

# *The News From* Native Plant School

**November 2012**



**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 and pay [online](#)**



## **Upcoming classes:**

**Please register and pay [online](#).**

### **2013 Schedule**

Thur, Jan. 10, 1-4 p.m.  
Control & ID of Common Invasive Plants (Woodbury)

Thur, Feb 14, 1-4 p.m.  
Conducting Small Controlled Prairie/Woodland Burns (Woodbury)

Thur, Mar. 14, 1-4 p.m.  
Native Plant Propagation from Seed (Brandt/Woodbury)

Thur, April 11, 1-4 p.m.  
Practical Gardening with Native Plants (Woodbury)

Thur, May 2, 1-4 p.m.  
The Art and Function of Combining Native Plants (Woodbury)

## **Nature Connection:**

What lurks beneath the ground and reaches as deep down as it does high? Compass plant of course. SNR staff, in cooperation with Sequoia Sciences spent a day digging up prairie plants (with a back hoe) in an effort to discover the hidden life of roots. In the photo, this compass plant grew down 4 feet to bedrock and then grew horizontally along the top of the stone some two-three feet further. Deep roots of prairie plants allow them to come through severe drought unaffected. This was one of the best years for compass plant in the Wildflower Garden Prairie.



Thur, May 2, 1-4 p.m.  
The Art and Function of Combining  
Native Plants (Woodbury)

Sat, May 11, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.  
[Shaw Wildflower Market](#)

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 and  
pay [online](#).**



## Photos from Native Plant School:



Scott Woodbury leads the trees, shrubs, and vines class through the Whitmire wildflower garden. This class was the final piece of a three part series that showcased native woody plants during the spring, summer, and fall. Scott talked about which plants have the best fall color and fruits. We also learned about fall and winter pruning and how to tell if the plant is dead or just dormant. Many plants were stressed this year during our hot dry summer and lost their leaves. Native plants are more likely to survive summers like this than non natives because they have had many years to adapt to Missouri weather and sometimes we have hot dry summers. Plants that looked like they died this summer may just be dormant, saving their energy for a fresh start next spring.

## November Native Plant Highlight



**Beautyberry** (*Callicarpa americana*)  
The whorled clusters of small pink flowers appear along the stems of beautyberry in midsummer, attracting pollinators, hummingbirds and butterflies. The lustrous purple-lavender berries that ripen in fall are the more conspicuous and attractive feature of this native shrub. Birds such as bluebirds that overwinter in our region forage on the berries. Beautyberry (*Callicarpa americana*) forms a well-rounded, four to five foot





attractive feature of this native shrub. Birds such as bluebirds that overwinter in our region forage on the berries. Beautyberry (*Callicarpa americana*) forms a well-rounded, four to five foot shrub that adapts well to both sun and light shade situations in gardens and landscapes.

## Gardening Tips:

Blow or rake tree leaves from beds onto lawn and mow. Rake up ground leaves, compost and use the following season.

Clean tree leaves and debris out gutters after tree leaves have fallen.

Before shutting down irrigation system for the winter, inspect drip lines, pipes, nozzles, etc. for leaks. This may involve digging up a pipe or valve in a soggy area to inspect for punctures or leaks. Mark all leaks and repair after turning off the water for winter.

November 15 to March 15 is the best time to prune most trees and shrubs. Remove conflicting and crowded branches, dead limbs, double-leaders and unsightly branches.

Add fuel stabilizer to engines before winter storage. Drain and store water hoses. Clean up all tools.

Good time to make improvements to hardscapes (pavers, walls, stonework, woodwork, etc.)

*“Believe me, you will find more lessons in the woods than in books.  
Trees and stones will teach you what you cannot learn from masters.”*

*~Bernard of Clairvaux*

## Parcels of Promise

by Cindy Gilberg

The cooler days of autumn are incredible for taking a walk through the garden or the prairies and woodlands at Shaw Nature Reserve. At this time of year the last bits of color fade to reveal the ripening seed heads of late summer and fall blooming perennials such as aster, goldenrod and late blazing star. Native grasses are full with fat seeds, causing them to bend over and sway in the wind. Seeds, those marvelous little parcels of hope for next year's bounty in the garden, are everywhere. Goldfinches and other birds are taking advantage of this important fall and winter source of food.

Why bother to collect seeds? One major reason is the satisfaction of growing your own plants to expand your garden. Because many native plants have deep tap roots, such as butterfly weed, it is much easier to start new native plants from seed than to try to dig and move or divide them. Besides, it is not allowed to dig plants in the wild. Another wonderful reason is to share them with other native plant enthusiasts.

Getting to know your plants' bloom time will give you an indication of when to begin collecting seeds. The early to mid spring blooming natives form their seeds beginning in late April through May. And so, in a regular progression, other later blooming plants begin to form ripe seed, typically within four to six weeks after their flowers have faded. Take the time to be observant and take notes so that

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Don't be impatient - be sure to wait and collect seed that is ripe. Unripe, green seeds will not ripen on their own after being cut from the plant. To determine ripeness note the color of the seed since immature seed heads are very green or there is still color in their flower petals. Wait until petals fade completely and the seeds turn tan or brown. September through November is when plants such as goldenrod, aster, ironweed and blazingstar turn a dark russet color and begin to appear "fluffy", indicating that they are ripe and ready to fly away on the first winter wind.

Collect seed when the weather is dry. Avoid the morning dew, waiting instead for mid-morning or later after the sun has begun to warm and dry the seed heads. If seed heads are moist, you run the risk of spoilage due to mold. Seed heads can be cut into paper bags or placed into cardboard flats to insure that sufficient drying takes place. Once dry, the seed separates easily from the plant tops, capsules or pods depending on what you collect. Shake the bag and separate the seed from the chaff. A sieve or screen is quite useful at this point. Once the seed is fairly clean, it should be placed in a mixture of moistened potting soil and sand (50/50) in a ziplock. Mark the name of the plant and the date you collected it on the bag, then store it in the refrigerator or other cold place for three months. This process, known as stratification, mimics the natural cycle of winter. In the spring, the seeds can be sown either into pots or directly in your garden, ready for the new year.

An option would be to sow the clean, dry seed directly into the garden in late November and December, thus freeing up sometimes valuable space in the refrigerator. The drawback to this method is that you might be providing a wonderful meal for foraging birds and rodents in the winter and it is sometimes difficult identify seedlings in the spring. A wonderful little book that can help you with identification is "Seedling ID Guide for Native Prairie Plants". It is available at the Visitors' Center at Shaw Nature Reserve and at Missouri Department of Conservation - Powder Valley in Kirkwood as well as on their website ([www.mdcnatureshop.com](http://www.mdcnatureshop.com)). So far there is not a printed book on woodland seedlings or others you may collect so it is a great idea to photograph those seedlings as they come up in pots and keep them for future reference.

Remember to only harvest what you need - don't be greedy. Unless you have an acre or more to seed, try to leave a lot of plant tops with seeds to provide food for overwintering birds and small mammals. Don't cut the dying foliage to the ground since it is a source of shelter small animals. A close look will reveal chrysalis and cocoons, egg cases of mantids and other overwintering insects. If you feel there is enough for everyone, note that the dried seed heads are also quite fascinating subjects for dried arrangements.

Keep seed collecting in mind next spring as you see other plants you want to add to your garden. Starting in late April-May, woodland wildflowers such as wild geranium, bellflower and sweet william begin to ripen. Go ahead and collect, clean and store those seeds in the refrigerator. Keep them there until late November for sowing outside. Or leave the seeds in your refrigerator through winter and sow in early spring for another year's bounty.

**"The seed is hope; the flower is joy."**

- Author Unknown

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