

The News From Native Plant School

April 2013



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:

Please register at shawnature.org/NPS

2013 Schedule

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)

Friday, May 10, 4:00 to 7:30 p.m.
[Shaw Wildflower Market](http://www.myspace.com/rosewoodband)
MBG/SNR Members Only sneak preview sale with music from the band Rosewood <http://www.myspace.com/rosewoodband>. Vendors will offer food, wine, beer, photography, crafts and of course, the widest variety of Missouri Native Plants.

Sat, May 11, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.
[Shaw Wildflower Market](http://www.myspace.com/rosewoodband)
Sale for the general public

Nature Connection: The Year of Food Eat Your Weedies! Native Edible Greens

By Cindy Gilberg



Eat your weedies is not only the title of a cookbook by the Wild Ones that volunteer at the Burr Oak Woods Conservation Department but is also a concept for enjoying the taste and value of native foods. What a delectable sampling of recipes are available using all sorts of Missouri native plants. What we see as a natural landscape, Native Americans saw as a bounty of useful plants for food, medicine and fiber. Learning to identify and cook some regionally native plants makes eating local foods about as local and seasonal as it gets.

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 at
shawnature.org/NPS

“He who searches for spring
with his knees in the mud
finds it, in abundance.”
– Aldo Leopold

Arbor Day:



In celebration of Arbor Day, Shaw Nature Reserve will be giving away seedlings of black gum (*Nyssa sylvatica*) and nannyberry (*Viburnum lentago*) on Saturday, April 6 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Bascom House located near the Whitmire Wildflower Garden. First come – first served. One seedling per family.

There are basic rules to live by when foraging for Missouri’s native edible plants. First and foremost, always properly identify a plant before you eat it. Many edible plants have look-alikes that can fool you. There are many great resource books on identification of edible native plants—use them along with a good field guide to Missouri native plants. Another way to avoid misidentification is to buy already identified edible native plants to include in your landscape. Here are other rules worth mentioning. Always ask permission before collecting plants on private property and do not collect plants from conservation areas. Avoid collecting plants from areas where they may have been sprayed with pesticides (i.e. roadways, along the edge of agricultural fields etc) and always wash the plant parts prior to preparing them for a meal.

Know which part of the plant is edible and how to prepare it properly. Eat small amounts the first time you eat a new plant to be sure you are not sensitive to it. Recipes abound in various books so have some fun trying different ones. Each season offers different plants to harvest so an awareness of what and when a plant is ripe or ready keeps your seasonally kitchen full.

Many highly nutritious native plants rank among those deemed as “weeds”. What makes it a weed? Some say a weed is a plant out of place or a plant without value or use. My favorite definition comes from the late and great J.C. Raulston—“A weed is a plant that has to deal with an unhappy human”. A case in point is the stinging nettle that grows in moist, low woodlands. This plant is loaded with high levels of minerals, vitamins and even protein. Perhaps because it is highly valued as food, medicine and fiber, it evolved with stinging hairs on its stems and leaves to survive heavy foraging. Wear long sleeves and gloves when collecting and preparing it to avoid its sting. Yes, it is worth it. Prickly pear cactus, also known as nopale, is another plant that fiercely protects itself, yet once the spines are gone, its leaf ‘pads’ are quite popular in Mexican cooking. Delicious red fruit ripens in late summer and is used for juice and jellies.

Other weeds that are easier to harvest and also highly nutritious include lambsquarters, purslane and plantain. Lambsquarters, when cooked, has a taste reminiscent of spinach. Purslane contains more omega-3 fatty acids than any other leafy vegetable. How often have you hear “how do I get rid of violets”? You can eat them! The leaves are high in vitamin C, A and E and the flowers are a delightful addition of color to salads, muffins, pancakes and desserts. Other plants with edible flowers include redbud, wild rose, the native yucca and wild rose. Some curiously tasty recipes in my favorite wild food cookbook include young cattail shoot stir fry, chickweed salad, dandelion wine, and red clover fritters. It doesn’t take much to encourage the growth of most of these edibles—mostly it takes some knowledge and tolerance of “weeds”. The reward is a free harvest of nutritious plants that can enhance your diet and surprise your guests.

Partners in Native Landscaping Workshop for Homeowners

We enjoyed seeing many of you at the Partners in Native Landscaping Workshop for Homeowners at Powder Valley Nature Center in February. Follow up information from the workshop including presentations and resources is now available on our website.

<http://www.missouribotanicalgarden.org/visit/family-of-attractions/shaw-nature-reserve/gardens-gardening-at-shaw-nature-reserve/native-landscaping-for-the-home-gardener.aspx#6621>

Gardening Tips:

Begin planting native perennials and grasses.

Replace mulch which has been washed out with spring rains. Smooth mulch layer if it has been disturbed.

Prune winter-damaged branches on shrubs or trees that have not begun to grow.

Wait to prune beautyberry until late April or early May because it leafs out late.

Start your shopping list for the Shaw Wildflower Market .

Planting Tips:

Before planting keep new plants in the shade, protected from strong winds, and well watered.

Read labels carefully and look up any cultivation information that you aren't sure about. Remember to put the right plant in the right place.

Dig planting holes larger than the pot size and then place the plant in with loose crumbly soil surrounding it. Keep the soil level of the plant in the pot the same as the soil level in your garden. Water thoroughly and mulch.

Keep a daily eye on plants for several weeks. Make sure they haven't been dug up by a curious squirrel or armadillo.

Keep them well watered and mulched. Throughout the summer check plants once a week and water if it doesn't rain for a week. Trees need to be watered for two years and during severe droughts.

<http://www.missouribotanicalgarden.org/visit/family-of-attractions/shaw-nature-reserve/things-to-do-at-shaw-nature-reserve/events/wildflower-sale.aspx>

Native Plant Highlight

Berlandiera texana Texas greeneyes

This is the perfect plant to put outside your kitchen window!

This perennial will grow 3-4' tall in sun or part shade and dry to average soil. It has yellow flowers from June until October. Goldfinches are attracted to the prolific seeds throughout the summer and fall. To promote more blooms and less height, this plant benefits from a spring haircut. *Berlandiera* is a good companion plant for the *blazing stars*.

This species can be found in the southern Ozark region of Missouri. It is a characteristic plant of glades and rocky woods.

We were so pleased with this plant's performance this past summer that we want to share it with you. Shoppers at our Shaw Wildflower Market this spring on May 10-11 will receive one free *Berlandiera texana* with their purchase.



How to make the most of the Shaw Wildflower Market

Become a member

Special sneak preview sale for members on Friday, May 10, 4:00 to 7:30 p.m.

Make a Shopping List

Look over your planting beds and decide what types of plants you need and how many. Look through your favorite native plant guides. We recommend *Tried and True Missouri Native Plants for Your Yard* by Barbara Fairchild. Plants available at the SNR booth are listed on the website. Create your dream plant list, include scientific name, and possible substitutions. Don't forget trees and shrubs!

Come Prepared

Carpool with a friend if you can but make sure you have plenty of space to fit all your purchases. If you plan to hike during your visit to SNR, do it first so that your plants don't bake in your hot car. Allow plenty of time, in case you spend longer shopping than you thought. Bring plenty of cash and checks, some vendors don't take credit cards.

Be on Time

Many popular species sell out within the first few hours. Visit each vendor to look over what they have and then go back to make your purchases. Remember to pay each vendor separately.

“In all things of nature there is something of the marvelous.”
- Aristotle

Here's What You Missed:

If you missed the March Native Plant School Propagation class you can find lots of information on our website at www.shawnature.org/NLM in the Native Seed Propagation Methods resource.



Volunteer, Betty Branson, trims off dead leaves from seedlings in the greenhouse.

Editor's Notes

We are looking for fresh ideas for the newsletter.

Do you have questions you want answered? Send us your native plant questions and our experts will answer them. Try to stump us.

Are you proud of your native landscape? Send us a story about your garden. Funny stories about garden catastrophes are welcome.

Who is your inspiration? Tell us about why you use native plants in your landscape. Send us a special quote or poem that comes to mind when you are out in your landscape.

Please send your comments and suggestions to Besa.schweitzer@mobot.org

Explore the Natural World at Home

By Cindy Gilberg

Nature will never cease to amaze if you take the time to slow down and observe it. Learning to slow down and be more observant is not so easy for busy families—it is much like being a child again and going on a treasure hunt. In fact, sharing this time with a child often teaches us adults how to find the ‘child’ within us. There is no need to wait for vacation time and go to far-off destinations. You can explore in your own yard. Add some native plants to your landscape to enhance the diversity of insects and birds that come to visit. Plan pathways and sitting places where you can go to watch nature unfold. Quiet and stillness is the key to being a good observer and that is exactly what we all need to balance our life in this hectic modern and often loud world.

A diverse landscape of native trees, shrubs, perennials and ornamental grasses is the key to a diverse habitat that will attract insects and birds. Plants that offer seed and berries at different times of the year are as important as plants that produce pollen and attract insects. If butterflies are of particular interest, plant not only plants for nectar but also the host plants for the butterfly larvae. This includes combinations such as milkweeds and monarch butterflies, pawpaw trees for the zebra swallowtail or violets and the fritillary butterfly. Add a water feature—even one as simple as a bubbler stone will be enough to attract all sorts of birds in all seasons. Keep some good field guides handy for identifying birds and insects.

So sit back and enjoy all the surprises and wonders as nature reveals itself. A quote I came across sums it up well – “the greatest gift of the garden is the restoration of the five senses” and of the soul as well.