

# The News From Native Plant School

April 2015



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](http://shawnature.org/NPS)



## Upcoming classes:

Thur, April 9, 1-4 p.m.

### Woodland Gardening

Mature white, post and chinquapin oaks are the dominant tree species in the Whitmire Wildflower Garden. Beneath these trees mowed lawn has been killed and replanted with native shade-loving species. Learn how to replace turf in shaded areas with a variety of woodland species and create a lower maintenance landscape that is attractive to wildlife and people year-round.

Thur, May 21, 1-4 p.m.

### Rain Gardening

Rain gardens slow down, capture and absorb water using elements similar to those in nature: plants, rocks, shallow swales and depressions that hold water temporarily rather than let it quickly run away. They provide beauty, natural diversity and wildlife habitat in areas that otherwise would be a monoculture of lawns, pavement, concrete culverts and storm drains. This class will show you how to plan, install and maintain rain gardens.

Thur, June 11, 1-4 p.m.

### Landscaping for Deer Resistance

Please register at [shawnature.org/NPS](http://shawnature.org/NPS)

## Shaw Wildflower Market: Sat, May 9, 9 a.m. - 4 p.m.



Shaw Nature Reserve and several nurseries from throughout the area will offer hundreds of varieties of Missouri native plants to use in home landscaping and to attract wildlife. Admission is free to members, \$5 for non-members.

Members night on May 8th. from 4 to 7:30 p.m. Members get first pick of the plants for sale. Includes live music by Rosewood!

More info at:

<http://shawnature.org/swm>

## This years vendors include:

Shaw Nature Reserve  
Wild Ones St Louis  
MO Wildflowers Nursery  
Forest Keeling Nursery  
Andy's Native Plants  
Ozark Berry Farm  
St. Francis Mt Natives  
DJM Ecological Services  
Pan's Garden  
Smiling Sun Garden

Audubon St Louis  
SNR Habitat Helpers  
St. Louis Herb Society  
MO Prairie Foundation  
Gateway Gardener  
Edg-Clif Farm & Winery  
Williams Brothers  
Great Harvest Breads  
Colleen's Irish Toffee  
Yvonne's Honey  
Pinckney Bend Distillery

Restore My Soul Photos  
Dorris Malone Baskets  
Ross Malone Books  
Heart Felt Designs  
Les Brandt Studios  
Silver Hill Sandcasting  
Think about Tables  
Corinne's Honey Farm  
Robs Rings  
MBG Membership  
SNR Bookstore

## Garden Tours:

The Sustainable Backyard Tour will be Sunday June 14th.

[www.sustainablebackyardtour.com](http://www.sustainablebackyardtour.com)

St. Louis Native Plant Garden Tour  
Hosted by Bring Conservation Home  
and St Louis Wild Ones.

Saturday June 20 from 9 am -3 pm.

## Celebrating 10 years of Greener Gardens:

You are invited!

Native Plant School is having a ten year anniversary celebration on October 17th in the Whitmire Wildflower Garden. The keynote speaker will be Alan Branhagen author of *Native Plants of the Midwest*. More info coming soon in this newsletter.

## Spring Blooms to Look for in April:

bloodroot  
cedar sedge  
celandine poppy  
confederate violet  
Dutchman's breeches  
false garlic  
false rue anemone  
fringed sedge  
goldenseal  
ground plum  
leatherwood  
mayapple  
narrowleaf blue-eyed grass  
prairie pussytoes  
purple wake robin  
serviceberry  
smooth pussytoes  
spicebush  
toothwort  
tussock sedge  
Virginia bluebells  
Virginia spring beauty  
wild ginger  
wild plum

"Sunsets are so beautiful that they almost seem as if we were looking through the gates of Heaven."

John Lubbock

## Spotlight on Annuals:

Each spring, Shaw Nature Reserve gives away a free plant with each purchase at the SNR booth. This year we are giving you the choice of two of our favorite annuals. Both of these annuals will self-seed to fill in the empty spots in your garden.

*Polanisia dodecandra*

### **Redwhisker cleome**

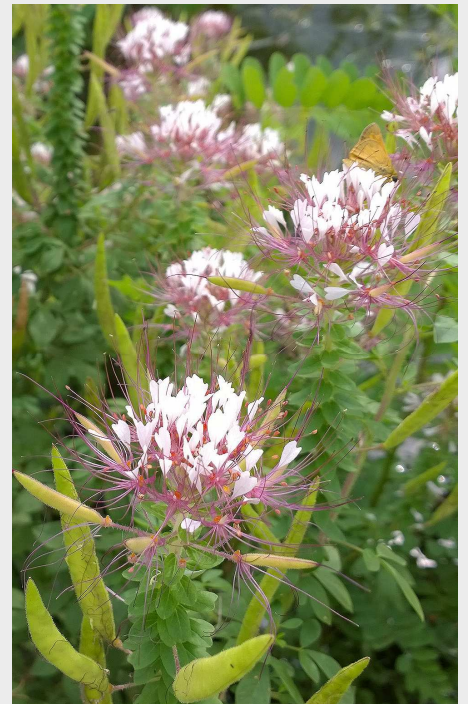
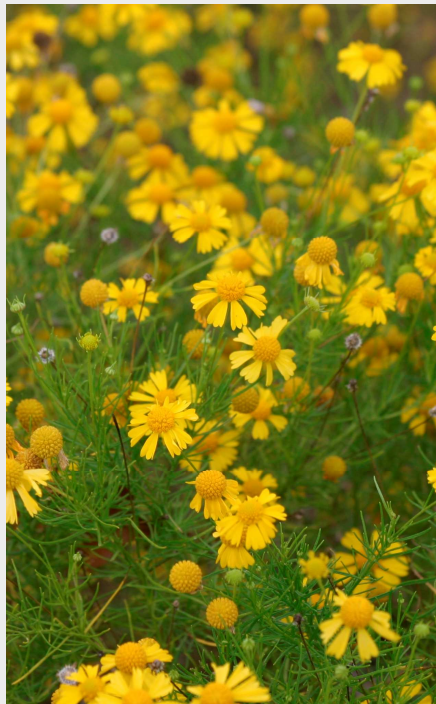
Pinkish white flowers June thru September. Grows to 1-2' in Sun and Dry to average soil. Grows on gravel bars. Strong pepper odor.

*Helenium amarum*

### **Annual Helen's flower**

Yellow flowers June thru November. Grows to 1' in Sun and Dry to average soil. Seed heads attract finches.

Helens flower on left and Redwhiskers on right



## Bumble Bee Emergence:

When you begin to see Dutchmen's breeches (*Dicentra cucullaria*) flowering it is also time to look for bumble bees emerging from their underground nests. The flower of Dutchmen's breeches is specially designed to be pollinated by a queen bumble bee. Only the queen is strong enough to pry the flower head open and has a long enough tongue to reach the nectar spurs at the top of the flower. Sometimes you will also see holes where smaller bees have chewed right through the side of the flower to reach the nectar within. The bees that cheat this way are able to get to the nectar of the flower without helping with pollination at all.





## Citizen Science:

Journey North would like you to report your monarch butterfly sightings this spring. When backyard gardeners like you report monarch sightings scientist can better understand this insect and how to protect it.

<http://www.learner.org/jnorth/monarch/>

## Gardening Tips:

- Divide and move perennials and grasses March thru May. Divide ferns while leaves are short to minimize damage to leaves.
- 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 by late April/early May (especially beautyberry).
- In late April and early May cut back tall grasses, goldenrods, wild bergamot, sweet coneflower, garden phlox, and asters by 50% to promote fuller and more compact growth.

## Reading Group:

This spring as the daffodils bloom, join our Natural History Reading Group at the Bascom House after the Spring Wildflower Walks on Tuesdays. Bring a lunch to relax between the walk and reading group. We will discuss different books by Rachel Carson, available to borrow from the Shaw Nature Reserve Natural History Library for the duration of the reading group. Books can be checked out from the Visitor Center.

4 Tuesdays  
from 1-3 pm:  
April 7,  
April 14,  
May 5,  
May 12



## Hardy and Versatile Native Shrubs and Small Trees

by Cindy Gilberg



Fringe tree, (*Chionanthus virginica*) pictured above

Missouri is home to a long list of native shrubs and small trees, many of which are prime choices for our landscapes. According to Don Kurz (author of the field guide “Shrubs and Woody Vines of Missouri”), approximately 130 species of small to medium native woody shrubs can be found growing in our state. While this doesn’t include several of the small trees, some are species we might think of as small trees rather than as shrubs. There is a fine line distinguishing between small trees and shrubs—in general, trees have single trunks and are about 20 feet or more in height while shrubs have multiple stems. Of course, gardeners sometimes confuse the situation even more by encouraging multiple stems on small trees and by pruning shrubs into single-stem specimens.

As versatile as they are functional, this group of plants is an integral part of the overall landscape, adding medium-size, year-round structure. Between the canopy of large trees and the herbaceous plants that form the ground layer, shrubs and small trees provide the framework or backbone of the garden. In this way, they are useful in outlining the structure of a space. Many designers utilize them to create ‘rooms’ within a garden as well, providing enclosure and privacy. Shrubs and small trees are quite valuable as screening and are an aesthetic alternative to fencing, especially when the fence is not tall enough to successfully block the view. Consider combining groups of different species with varying heights and textures for a more dynamic setting. Repetition of similar forms throughout the view creates rhythm and serves to tie the garden together visually. A few species that work well for screening are hazelnut (*Corylus americana*), black haw (*Viburnum prunifolium*), gray dogwood (*Cornus racemosa*), and ninebark (*Physocarpus opulifolius*). These species are also outstanding choices for planting a fter invasive honeysuckle is removed, particularly when the invasive bush honeysuckle is functioning as a screen.

Smaller shrubs (three to five feet) can be planted in large masses to form tall ground cover, making a handsome backdrop for shorter herbaceous perennials. A classic look is to have small trees rising up out of these masses, using the ground cover shrubs as an anchor for the scene. A useful list for this situation includes fragrant sumac (*Rhus aromatica* ‘Grow Low’), beautyberry (*Callicarpa americana*), wild hydrangea (*Hydrangea arborescens*) and golden currant (*Ribes odoratum*).

All of these plants can be used as accents in the garden where textural contrast is needed or to punctuate a view. Leatherwood (*Dirca palustris*) is a lesser known beauty that is slow-growing, reaching an ultimate height of five to six feet. Vernal witch hazel (*Hamamelis vernalis*) blooms in late winter with dark-yellow flowers that are delightfully fragrant while common witch hazel (*H. virginiana*) blooms with lemon-yellow flowers in late fall. Both grow twelve to fifteen feet tall but give vernal witch hazel lots of space since it grow 15-20 feet wide as well. Both have desirable yellow-orange fall foliar color.

## In The News:

The New York Times is talking about native plants! The Chickadee's Guide to Gardening; In Your Garden, Choose Plants That Help the Environment. By Douglas Tallamy. Admire plants for what they do. Not for what they look like.

Read the article at:  
[www.nytimes.com/2015/03/11/opinion/in-your-garden-choose-plants-that-help-the-environment.html?emc=eta1&\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2015/03/11/opinion/in-your-garden-choose-plants-that-help-the-environment.html?emc=eta1&_r=0)

Did you see the CBS Sunday Morning Show about monarchs and native plants? Planting a future for monarch butterflies. The federal government announced plans Monday to protect hundreds of thousands of acres across the country to save the threatened monarch butterfly.

Read the article at:  
<http://www.cbsnews.com/news/planting-a-future-for-monarch-butterflies/>

## National Walking Day

is Wednesday, April 1, 2015

"Every child should have mud pies, grasshoppers, water bugs, tadpoles, frogs, mud turtles, elderberries, wild strawberries, acorns, chestnuts, trees to climb, brooks to wade, water lilies, woodchucks, bats, bees, butterflies, various animals to pet, hayfields, pine-cones, rocks to roll, sand, snakes, huckleberries and hornets; and any child who has been deprived of these has been deprived of the best part of education."

— Luther Burbank

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.asp>

Remember that habitat for birds and other wildlife is best accomplished with a diversity of plants. Make note of when a plant flowers, attractive for both the gardener and pollinating insects. Many have berries, such as dogwoods, viburnums and spice bush (*Lindera benzoin*), providing additional interest in the garden as well as food for birds. Dense branching of shrubs and small trees also offers cover and potential nesting sites for many birds.

An excellent performer for woodland gardens is wild hydrangea (*Hydrangea arborescens*). Large, flat clusters of white flowers lighten up the shade in beginning in June and last for much of the summer. It grows 3' – 4' and is tolerant of average soil. This hydrangea works well when planted in masses and is useful for naturalizing. Pruning, while not necessary, can be done in late winter to remove old flower stems and improve the overall appearance. Because of its large leaves hydrangea is perfect for planting with fine to medium textured plants such as ferns, sedges (*Carex* sp.), Indian pink (*Spigelia marilandica*) and black cohosh (*Cimicifuga racemosa*).

Beautyberry (*Callicarpa americana*) earns its name every September when its long branches are laden with clusters of brilliant fuchsia berries. By December the berries are almost gone, having provided a feast for many songbirds. This exceptional, 4' native shrub does quite well in full sun to light shade with an organic-rich soil and average moisture. Light blue flowers of aromatic aster blend well with the colorful berries. A mass of prairie dropseed as a foreground provides a delightful contrast in foliar texture.

I never cease to be amazed by the sheer numbers of butterflies and other insects that visit buttonbush (*Cephalanthus occidentalis*) each year. In July, hundreds of round, creamy white flowers dangle from this 5'-7' shrub. Tolerant of drier soils but happiest in moist areas, buttonbush, is at the top of the list for rain gardens, at the edge of ponds and for use in low, wet landscapes. It performs best in full to part sun and can be used as a mass planting or singly as a specimen plant. Other wetland species such as copper iris (*Iris fulva*), orange coneflower (*Rudbeckia fulgida*) and swamp milkweed (*Asclepias incarnata*) are wonderful companion plants to include in conjunction with buttonbush.

Another outstanding choice not only for moist soils but for attracting butterflies is spicebush (*Lindera benzoin*), a 2005 Plant of Merit. In early spring, its fragrant chartreuse flowers can be seen through the leafless woodlands. The aromatic leaves, appearing after the flowers, are the larval food for the spicebush swallowtail butterfly. While spicebush is best suited for open woodlands (light or dappled shade) and moist soil, it tolerates full sun as long as the soil is quite moist. It is also tolerant of drier soil when planted in light shade. Growing 6' – 12', spicebush produces red berries (on female plants) that attract many birds.

On warm days in March, a most remarkable spicy scent tempts walkers in the Whitmire Wildflower Garden to discover its source. Down the path and around the corner they realize it comes from a large rounded shrub covered with millions of small, fragrant yellow flowers. It is clove current (*Ribes odoratum*), a 6' – 10', thornless shrub that has an arching habit. Clove currant <pictured at right> is often planted as a screen or hedge because it tends to colonize. Birds come to eat its edible, black berries in mid to late summer. Most gardeners know the

classic 'top ten' that include dogwood, redbud, serviceberry, fringe tree and winterberry. Just a handful of other worthy options for the landscape are discussed here. The Native Plant School, held at Shaw Nature Reserve is a wonderful way to become familiar with a whole new palette of hardy native plants.

