

The News From Native Plant School

December 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:



We have had several questions recently about how to tell the difference between the native and non-native bittersweets. These two species can sometimes be very difficult to tell apart. The non-native bittersweet's berries have yellowish capsules around the red berries. Native bittersweet has red to dark orange capsules with red berries inside. Native plants tend to have a cluster of berries at the end of each tendril. Even if you bought a plant labeled American bittersweet be sure to ID it yourself because sometimes the nurseries miss identify their plants. Oriental



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](#).**



American bittersweet
Celastrus scandens
Native



Oriental bittersweet
Celastrus orbiculatus
Non-native invasive

bittersweet be sure to ID it yourself because sometimes the nurseries miss identify their plants. Oriental bittersweet is an invasive plant. Holiday decorations using oriental bittersweet berries could potentially be spreading the seed into nearby woods and fields.

December in the Prairie:



What seems to be a quiet time in the prairie is not that at all. The prairie is full of seeds that mammals and flocks of birds alike scramble to collect and eat. The big and little bluestem, Indian grass and others have turned to a light tawny brown color that shines red-orange in the winter sun. Much of their seed still hangs on the stems, bent now more from the weight of finches and other birds than from the weight of the fast disappearing seed. The interesting seed head structures of coneflowers, sunflowers and blazingstars offer the last lingering seeds to the large flocks of juncos, finches and sparrows. Many seeds that are accidentally dropped by birds become a welcome meal for the mice that are waiting below. Hawks circle overhead, ever watchful for the occasional careless rodent that will become their next meal. The thick growth of the prairie becomes an even more important source of protective cover for wildlife as the winter months set in. The prairie management schedule takes this into account and burning or mowing is only done in late winter.

Gardening Tips:

Review the year's schedule and make plans for next year's improvements.

Prune any tree branches in parking lots and sidewalks that interfere with public safety.

Continue with leaf removal if needed.

Continue pruning trees and shrubs.

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Dried Seed Heads Bring Life to the Winter Garden

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*).



Creating Landscapes for Wildlife

by Cindy Gilberg

Birds and insects will nest in the oddest places at times...garden pots, canoes, and holiday wreathes come to mind. But wildlife can be encouraged to nest in gardens by including some of their favorite plants. Grasses and sedges provide building materials for many song-birds. Bats take cover in winter beneath the bark of shagbark hickory. Winter flocks of junco's and sparrows tuck themselves between grass plants on the coldest days.

Since the beginnings of European settlement, natural landscapes in the United States have been transformed by industry into less diverse landscapes. For instance, there are over 40 million acres of turf in the U.S. That equals the size of Missouri. There are about 350 million acres of crop land which is four times the size of California, and 790 million acres of range and pasture land which is about 40% of all the land in the lower 48 states. The result is less habitat for birds, butterflies, and other living creatures. A viable solution is simply to reverse the process. Convert some pasture

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Here is how it works. Plant diversity is the key to attracting the widest array of wildlife visitors. Landscaping with Missouri native plants helps to restore the habitat necessary to sustain wildlife. Wildlife needs food, water, shelter and nesting sites.

When working on a limited budget, consider your garden to be a work in progress, adding to it over a period of two to three years. Buy smaller plants and take advantage of late season sales. Gardening friends usually have extra plants to swap. Many people collect seeds and grow their own.

Each of us can create small oases in our own yards - natural gardens where we can observe nature on a daily basis. Always include a place to sit and rest, observing all there is to see. A native plant garden offers the opportunity to rediscover nature up close, reconnecting with the natural world around us. Sit back, grab your binoculars and enjoy the show!

What can one person do in restoring the biodiversity of our area? “Think globally, act locally” - step by step, garden by garden we can all contribute and make a big difference.

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