

The News From Native Plant School

March 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:

2014 Schedule

Thr, Mar. 13 1-4pm
Greenhouse Propagation

March 21-22, 2014
Partners in Native Landscaping
Workshop at MBG
special guest Doug Tallamy
register online at
stlouisaudubon.org/PNL/

Thur, April 10, 1-4 p.m.
Top Performing Plants

Friday May 9, 4-7:30 p.m.
Shaw Wildflower Market
Members only pre-sale

Saturday May 10, 9-4 p.m.
Shaw Wildflower Market

Thur, May 15, 1-4 p.m.
Container Gardening

Thur, June 12, 1-4 p.m.
Landscaping with Sedges

Friday Sept. 5, 4-7:30 p.m.
Fall Wildflower Market

Thur, Sep. 11, 1-4 p.m.
Landscaping with Vines

Please register at
shawnature.org/NPS

Nature Connection:



Where there is smoke there is FIRE. With the snowiest and coldest winter in many years has come a very slow burn season in the Whitmire Wildflower Garden and throughout Shaw Nature Reserve. We have our fingers crossed for southern breezes between 5-10 mph, drier fuel conditions and humidity between 40-60%. Wishful thinking? Perhaps fire will happen but it must be soon as our normal burn season ends in mid-March!

Why use Fire? Fire rejuvenates a prairie in many ways. First, fire suppresses tree growth. In the absence of fire you get closed canopy forest and a huge opportunity for bush honeysuckle to invade. Secondly, burning removes the excess leaf litter and duff allowing more plants to flower and produce seed. It also increases available nutrients through indirect stimulation of microbial activity in the soil and releasing nutrients from the ash. Burning exposes the darkened soil and allows sunlight to warm the soil quicker and extend the growing season for warm season native plants.

Native Plant and Garden Seminar

Native Plant and Garden Seminar
Cape Girardeau Conservation
Nature Center
March 8, 2014

The upcoming Native Plant and Garden Seminar at the Cape Girardeau Conservation Nature Center is a welcome signal that springtime is nearing, as are warmer temperatures and seasonal visitors like butterflies and hummingbirds.

One way to ensure your yard receives four stars from these guests is to develop your habitat with native plants that offer the best nutrition and most comfortable shelter. This year's Native Plant and Garden Seminar is scheduled for March 8, from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. The seminar is a cooperative event hosted by the Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) and the Cape Girardeau County Master Gardeners. Keynote by Scott Woodbury of SNR.

<http://mdc.mo.gov/sites/default/files/resources/2014/02/gardenseminar2014.pdf>

<http://www.semissourian.com/blogs/davis/entry/57229/>

Partners for Native Landscaping:

There are still a few spots left for the 2014 Partners for Native Landscaping: A Workshop for Homeowners will be held on March 21-22 at Missouri Botanical Garden. This year Doug Tallamy, author of *Bringing Nature Home* will be the keynote speaker.

Use the links below to view the brochures and link to registration.

<http://stlouisaudubon.org/PNL/>

March in the Greenhouse

Our greenhouse is full of baby plants. Staff and volunteers have been busy the last few weeks sowing, watering, and transplanting native plants. If you would like to learn how to grow your own plants come to the next Native Plant School class, Greenhouse Propagation.



Citizen Science: Frog Watch USA At Shaw Nature Reserve

FrogWatch USA™ is a long-term citizen science monitoring program of frogs and toads. As a volunteer-based monitoring program, FrogWatch USA™ gives citizens across the country an opportunity to be directly involved in gathering information that can ultimately lead to practical and workable ways to stop amphibian decline. You do not have to be a frog or toad expert to be a FrogWatch USA™ volunteer! All you need is:

- An interest in frogs and toads;
- A willingness to participate in a volunteer training session;
- A commitment to monitor a wetland site for 3 minutes multiple evenings throughout the breeding season.

Shaw Nature Reserve will be hosting a free training the evening of Monday, April 21st. [RSVP required for this event.](#)

More info at:

Why RainScape?

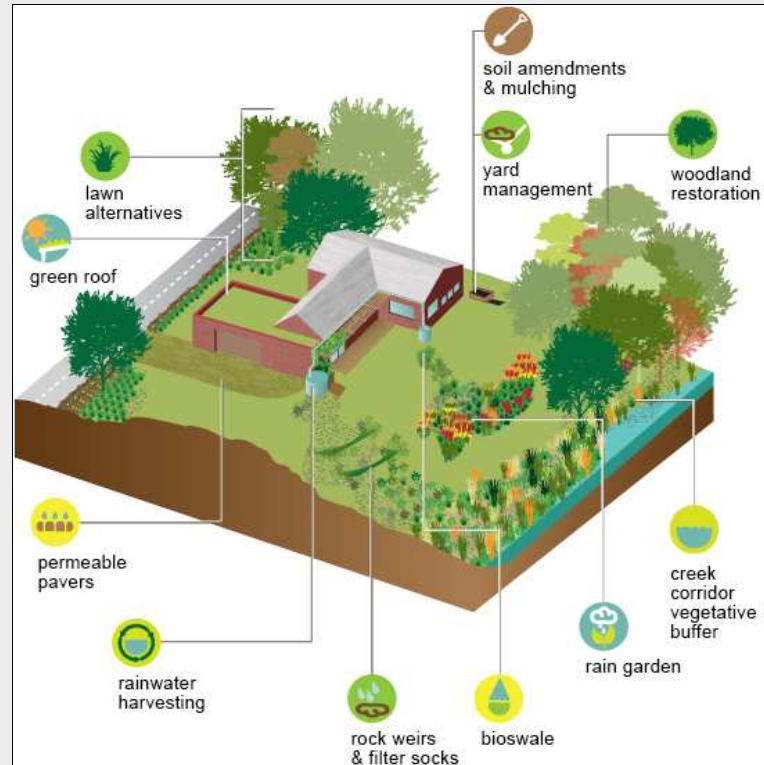
Impervious surfaces such as rooftops and driveways have replaced healthy soils and natural plant communities that once readily absorbed rainwater. The resulting runoff contributes to water pollution, health challenges and property damage. You can landscape your yard for both beauty and function. Address specific water issues on your own property such as erosion, wet areas of the yard and difficult-to-mow places, while positively impacting your neighbors and area streams as well.

“It's spring fever. That is what the name of it is. And when you've got it, you want—oh, you don't quite know what it is you do want, but it just fairly makes your heart ache, you want it so!”

— Mark Twain

Seen in the Garden:

We started off Native Plant School 2014 with a Rainscaping workshop in early February. The Missouri Botanical Garden has set up an excellent guide for homeowners to take them set by step through the process of rainscaping. We recommend you take a look.
<http://www.missouribotanicalgarden.org/sustainability-conservation/sustainable-living/at-home/rainscaping-guide.aspx>



Edgar Denison Day

Over the next months we will be remembering Edgar Denison for his many contributions to native landscaping in St Louis and Shaw Nature Reserve. Edgar Denison will be celebrated this April as part of Kirkwood's Earth Day observances, presentations at Kirkwood public library, a bioblitz, and his art will be on display at Powder Valley Nature Center.

For a complete list of events:

<http://www.kirkwoodinbloom.org>

*“In the spring, at the end of the day,
you should smell like dirt.”*

— Margaret Atwood

Remembering Edgar Denison: By George Yatskievych

Edgar Denison won three major awards including:

- Erna R. Eisendrath Memorial Education Award (1985)
- Julian A. Steyermark Award (1993)
- Missouri Department of Conservation Hall of Fame (1994)

The first two awards are from the Missouri Native Plant Society, the only group dedicated specifically to the study, conservation and enjoyment of wild plants in Missouri.

The Erna Eisendrath Memorial Education Award, recognizing individuals who, through teaching, writing, or other activity have conveyed to others a significant appreciation and knowledge of Missouri's native flora.

The Julian A. Steyermark Award, the Society's highest award, is given to an individual who has made outstanding contributions to any and all aspects of Missouri botany.

The Conservation Hall of Fame is a program administered by the Missouri Department of Conservation that honors deceased Missourians who had a substantial and lasting impact on the state of conservation in Missouri. To be eligible the citizen must perform an outstanding act or dedicated service over an extended period that results in major progress in conservation in Missouri.

Gardening Tips:

Cut down and remove dead leaves, stems and seed heads from perennials and grasses.

Mulch where needed to reduce weeding and maintain moisture.

Plant trees, shrubs, vines, perennials and grasses through May. Recycle all plastic pots.

Divide and move perennials and grasses March thru May. Divide ferns while leaves are short to minimize damage to leaves.

Install rain barrels now to be ready for spring rains.

Why Use Native Plants?

For Beautification

Wildflowers, flowering vines, shrubs and trees offer a wide range of colors, textures and forms to create dynamic seasonal displays. Grasses and sedges have interesting flowers and seed heads and yellow–orange fall color. Shrubs and trees have fall color and berries that persist into the winter. Choosing a wide assortment of plants ensures seasonal interest, with the bonus of attracting colorful birds, butterflies and insects.

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>

Edible Native Plants by Cindy Gilberg

Edible landscaping has gained renewed popularity; in fact, sales of edible plants have soared for the first time since the Victory gardens of the WWII era. Many of these plants can be purchased for your home landscape or you may want to forage for them in the wild. However, wandering fields and woodlands, browsing on whatever you get your hands on is NOT the way to enjoy edible native plants. Many plants can cause sickness and/or are poisonous. Several plants that animals eat are not edible for humans. Always refer to a field guide, or better yet, a knowledgeable person to identify and help you distinguish edible plants from poisonous ones. Join a wildflower identification walk at Shaw Nature Reserve. A recent class at SNR featured Missouri edible native plants and is sure to be repeated.

I can remember the first time I beat the raccoons to a ripe pawpaw – the delectable fruit is reminiscent of banana custard and mango. Such a tropical taste on a Missouri native tree! Pawpaw (*Asimina triloba*) is a small tree that grows 15 to 20 feet tall in moist to average soil in woodlands, but adapts as well to more sunny sites. Another familiar tree fruit is persimmon (*Diospyros virginiana*). This native tree grows 30-40 feet tall and has wonderfully textural, blocky bark. Plentiful fruit forms in late summer and ripens in October. Forager beware – the unripe fruit is exceptionally astringent. One bite of unripe fruit and your salivary glands shut down for at least a half hour! When ripe the fruit is a rich apricot color and its skin gets wrinkly. A brisk shake of the trunk will yield an afternoon snack of sweet fruit. Persimmon pudding is at the top of my list of native plant recipes.

One of the first trees to announce spring in Missouri woodlands is the redbud (*Cercis canadensis*). The clusters of soft pink flowers that adorn its branches are edible. Add them to fruit dishes, as garnish for hot vegetable dishes or sprinkle them on a green salad. Regardless of how you choose to enjoy them, the color and taste is an unusual and attractive addition to a meal. Other edible flowers you may want to try are violets (yes, don't curse them, eat them!) and glade or nodding onion (*Allium stellatum/A. cernuum*). Violets are great sprinkled over ice cream and other desserts or try adding them to salads for extra color. Onion flowers are wonderful in vegetable and egg recipes.

Lambsquarter (*Chenopodium album*), typically identified as a weed, grows in full to part sun and thrives in poor soil. Why not enjoy the lush growth of this “weed” for dinner without the rigors of active gardening? The leaves, when steamed, sautéed or stir-fried, taste of spinach, only much better! I cherish my patch of lambsquarter and am careful to let seed from this 4-5 ft tall annual fall near the house to guarantee another crop the following spring. This is a plant that you will have to seek in the wild as it is not available in the nursery trade.

For those of us who are tea drinkers, there are a number of options. The leaves of bee balm and wild bergamot (both are *Monarda* species) lend a minty flavor to tea. The ripe, red berries of fragrant sumac (*Rhus aromatica*) make a wonderful lemon tea or cold drink. Spice bush, more of a small tree than a bush, has a spicy smell and flavor mildly reminiscent of allspice. Chop up and use the leaves, bark and even the spring flowers for brewing tea. New Jersey tea (*Ceanothus americanus*) earned its reputation during the Boston Tea Party protest against taxation of imported tea. The dried leaves make a respectable cup of tea.

There are some berries that are worth mentioning. Gooseberry, a 3 foot tall shrub, grows in our woodlands. The fruit can be picked green for use in pies and preserves or enjoyed fresh when ripe. Be careful when harvesting due to thorns along the stems. This also holds true for harvesting wild blackberries and raspberries. These have exceptionally sweet fruit protected by especially sharp thorns, but it is well worth carefully plucking these juicy berries.

There is a surprisingly long list of native plants that can be added to your diet and I have only scratched the surface here. Eating local foods couldn't be more true when you discover the seasonal delights of these plants.

Be an informed forager!

“Ozark Wildflowers” by Don Kurz and “Missouri Wildflowers” by Edgar Denison are two excellent field guides. “Wild Edibles of Missouri” by Jan Phillips is an inspiring and informative book with recipes as well as tips on identifying the plants. There is also a Peterson Field Guide “Edible Wild Plants: Eastern and Central North America”.