exhibits.
- 3 p.m. Social, music, light food and refreshments.
- 4 p.m. Keynote Address: ALAN BRANHAGEN.

Special thanks to Wild Ones St. Louis for Sponsoring this 10th Anniversary Celebration!

### Exhibitors Include:

- Conversations with native plant expert & acclaimed author Alan Branhagen
- Live music in the Garden: Nathan Gilberg, Matt Rowland and Friends
- Face-time with Horticulture staff and Entomologist James Trager
- Flower arrangements & bush honeysuckle control (SNR Staff)
- Butterfly Host plants with Wild Ones St. Louis
- Bird Bubbler demo with Gateway Gardener Mag. editor Robert Weaver
- Backyard Consults with Audubon's Bring Conservation Home
- Monarch Butterflies and Home Garden Soil Tests with MO Master Naturalists
- Native Landscape Solutions with Grow Native!
- Food for Birds with Wild Bird Rehabilitation
- Bush Honeysuckle Tables with Dale Dufer
- Asian Carp Nuggets served on Bush Honeysuckle Tables
- Wine & Beer by the glass or bottle with Edg-Clif Vineyard
- Pottery and throwing techniques with The Art Center at Gilberg's
- Sustainable Urban Farming with Native Plants with Lincoln University
- Food from Local Harvest
- Books From SNR Bookstore

Free willow seedlings (prairie or diamond) to the first 100 attendees. Tallamy says there are 456 caterpillars on willow!!

# Backyard Habitat for Monarch Butterflies

The Missouri Department of Conservation has just released monarch habitat recommendations and plant lists, which we are pleased to share and promote.

<http://mdc.mo.gov/your-property/wildlife-your-property/backyard-wildlife/backyard-habitat-monarch-butterflies>

## More Monarchs

Monarch Joint Venture  
<http://monarchjointventure.org/>

Monarch Watch's Bringing Back the Monarchs  
<http://monarchwatch.org/bring-back-the-monarchs/>

Missourians-for-Monarchs  
<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Missourians-for-Monarchs/441431742673348?fref=ts>

## Guess The Plant



Have you seen these seed pods dangling in your yard or out on a hike? Do you know what species of butterfly is dependent upon this plant? Check next month's newsletter for the answer.

## A Case for Pussytoes

By Dawn Weber



American Lady butterfly on Prairie Pussytoes  
– photo by Dawn Weber

Pussytoes is a low-growing native groundcover with understated spring blooms and silvery-green leaves that resemble the soft pads of a cat's paw. Field or prairie pussytoes, botanically named *Antennaria neglecta*, are native to the north east and north central US as well as much of Canada. Just a few inches tall, they appreciate full sun to light shade, and dry to average soil.

Without a doubt, there are showier native plants. So why make room in your garden for this unassuming little plant? Because pussytoes is one of the host plants for the American Lady butterfly.

American Lady butterflies *need* pussytoes. Tiny just-hatched caterpillars cannot travel very far for food, so the female butterfly lays her eggs on a host plant that the new caterpillars can eat.

One Saturday morning, standing in my kitchen, I noticed a butterfly moving around my new sunny garden bed. Grabbing my always-ready camera from the kitchen counter, I went outside to see what kind it was.

After observing for a few minutes and consulting my field guide, I discovered that it was an American Lady butterfly who had found the pussytoes that I planted. For several minutes I watched her select a leaf, lay an egg on the top of the leaf, float away, come back, choose a new leaf and lay another egg.

I only had the opportunity to witness this amazing event because I had planted what she was looking for. Totally worth the bug bites I got sitting in the grass watching her!

Nectar plants are important food for adult butterflies, but host plants for caterpillars are the key to supporting the species. When you choose plants for your garden, be sure to include host plants so that you support the entire life cycle of the butterfly.

Download the [Missouri Botanical Garden's fact sheet](#) for local butterfly species and their host plants.

*Dawn Weber is the recipient of the 2013 Landscape Challenge sponsored by Wild Ones, Shaw Nature Reserve, and Grow Native! Wild Ones volunteers installed a native plant garden in her sloped front yard, and it is now home to untold Missouri flora and fauna! That same year, she received a visit and a report from St. Louis Audubon Society's Bring Conservation Home Habitat Advisors, who asked her join them as a Habitat Advisor. Now, we're all benefiting from her passion for nature, not to mention her talent in photography. Thank you, Dawn.*

## 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 rain gardens, eves, 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.

## Citizen Science

Developed by Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology, YardMap is a free, social, interactive, citizen science project about habitat creation and low-impact land use. YardMap enables people to map their habitat management and carbon neutral practices in backyards and parks, interact socially, and try out new landscape strategies for creating wildlife habitat at the neighborhood level.

<http://content.yardmap.org/>

## Garden Program

Wild Ones native plant butterfly garden/habitat recognition program is available for you to register your native planting(s). Have your site listed on the Wild Ones wildlife corridors map. <http://www.wildones.org/butterfly-garden-program/> If you register your garden with Wild Ones, it will automatically be registered with the Million Pollinator Gardens Program.

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>

## Bill Davit, a look at our roots

By Larry Melton

Bill Davit worked in maintenance when David Goudy became Arboretum Manager in 1971 along with one other employee, David Lane in Education. Davit spent his time clearing the overgrown trails Edgar Anderson and Louis Brenner had originally built. He also did work on the Morton property in anticipation of it coming to the SNR.

In 1972 Davit was more involved in Horticulture and became the Arboretum's naturalist. At first Bill ordered seedling bundles from the Missouri Department of Conservation and began planting them around the grounds. It required a lot of attention to keep the tender plants alive. He also took cuttings from existing trees and shrubs and used the old green houses that were still on the property for propagation. Visitors began to increase as classes in organic gardening were taught and special garden

members' days were offered. The spring and fall Tuesday Wildflower Walks began in 1974 and attracted many new visitors. Bill Davit recalls learning a great deal from the tour guides Nell Menke, Betty Nellums and Art Christ. From the beginning of his employment Bill Davit had been collecting and propagating native plants for use at the Arboretum. Previously Dr. Edgar Anderson and Lewis Brenner had propagated native wildflowers along the many trails previously laid out or newly built as well as in the special collections around the grounds.

The tall grass prairie restoration began in May, 1979. The staff began by burning off about four acres selecting an area that was apparently remnant prairie based on existing grass stands. Some of the critical funding came from the Missouri Prairie Foundation. That section is often referred to a the Davit Prairie. In an interview with the Washington Missourian newspaper, Bill Davit was quoted as saying "One idea behind the Arboretum is to let the area, through environmental succession, grow back into its natural state..."

"There is a lot you can learn from prairies, It's important to learn how natural ecosystems work and get ideas about how to exist in this part of the world."

"The goal was to increase the number of species to make it more diverse, Prairies can have 350 species of plants. It takes a long time to create a prairie that resembles an actual prairie."

Bill went to work at the at what became the Litzinger Road Ecology Center under his supervision. Though he is retired now he continues to keep a close eye on Shaw Nature Reserve during frequent visits. He still stays very busy helping his daughter Carol Davit in her capacity as director of the Missouri Prairie Foundation and does a cordage demonstration and Indian braiding exhibition at Prairie Day. You might have seen him at our Shaw Wildflower Market selling trees.

Pictured above, Bill is wearing the "unofficial" logo of the Missouri Prairie Foundation.

