The News From Native Plant School

July 2014

Native Plant School is a partnership between Shaw Nature Reserve, The Missouri Departmet 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

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

Nature Connection:
Natural vs. Horticultural Diversity

I've heard that native landscaping lacks diversity compared to traditional landscaping. A trip to a local garden center illustrates my point. Native plants are displayed in a tiny well marked area. By comparison, the rest of the garden center displays vast benches of cultivated varieties (cultivars) of annuals, perennials, ornamental grasses, tropicals, hanging baskets, sculpted evergreens, trees, shrubs, and evergreen groundcovers. This is horticultural diversity at its best, delighting the eye, promising an artful display and the latest, greatest thing year after year. This plant palette goes on and on and on.

And so the native gardener may feel stymied by the lack of eye-catching and new native plants available for the home garden. A lack of colorful leaves and bold foliage textures. A lack of new plants to choose from each spring. No skinny upright or low bushy evergreens. No weeping small flowering trees. Only one purple coneflower for heaven's sake compared to the dozens of cultivars that come in every color of the rainbow. But here is the thing. Native gardens have more diversity with one purple coneflower, one wild hydrangea and one marsh milkweed than all of their cultivars combined. Native gardens have finches because purple coneflowers produce seed. They have bees and wasps because wild hydrangea have pollen and nectar. And they have beetles, bugs, bees and butterflies covering the milkweeds and every other species of native plant. In total the natural diversity in a native garden is far greater than the horticultural diversity in a traditional garden. That said, I enjoy the eye-grabbing jolt and the alluring elegance that comes from a horticultural display full of cultivars and non-native plants much the same way that I enjoy the ongoing march of natural diversity that finds it way to my native garden. The difference is that gardening isn't about my selfish pleasures anymore. Those days are gone. The native garden is a sanctuary for species, a buffet for birds, and a safe harbor for as much diversity as I can attract. Plant a native species and see what shows up in your garden!

"A Woman in harmony with her spirit is like a river flowing.
She goes where she will without pretense and arrives at her destination prepared to be herself and only herself "

– Maya Angelou

Tribute to Cindy in Healthy Plant:

Jean Ponzi wrote a tribute to Cindy Gilberg in the July edition of the Healthy Planet. You can read it online at:
www.thehealthyplanet.com

Are We Really Helping?

When we garden or landscape with the aim of restoring habitat for wildlife, are we really making a difference? There's precious little research quantifying the effects of our hard work, but new studies are encouraging.

Read full article at:
http://nativeplantwildlifegarden.com/are-we-really-helping/

Cindy Gilberg's Obituary

Cindy Gilberg, passed away, Monday, June 30, 2014. Cindy dedicated her life to teaching others about the natural world, sharing her knowledge of horticulture and the art of design. She touched the heart of many in her endeavors and will be missed by all.

http://www.legacy.com/obituaries/stltoday/obituary.aspx?n=cynthia-l-gilberg-cindy&pid=171577580&fhid=15141

Tribute in Gateway Gardener magazine:
http://www.gatewaygardener.com/uncategorized/a-tribute-to-cindy-gilberg-our-own-missouri-native

Cindy Gilberg Awarded Certificate of Excellence by Deer Creek Watershed Alliance

The Deer Creek Watershed Alliance has been successful because of the contributions of many different organizations and individuals; however, there is one individual who has made a lasting contribution to the Alliance that was recognized when she was awarded a Certificate of Excellence at the Deer Creek Watershed Alliance Annual Meeting on May 20, 2014 at Mary Institute and Country Day School (MICDS).
Cindy Gilberg has served as Project Horticulturalist for the Deer Creek Watershed Alliance since 2009. Through her work at Shaw Nature Reserve, Cindy has developed a solid expertise in native plant landscaping as well as rainscaping (landscaping for stormwater management), and has shared this knowledge with many, including the Alliance. Her passion for rainscaping and her ability to educate others about how to implement rainscaping techniques in their own yards, both in oral presentations and in written articles, is unparalleled. As a member of the Garden Writers of America, she has written native plant columns for the Gateway Gardener, Kansas City Gardener, and The Healthy Planet in addition to occasional submissions to other publications.
Cindy has been extensively involved in ornamental horticulture in St. Louis for over 35 years, as owner of a garden center, coordinator of horticultural industry educational programs, and as an educator around the region. Cindy received her B.S. in horticulture, with a minor in botany, from the University of Missouri – Columbia.

http://deercreekalliance.org/gilbergaward2014.aspx

Seen in the Garden:

It was a hot and humid day for Native Plant School this month. However, we didn't let it stop us from walking around the garden and learning about sedges. Sedges have many uses in the garden. They can provide texture, fill in gaps, and prevent erosion; all while providing habitat. The flowers didn't seem to mind the weather at all and put on a beautiful display for us.

"I say, if your knees aren't green by the end of the day, you ought to seriously re-examine your life."

~Bill Watterson, Calvin & Hobbes

Gardening Tips:

Expect some leaf fall, a normal reaction to summer drought, especially on red buckeye. Continue watering young plantings.

Trim back any branches, arching stems, and groundcover overhanging curbs or sidewalks.

Deformed leaves, flowers, and stems on purple coneflower, blazing star, black-eyed Susan and possibly other species in the aster family are infected with aster yellows virus. Dig the entire plant and dispose in trash. Composting will spread the virus.

Another place for prairie:

Prairie is being established at Dayton International Airport.

"Aullwood Audubon Center and Farm in Ohio has partnered with the Dayton International Airport on a different approach, planting tallgrass prairie near the airfield instead of mowing or planting crops. The thinking is that this will deter the larger birds that can bring down a plane, like geese and gulls, since they tend to avoid longer vegetation, which hinders their ability to spot predators, says Charity Krueger, executive director of Aullwood Audubon. Smaller, less dangerous birds, such as sparrows and meadowlarks, tend to hide in the longer growth for safety. The Dayton airport aims to replace as many as 1,100 acres of its surrounding land with tallgrass prairie."

Read the full article at:
http://www.audubonmagazine.org/articles/living/tall-grasses-might-be-key-cutting-birdstrikes

Why we don't have bee hives at SNR:

- Honey bees are not native to this continent, though they have become very much a part of the ecology of modern North America.
- Honey bees that already live here are competitors for the nectar and pollen resources of the native bees that truly belong in a nature reserve.
- Honey bees also compete with native organisms (spiders, mud-daubers, many other types of arthropods, lizards, tree frogs, many kinds of birds, bats, flying squirrels, etc.) that would otherwise nest in the tree hollows now occupied by feral bee colonies.
- We don't make any active attempt to reduce their impact other than not allowing bee hives on the property.

European (a.k.a., western) honey bees, after four centuries-plus on this continent, have a full complement of also-exotic, and de novo North American native, natural enemies that control their feral populations. The species is essentially completely naturalized here. I don't think it should be considered over-abundant here as long as they're not augmented with apiary bees. I know we do get some bees from adjacent properties coming in, but my view is that if we just let the natural enemies do their work, the honey bees can be viewed as a well-integrated naturalized species like dandelions, Deptford pink, or mullein.

By James C. Trager, Ph.D

Emerald Ash Borer found in St. Charles County:

In a news release Forest ReLeaf of Missouri stated that the emerald ash borer (EAB) has been found in St. Charles County, marking the destructive insect's first known infestation in the St. Louis area.

EAB was first found in Missouri in the summer of 2008 south of Greenville at a campground on Lake Wappapello, says Hank Stelzer, University of Missouri Extension state forestry specialist. Since then, EAB has been found in 11 Missouri counties, most notably in the Kansas City area.

The infestation in St. Charles County was discovered by an employee at an industrial park on Highway N, a few miles south of Interstate 64. He noticed a declining ash tree in the parking lot. He looked closer and found the distinctive D-shaped exit holes. He then called the urban forester from the Missouri Department of Conservation. The forester, along with entomologists from the Missouri Department of Agriculture, collected a good adult specimen. USDA personnel in Brighton, Michigan, confirmed it was EAB.

To read the full press release and learn more about the EAB threat, visit http://extension.missouri.edu/news/DisplayStory.aspx?N=2236

Salamanders Take a Bite Out of Climate Change:

During a rainy season, a single salamander may be able to sequester 178 pounds of carbon per acre of forest. By consuming and suppressing leaf-shredders like beetles, ants, and springtails, leaf litter can return to soil rather than be chewed up and released into the atmosphere. Herpetologists at California's Humboldt State University added a single Ensatina salamander to half of the twelve 16-square foot ground enclosures in a northwest California forest, finding an average of 13% more leaf litter where a salamander had been introduced. A diet of leaf-shredders does not provide enough calories to most animals of comparable body size, but a salamander's lack of lungs allow its relatively large body to be sustained by insects. However, a recent study in Global Change Biology suggests that warmer climates correspond to increased metabolism and body size reductions in salamanders, which may affect the long-term impact they have on carbon sequestration.

http://www.chicagowilderness.org/MemberNews/tag/climate-change-task-force-newsletter/

"There can be no other occupation like gardening in which, if you were to creep up behind someone at their work, you would find them smiling."

~Mirabel Osler

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

All About the Wildflowers: Peg and Blanton Whitmire's Legacy

Visitors to Shaw Nature Reserve love the Whitmire Wildflower Garden. They enjoy the year-round showcase of over 800 Missouri native species and are inspired by the diversity achieved through native landscaping. What they probably don't know is that it began as a birthday present in the 1980s.

Blanton and Peg Whitmire discovered the Missouri Botanical Garden when they moved to St. Louis and became members in 1974. Their neighbor, noted conservationist and naturalist Edgar W. Denison, introduced them to Shaw Nature Reserve (then Shaw Arboretum) after learning of Peg's love of native wildflowers.

For Peg's 70th birthday, Blanton wanted to create one grand display that showcased the diversity of Missouri wildflowers. This undertaking would require vast space and scientific knowledge to properly develop and care for the plants. Knowing how fond Peg was of the Reserve, Blanton met with Director John Behrer to discuss creating a Missouri wildflower display.

The Reserve was very interested in Blanton's idea; they had wanted to create such a display as well. The landscape architecture firm MTR developed a master plan identifying an ideal tract for it, and details for the garden's development began to take shape.

On Peg's birthday, the week before Christmas, she arrived at the Reserve with her family and was greeted by friends and staff. There she was presented with her surprise birthday gift—the plans for the five-acre Whitmire Wildflower Garden.

By the time Peg received her gift, Blanton was deeply engaged with the science, conservation, and education work at the Reserve. He and Peg were frequent visitors and contributors. They continued to support the development of the Whitmire Wildflower Garden and other projects.

The Whitmire Wildflower Garden now hosts classes and programs all year long for a wide range of visitors, from casual gardeners to PhD-level researchers and everyone in between.

"People are just beginning to fully understand the value of native plants," Blanton says. "The garden serves a purpose; it showcases their beauty, diversity, and adaptability. You can go to one place and see many wonderful examples all year long."

This focus on understanding, education, and the native environment echo the Reserve's mission, which is to "inspire responsible stewardship of our environment through education, restoration, and protection of natural habitats, and public enjoyment of the natural world."

"It means a lot to have the Whitmire Wildflower Garden," Blanton says. "Science education is so important. I feel good about what's going on at Shaw [Nature Reserve]; it's a good thing to support."

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