

The News From Native Plant School

June 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

Thur, June 19, 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

Thur, Oct. 9, 1-4 p.m.
Small Flowering Trees and Shrubs

Please register at
shawnature.org/NPS

Milkweeds for Monarchs:

In honor of this year's Earth Day, Mayor Slay announced a new City sustainability initiative called 'Milkweeds for Monarchs.'

"The goal of this project is to both increase the dwindling monarch butterfly population and to better connect people and urban nature," said Slay. Mayor Slay has committed to the City planting 50 monarch gardens, and is challenging the community to plant an additional 200 monarch gardens in 2014 to commemorate the City's 250th birthday year. "I will be planting one at City Hall and in my own yard at home. But, I'd like to see these butterfly gardens everywhere. They can go in your neighborhood's community garden, in front of your business or in your own yard," said Slay. Shaw Nature Reserve provided the plants for mayor Slay's butterfly garden.

<https://stlouis-mo.gov/government/departments/mayor/news/milkweeds-for-monarchs-initiative.cfm>



"I took a walk in the woods and came out taller than the trees."
- Henry David Thoreau

Join Wild Ones:

Wild Ones: Native Plants, Natural Landscapes encourages landscaping with native plants in residential, business and public landscapes.

Why should you care about native plants? As more land is developed for housing and businesses, the environment has become increasingly fragmented. Butterflies, birds, and other wildlife have a harder time finding the plants they depend on for food, shelter, and raising their young. Gardens with native plants can help to fill this need.

Native plants, including trees, shrubs, wildflowers and grasses, are better adapted to local conditions, and require less maintenance. Imagine a yard that requires little or no fertilizer, water and pesticides!

And native plants connect us to history. These plants have been growing in the St. Louis area for hundreds of years. Your yard could have some of the same plants that were here when the first pioneers explored the West.

Want more information or wondering how to get started? Visitors are welcome to attend any of our monthly meetings. Members also receive the following benefits:

A quarterly national newsletter.

Eligibility for a free landscaping consultation.

Discount on plants purchased from our booth at the annual Native Plant Sale when they volunteer.

Access to great educational resources about native plants.

The satisfaction of supporting our efforts to promote the use of native plants.

St. Louis members also get a discount on a yard evaluation with the St. Louis Audubon Society's Bring Conservation Home program.

<http://stwildones.org/>

Friday Greener Garden Series

The 2014 Friday greener garden series in the Whitmire Wildflower Garden is a new opportunity to learn about native plants and native landscaping. Shaw Nature Reserve Staff will be leading round-table discussions and tours along with Missouri Department of Conservation staff and Wild Ones members. Nurseries will be on hand to speak with gardeners and sell plants and seeds. Come enjoy the company of gardeners and assorted plant nuts in this informal outdoor setting.

April 25, 2014 **Woodland Connection!** Are you gardening in the shade? Have you been struggling to find the right plants that grow under trees? Join Shaw Nature Reserve, Missouri Department of Conservation and Missouri Wildflowers Nursery staff for a discussion and woodland garden tour on gardening in shade. Many woodland plants will be in full bloom and for sale at this peak season wildflower event. 5 - 7:30 p.m.



June 27, 2014 **For the Birds: why insects matter.** Don't stomp that caterpillar, celebrate it. Native insects in the garden aren't a disease; they belong there and provide needed food for nesting birds. Join Shaw Nature Reserve, Missouri Department of Conservation, St. Louis Audubon Society and Wild Ones staff as we discuss the many benefits of native plants and garden insects for bird welfare, and tour the garden in search of creeping, crawling and flying wildlife. 5 - 7:30 p.m.



September 12, 2014 **Seeding a Tallgrass Prairie or Savanna!** Larger land owners/managers who are wondering what to do with that huge expanses of mowed lawn or field can benefit from this discussion led by DJM Ecological Services, Missouri Department of Conservation and Shaw Nature Reserve Staff. Come learn how to plan, prepare the site, install and maintain a seeded prairie or savanna landscape. 5 - 7:30 p.m.



October 24, 2014 **Celebrate Autumn Color!** What better time than autumn to discover the beauty of Missouri native trees and shrubs. On hand to talk about Missouri's showiest woody plants are Missouri Department of Conservation, Shaw Nature Reserve and Forrest Keeling Nursery. Many trees and shrubs will be in full autumn color and will be for sale. 4:30 - 7 p.m.



Friday events are free but you must register in advance. Participants are encouraged to bring food to share. Drinks will be provided. Registration is limited to the first 40 people. Register by emailing besa.schweitzer@mobot.org

Pollinator Dinner:

Tue, June 17, 6pm – 9pm
St Louis Zoo

In celebration of National Pollinator Week, June 16-22, 2014, sit down to a special Monarch Butterfly inspired dinner where you can sample the many foods pollinators help provide and dishes from cultures along the monarch butterflies' migration from Mexico to Canada and back. Sip mead and honey wine, enjoy a honey tasting, and peruse booths with information and activities related to pollinators. After a buffet dinner, hear a presentation by Dr. Gary Nabhan, an internationally-celebrated nature writer, food and farming activist and proponent of conserving the links between biodiversity and cultural diversity, on the "Plight of the Monarch Butterfly" and learn what you can do to help. Event located in The Living World at the Zoo. Advance reservations required. To make reservations, call (314) 646-4897.

"Behold, my friends, the spring is come; the earth has gladly received the embraces of the sun, and we shall soon see the results of their love!"
Sitting Bull

Gardening Tips:

Vigorous low hanging limbs should be removed or shortened on new trees and shrubs.

Cultivate, weed, and mulch. Mulching will reduce about 70% of the summer yard maintenance.

Continue to water new plantings deeply as needed. Apply at least one inch of water each time.

Softwood cuttings from new growth of many shrubs and perennials will root if propagated in a moist shady spot.

Seen in the Garden:



In May Scott Woodbury made a huge mess in the horticulture head house teaching the container gardening class. Those of us lucky enough to attend came away with some great advice for making container gardens of our own as well as a few free plants. The containers constructed in the class can be seen displayed throughout Shaw Nature Reserve around buildings and in the Whitmire Wildflower Garden.

Native Gardening for Hummingbirds by Cindy Gilberg

When do the hummingbirds return to St. Louis? Their arrival in mid-late April is almost perfectly timed to the blooming of wild columbine (*Aquilegia canadensis*) in our woodlands. The promise of nectar is welcome after an exhausting spring migration north from Mexico and Central America. Known only in the western hemisphere, there are over 300 species of hummingbirds but only one that commonly frequents our gardens – the ruby throated hummingbird. These tiny gems have iridescent plumage and are, as John J. Audubon once remarked, "glittering fragments of a rainbow". Fondly referred to as 'hummers' by many, their preferred native habitat is woodland edges. A good mix (about 50/50) of open area to tree and shrub plantings is an easily attained landscape in residential properties. This will provide everything they need from shelter and nesting areas to open arenas for their aerial displays during mating season.

Because of hummingbirds' high metabolism and need for copious amounts of energy-rich nectar, they can't afford to waste time foraging – flowers help them out by advertising both color and shape. Red, yellow and orange flowers as well as tubular flowers are 'flags' that draw the attention of hummers. These flowers co-evolved with long-tongued creatures (hummingbirds and butterflies), offering a tasty meal in exchange for pollination. A lesser known fact is that these miniature birds compliment their sweet tooth by hunting for small insects that add much-needed protein to their diet.

The key to creating a garden attractive to hummingbirds as well as many other insects and birds is to plant a diverse backbone of the native plants they depend on for survival. Be attentive to the bloom-times, adding in flowers for each season so that nectar is always available. The color red will attract them initially yet they also forage on plants such as blue salvia (*Salvia azurea*), smooth beardtongue (*Penstemon digitalis*) and wild bergamot (*Monarda fistulosa*).

Fundraiser for BCH June 8th:

I am having a fundraiser for Bring Conservation Home on June 8th at our house in Richmond Heights, 115 Lake Forest Drive, Richmond Heights, MO.

In the past decade, Kei and I have taken out English Ivy, Chinese Ewes, Japanese Honeysuckles, Wintercreeper, Norwegian Maples and have slowly worked our way into Gold BCH certification. Instead of lawn, we want to have rose verbena, MO primrose and purple poppy mallow spreading over what would normally be lawn. In addition, we have prairie dropseed and other grasses taking the place of turf grass. I will make sure that tall prairie plants get moved elsewhere (last year's lesson) to keep a tidy appearance and I think that we should not fear what the neighbor's think and care more about our food supply and keeping the rapid extinction of many species of invertebrates, amphibians, reptiles and birds from escalating even further. Our last hope is our suburban landscapes and I hope to get that message across based on Doug Tallamy's lessons and experiences.

Susan Pang

Naturescaping Open House
Sunday June 8th, 2014 from 1-5pm
115 Lake Forest Drive,
Richmond Heights, MO 63117

No charge
Donations appreciated
RSVP not required

<http://www.stlouisaudubon.org/calendar/OpenHouse-8Jun2014.html>

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>



Hummingbird attracting vines; trumpet creeper, trumpet honeysuckle, and crossvine.

The plant list should also include flowers that attract small pollinating insects, for example coneflowers and other composite flowers as well as plants such as mountain mint (*Pycnanthemum* spp.) and buttonbush (*Cephalanthus occidentalis*). Design plantings that include masses of each species to create big splashes of color – hummers prefer to frequent easy buffets. The final touch is to incorporate various trees and shrubs for shelter and nesting sites. Don't be tempted to spray pesticides - using natives eliminates the need for pesticides, ensuring that these tiny winged jewels won't die from exposure to harmful chemicals.

Springtime offers quite a few choices for nectar besides columbine. Virginia bluebells (*Mertensia virginica*), wild sweet William (*Phlox divaricata*), wild geranium (*Geranium maculatum*) and rose verbena (*Verbena canadensis*) are just a few that can be included. The siren-red flowers of fire pink (*Silene virginica*) are another guaranteed magnet as are the red, tubular flowers of red buckeye tree (*Aesculus pavia*). I was surprised to observe hummingbirds frequenting a clump of copper iris (*Iris fulva*) but later read that irises are among those plants desirable to hummers.

Summer marks the beginning of mating season and these bold little birds waste no time to attract a female, stopping only to replenish their supply of food. Watch for the courtship dance of the red-throated males – a spectacular swooping U-shape flight. Nesting soon follows as females collect spider web strands for gluing their minute cup-shaped nests to twigs along with bits of lichen and assorted fluff. The result is about as big as a walnut and holds two eggs. An abundance of summer flowers satisfy their voracious appetites. Bright orange flowers of butterfly milkweed (*Asclepias tuberosa*), trumpet creeper (*Campsis radicans*) and our well-behaved native honeysuckle (*Lonicera flava*) serve up delectable meals. Add some pink Monarda (*M. fistulosa*), garden phlox (*Phlox paniculata*), red royal catchfly (*Silene regia*) and Eastern blazing star (*Liatris scariosa*) for further variety. An unusual plant for dry sites is American aloe (*Manfreda virginica*). Though hummers aren't attracted by fragrance aloe emits a delicate fragrance in the evening from its long, tubular flowers, an indication that it counts on more than one group of pollinators. Top off the summer list with yellow (*Echinacea paradoxa*) and purple coneflowers (*Echinacea purpurea*), Western sunflower (*Helianthus occidentalis*) and other flowers that attract protein-rich insects. By late summer both adults and young enter into a contest, vying for their spot at flowers and feeders. They become quite territorial and aggressive in an attempt to stock up on food as the moment approaches for them to once again fly south for the winter. Among the autumn flowers red cardinal flower (*Lobelia cardinalis*) reigns supreme, loving the moist, part-shade haunts that hummingbirds frequent. Another real magnet in fall is bright orange annual jewel weed (*Impatiens capensis*) that grows in similar sites as cardinal flower. Some more late-blooming perennials to try are turtlehead (*Chelone*) and obedient plant (*Physostegia*), both with pink to white tubular flowers that are quite evident and appealing. An additional surprise for me was the frequent visits hummers made to hardy Hibiscus – not only white but not tubular at all, yet a valuable addition to the plant list.

These amazing minute gems are creatures of habit. The same birds return to those sites that are especially attractive in providing not only great nectar sources but also water, shelter and nesting sites. The measure of your success will be evident with their arrival the following spring.