



# Twin Cities Chapter Quarterly Newsletter

November 2009    Volume 7, Issue 4

## Upcoming Events/Monthly Meetings

*(Meetings at the Wood Lake Nature Center: social at 6:30, meeting to start promptly at 7:00. Free and open to the public)*

**17 November (Tuesday) Future Climates and Forests in Minnesota (Dr. Lee Frelich, PH.D., Forest Ecology, University of Minnesota).** What are scientists predicting will happen to our Minnesota forests in response to man-made changes to our planet? Dr. Frelich is a recognized expert in Forest Ecology, particularly the ecology of hardwood-hemlock forests of the Upper Great Lakes regions, covering everything from the effects of fire and wind to earthworms and global warming. He also helped build the garden at Loring Park.

**Note:** Construction continues to add driving challenges to our monthly meetings at Wood Lake Nature Center in Richfield (6710 Lake Shore Drive) which is located just south and west of the intersection of W 66th St and Lyndale Ave S in Richfield, Minnesota.

- Website for directions to Wood Lake Nature Center:  
[www.woodlakenaturecenter.org](http://www.woodlakenaturecenter.org) or
- Access the MNDot site for construction information at:  
<http://www.dot.state.mn.us/projects/c>

- **Officer Election** Co-chairs or President and Vice-President; Secretary; and Treasurer). Contact Marty Rice (email: [jcrmfr@msn.com](mailto:jcrmfr@msn.com); phone: 952-927-6531), if you are interested in more information on any of these positions.

- **Seed Exchange.** Pick up native plant seeds for next year's garden and share any seeds that you may have. Please label any seeds you bring with the common name, scientific name and habitat preference. Bring your offerings in one large container and those interested in taking some seeds home should bring envelopes. Leftover seeds will be donated to schools, nature reserves, etc.

**19 January (Tuesday).** The January and remaining 2010 monthly programs are currently being finalized. Information will be emailed on these as it becomes available. For those of you without email connection, please contact Julia Vanatta (612-382-2800) or Marty Rice (952-927-6531) for details as the meeting dates approach - or go to our web site.

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**27 February 2010 (Saturday), Annual Native Plants Spring Conference (At the Roseville Radison)** Mark this date on your calendars! More information on this upcoming event in the February newsletter or go on line to our website earlier than the newsletter publication date..

## Meeting Notes

### **Wild Ones Presentation for September: Maintenance Tips for Native Gardens.**

Laura Domyancich. This presentation commenced with the statement that it is really a misconception natives are maintenance-free. Just like any other living thing, it needs some attention. At the onset when planning your garden not only should you really get to know what plants you are choosing, but also where you are planting them in your yard. For instance, knowing whether a plant is aggressive is as important as its sun/soil requirements. If a plant is “too” happy somewhere, you might be able to move it to less ideal conditions where it will still look good (like sunnier, shadier, or drier), but will not spread as readily. You can also clip spent flower heads prior to seeding to prevent a “weed” problem later.

Once you have put in your new plantings, they need to be watered regularly. Mulch will help keep water from evaporating as quickly from the soil. Shrubs and trees need supplemental water during hot dry summers or prolonged periods of no rain. Trees can be watered once a week for a few hours with a drip hose encircling the tree about 3 feet out from the trunk. Otherwise, put a hose on slow trickle for a few hours in each quadrant around the tree.



Weeds and invasives are always trying to gain a foothold in one’s yard. So know the differences between problem species and their native look-alikes: for example, glossy buckthorn versus black cherry

- Buckthorn: Has no glands at the leaf base and its berries are attached in small clusters close to the branches
- Black cherry: Has orange glands at the base of leaf; with berries attached linearly along the flowering stalk

Be able to recognize the common aggressive weeds in your area and be vigilant about dealing with them.

Understanding their growth habits will help you figure out how to deal with specific problem species. Your arsenal included clipping, pulling, smothering, or applying herbicide. If you are composting remember seeds should be sent to municipal (hot) compost areas so the seeds are destroyed. If putting aggressive weeds like garlic mustard in your home compost area, remove the soil or they will regrow.

Some of the weeds that could invade your yard include:

- Garlic mustard - Biennial. Green leaves persist very late and green up very early. The leaves are good for eating (sautéed or as pesto). Get flowering heads before seeding. Seeds live up to five years so it takes that long to really get rid of them after no more seed production.

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- Canada thistle - Perennial. Spreads by seeds and rhizomes. You must keep pulling and clipping the seeds over long period of time to kill it, if not using herbicide.
- Spotted knapweed - Perennial with a large taproot. Don't allow it to seed, because if it shows up in your landscape, it can be very hard to get rid of.
- European creeping bellflower - Perennial. Has rhizomes with a tuber. This takes several years of pulling, if you don't dig out the tuber or use herbicide.
- Reed canary grass - Takes 2 years to kill both active growth and secondary (dormant) tubers. Best removed with herbicide. Make sure to use Rodeo or other water-safe herbicide when spraying near water.
- Purple loosestrife - Easy to spot in bloom. You must clip the seed heads of this noxious weed. Hard to pull out all the roots. It will resprout so return to pull out new shoots prior to blooming to eradicate.
- Buckthorn - If you have a large infestation, get the female (fruiting) trees first and try to pull up seedlings and young plants. If you cut the trunk, treat the stump with a herbicide (stump herbicide or use Roundup if the temperature is above 50 degrees F).

Plant pathogens are another source of trouble that need to be attended to. Problems usually start out small and, if treated promptly, can be solved fairly easily. Check the leaves and trunks of plants and trees regularly for small signs of damage. Common sources of disease include:

- Aphids which can generally be sprayed with a jet of water (but be sure to get the undersides of leaves, too).
- White pine blister rust (fungus) which can look like winter burn, but when one cuts into a branch you can see a rusty-looking crescent on the cut area or a vertical cut from which sap flows. Cut off the affected area and put in the trash – don't compost.

Recommended plant guides:

- Newcomb's Wildflower Guide
- Audubon Society Field Guide to North American

For help with plant damage:

- Check [extension.umn.edu](http://extension.umn.edu) and go to their Gardening page.

- For more personalized assistance bring plant material (live, healthy and affected samples) to the University of MN Plant Disease Clinic and for a fee they will provide

Use of herbicides is sometimes the best way to treat problem weeds, such as reed canary grass, creeping bellflower, creeping Charlie, thistle, buckthorn, and other shrubs/trees. Roundup breaks down quickly and is a good choice for killing whatever it touches. It is, however, less or not effective against poison ivy, and the mint family. Do not spray near water, instead use Rodeo.

Helpful information was given on when and how to prune.

- Inspect for damage, especially after ice storms or high winds. Trim as necessary with sharp tools (cleaner cuts heal faster).
- Cut off the branches of trees and shrubs when the crotch is at too narrow of an angle (want branches to have horizontal support), otherwise it is a weak spot.
- When trimming branches, make sure to cut far enough from the trunk so that the upper and lower lines of the branch are parallel. If you cut too close to the trunk, it will interfere with healing.

- Shrubs will often bloom and fruit better on newer growth. Renewal pruning: cut oldest stems from base.
- Clean tools with either soap and water, or if you are concerned about disease, you can use alcohol and burn it off with a match to sterilize it for future use.

Finally, as fall is upon us maintenance tips for the season were shared. One should clip seeds, mulch, and transplant smaller plants (seedlings) with good root systems. If you have vegetation you wish to kill (preferably after one kill with Roundup, if the plants tend to be persistent) use the more environmentally friendly brown craft paper instead of landscape fabric, with 3 to 4 inches of mulch on top. Earlier in the season to make gardens tamer, cut back asters or goldenrods or other tall fall bloomers by 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> week of June (before flower parts have started forming).

## **October 2009. Ecology and Evolution of the Interaction Between Ants and Plants.**

**Chester Wilson.** The relations between ants and plants is an example of mutualism - that is, both of them are using the association for their own benefit. Mr. Wilson first presented a classic example of this from the southern hemisphere using the tropical acacia tree of Costa Rica. Here one finds no competing vegetation surrounding these trees thanks to the presence of ants. Other plants are kept at bay by the industriousness of the ants in chewing and destroying the surrounding vegetation. They also swarm any insects or larger animals that try to eat parts of the acacia. This attack by hundreds of ants in effect so annoys the larger animals that they quickly leave to find a less irritable dining site elsewhere. In return the ants not only get a home in the hollowed thorns on the trees, but also eat the sweet nectar that is found at the tips of the acacia's leaves.

Closer to home, ants' mutualism is reflected in the process of seed dispersal - called myrmecochory. This is a fairly common type of interaction in which the ants use parts of the plant's seed as a food source and in return seed is dispersed by the ants as it carries the food source (seed and all) back to its nest. The seeds of these myrmecochorous plants have an oil rich part to them called the elaiosome which is a high energy food resource for the ants. In actuality this part of the seed has no other function than to attract ants. Although the elaiosome is the only part of the seed these ants consume they carry the entire seed away from the parent plant thereby:

- (1) Moving the seed to a more suitable environment usually buried in the upper portion of their nest which is typically loose soil and in the woods probably consists of rich humus earth.
- (2) Removing the plant from the its parents and sibling which lessens competition for space and sunlight and also from potential diseases that are often present in older, mature plants.
- (3) Avoiding predators such as birds who readily consume seeds lying exposed on the ground.

There are two ant guilds that are interested in a plant's seeds. The ants in the first (Guild 1) are considered to be poor quality seed dispersers. These are granivores (meaning they actually eat the seed). The Guild 1 ants forage in groups and once they find seeds they quickly guide members of their group to the seed source. If seeds are taken back to their nests they are either eaten or may be buried deep in the earth where the seed dies. These ants don't forage very far from home, creating more nests per unit area. This in itself is not as helpful to the plant as all the seeds are now found close together near the parent plant instead of being more widely dispersed. The second group of ants (Guild 2) are considered to be high quality seed dispersers. These ants are scavengers and omnivores that forage individually (not in groups). They will transport the seed back to their nest where the elaiosome is consumed and the seed is usually discarded at the upper part of the nest or outside it. (Note that the seeds of these plants have hard shells as opposed to those with a soft shelled outer coat called an aril.) Because it does not eat the seed, the mouth parts of a Guide 2 ant such as *Aphaenogaster rules* are not

strong enough to break through the seed. On the other hand the *Pheidole megacephala* (a Guide 1 ant) has giant jaws that can crack open any seed and then consume it.



Locally the following plants are myrmecochorous:

- *Erythronium americanum* - Trout lily
- *Erythronium labium* - White trout lily
- *Asarum canadense* - Wild ginger (the ants also pollinate this plant)
- *Carex pedunculata* - Longstalk sedge
- *Dicentra canadensis* and *cucullaria* - Squirrel corn and Dutchman's britches
- *Hepatica americana* and *acutiloba* - Round and Sharp lobed hepatica
- *Jeffersonia dahlia* - Twinleaf
- *Sanguinaria canadensis* - Blood root
- Trillium - several species
- Violets - all or almost all species

Many scientific experiments have been performed to confirm that the actions of these ants really do increase the number of surviving seeds. This included determining that burying the seed protects

them and removal from underneath the parent plant increases their survival rate. It was interesting to note that most of the myrmecochorous plants bloom in the spring and some into early summer. This coincided with the fact that these particular ants are most active in the May, June, July time frame. Birds are not that active in gathering seed at this time of year. As fall approaches the ants being omnivores turn to dead insects for protein to help maintain the nest throughout the winter.

So how do you know if any Guide 2 ants are in your neighborhood? Chances are if your property is near a woodland area, these ants will be present. To prove it, put a dish of Johnny jump up seeds in the morning. If the seeds are gone by midday then the ants are likely around.

## CoChairs' Message - Marty Rice/Mary Schommer, CoChairs

Our lovely September has given way to a pretty depressing October. It is shaping up to be the coldest one on record if temperatures continue apace. Hope time and weather allowed all of you to finish those outdoor tasks.

Speaking of tasks, we have one remaining meeting in 2009 which we hope many of you will be able to attend. In addition to our scheduled November speaker, it is the time we have our officers' election. As neither of us will be running for the co-chair position, we are encouraging members to step forward and throw their name into the ring for this position or for the secretary or treasurer position if your interest lies in that direction. We have a great group of support people not only in board members but also in willing volunteers for events we sponsor or partake in. It's a wonderful group to lead.

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The next major event on our calendar is our annual exposition in February, which we are again co-sponsoring with the St. Croix Wild Ones Chapter. In addition we are partnering with the Minnesota Association of Landscape Architects and for the third year running master gardener training credits can be accrued. Douglas Tallamy, author of *Bringing Nature Home* and botanist Welby Smith, author of *Trees and Shrubs of Minnesota*, will be keynote speakers - both of whom are well known in their respective fields. So, once again, this promises to be a dynamite day. Be sure to put the date on your calendar and buy tickets for yourself or possibly as a gift for someone you would like to share the day with!

MARY SHOMMER and MARTY RICE

## Gardener's To-Do List (November, December, January)

- \* Fall is a busy time of year. Just a few chores done now will pay off in a tidy garden come next spring, and that means less work before you get in there and start digging in the dirt again.
- \* Last call for weeding. Remove tough perennial weeds and you'll thank yourself in the spring. Throw away any seed heads, also any quack grass or bindweed (they may continue to grow in your compost pile); the rest can be composted.
- \* Cut back perennials if you find their yellowed or frost damaged foliage too unattractive; though if they're not diseased you can leave them upright to help trap insulating snow and provide shelter and forage for wildlife.
- \* Clean and organize your garden tools, including draining garden hoses and sprinklers.
- \* Sketch your garden for winter-time planning for expanding your gardens. Try to find room for a rain garden!
- \* Prairies may be cut or burned either now or in the spring.
- \* Apply winter mulch as needed once the soil begins to freeze, or by late November. Most natives should do fine without this.
- \* Add compost to newly planted perennials as you put your garden to bed for the winter.



## Featured Native Plant: White baneberry

**Common Names:** Doll's Eyes, white cohosh, *Actaea alba*, white bead

**Scientific Name:** *Actaea pachypoda*

**Family:** Buttercup (Ranunculaceae)

### IDENTIFICATION

**Habitat:** Rich woods. Found on the eastern side of Minnesota.

**Height:** 1 - 2 feet

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**Leaves:** Alternate, toothed, compound leaves up to 16 inches long and 12 inches across. Each leaf is divided into 5 leaflets

**Flowers:** Spiky dense 4 inch long racemes (stalked flowers arranged singly along a single elongated stem). The white flowers are each about ¼ inch wide. They bloom from May to June

**Fruit:** White berry with a vertical groove and dark spot at its apex. The berries (containing 4 to 8 brown seeds within) are found on the terminal spike.

**Overall characteristics:** This plant has a dense growth and oval shape making it appear shrub-like. It has a thick, large rhizome. In early fall the plant disappears and goes dormant until spring. The species name means “big foot” which probably was so named because of the rhizome. The name baneberry refers to the fact that the berries are poisonous as bane mean deadly poison or to cause harm or death. In flower, white and red baneberry plants look very similar. You can tell them apart because red baneberry has very thin stems, red fruit, and a shorter flowering spike. The red baneberry is also more prevalent throughout most of the state.



### **GARDEN TIPS**

**Plant Hardiness:** Zone: 3 to 9

**Sun/Shade Needs:** Partial to full shade.

**Soil Needs:** Moist soil. With lots of organic matter

**Planting:** Plant 18 to 24 inches apart.

Spreads 1 to 3 feet

**Propagation:** Seldom needs to be divided, but can do so in the spring. One can collect seeds 3 to 4 weeks after the berries begin to color. It is probably best to clean the seeds and sow them immediately outdoors. With luck you will get some seedling the next spring. Others may take longer so be sure to remember where you planted them. If the seeds are allowed to dry it may take several years to germinate. These should be cleaned before storing and then stratified, if starting them indoors.

**Care:** Low maintenance. Long-lived. May want to amend you soil with organic matter before planting.

**Companion Plants:** Shade loving plants such as ferns, zigzag goldenrod, wild geranium, columbine and large-leaved aster.

**Friends & Foes:** Rust and leaf eating insects may be a problem. Deer and rabbit resistant. Note the berries are harmless to birds - the plant’s primary seed dispersers

### **NOTES**

**Current Use/Interest:** All parts of this plant are toxic. Even touching it can cause blisters. The berries are the most poisonous part of the plant. They contain carcinogenic toxins which can have an immediate sedative affect on cardiac muscle tissue which can lead to cardiac arrest and death

**Historic Use/Interest:** Native Americans used a root tea for various problems such as pain, colds and coughs.

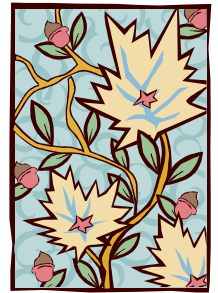
## Book Review, Internet Info, You Name It!!

*Editor's Note: Once again we have the pleasure of giving you something from the daily journal of John Caddy. If you wish to see more of his musings and great photos go to [morning.earth@earthlink.net](mailto:morning.earth@earthlink.net)*



Strange pair at the last asters,  
bumble bee and grasshopper, one  
smoothed slick, one fuzzed, both  
replete with chitin hooks. Both  
hunger for life. We think  
'Killing frost' means plants,  
but as dendrites of ice rupture green,  
so ice will end hopper and bee,  
except for newborn buried queens  
ripe with royal antifreeze, and a host  
of hopper eggs that too will freeze  
and yet in thaw emerge.

## From the Brown Thumb



This past spring as I began reviewing my yard for the coming summer, my main concern was how to deal with the shade in my yard. I have always wanted to have a lush garden filled with plants that flourish in the sun. Instead I think I finally fully realized that, for the most part I would need to discover more and more shade loving plants while carefully selecting and nurturing those plants that would have to crowd into my limited sunny areas. I always knew that I had a predominantly shady yard, but optimistically strived to ignore that fact as much as possible. Although I had done the yard sketches showing existing structure (primarily trees, sidewalk and buildings) and designed around these, I did not ever really look at my yard in its entirety. But one March day I did a tree count only to realize that I actually had 13 trees growing on my property. A large number for a regular sized urban lot. I also knew I truly loved all of these (with the exception of one, a young catalpa) and wanted them all to remain. Come May I decided to remove the one tree that I felt should go, since its removal would allow more sun onto our lot: the 8 inch diameter young catalpa which was along the southern fence line of our property. Because I was not overly fond of the pods strewn over the land and the humongous leaves that dropped in the fall, I knew I would feel no remorse at its departure. Especially with its parent tree was in our front yard and that one would remain. As I was busy taking this down I glanced up at the nearby trees (3 similarly sized elms) and mused about Dutch elm disease, hoping my group would remain safe. The nearest tree in my opinion did not look very perky. Anyway the sawing continued and light again found its way into a portion of my back yard.

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A few weeks later a city truck pulled up and a man alighted with a large long-handled pruning instrument in hand. He immediately headed for my back yard and my first thought was - he is going to my elms. - and indeed that was the case. He had spotted one tree with Dutch elm disease that he said absolutely must go. The other two, still looked all right (even the one I had though was not well passed the test). However, given the fact that the one diseased tree was within spitting distance of the other two, I felt it was the death knell for all of them. Perhaps if the trees had been older I would have put up a fight to save the other two, but given their age and the nearness to the marked tree, I reluctantly decided that the group should all be removed. We hired an arborist to do the deed and as he was surveying the situation, he spotted another elm on the other side of our house with problems. This poor elm had hidden itself well out of the city's searching eyes; however, our man found it. So here I was, facing a yard with 8 instead of 13 trees and with a prospect of another eventual loss as he pointed out that one of my remaining trees was an ash.



Now here I was supposedly in a position to be glorying in the prospect of more sunlight entering my yard - and the first words out of my mouth to the arborist are - any suggestions on what trees I might get to replace the loss. The realization hit me full in the face. I obviously didn't want a sunny yard but was seeking a forest-like atmosphere all along. The search for replacement trees commenced with suggestions from the arborist who felled the trees on our lot and continued with a visit to the arboretum, and finally some library time. After some thought I believe I am going to put in a river birch and a hackberry, plus extend an existing thicket area. The river birch is solely a result of a long standing attraction to birch trees which I believe comes out of memories from my childhood. This particular species grows to a height of 40 to 60 feet and has very distinctive bark that makes the tree interesting throughout the year. I confess that it has no outstanding wildlife value that I know of but is going into my yard only because I happen to like them. The hackberry on the other hand was selected because it is a great source of food and shelter for wildlife. Its berries are eaten by both birds and mammals and the leaves provide food for butterflies in their larval stage. So having selected them I am now waiting patiently for a bit of root rot to destroy the subterranean remains of the departed elms and catalpa. For a few years sun loving plants will do a bit better but next fall the replacement trees will be planted and my yard will once again start taking on a more forest-like look.

## Welcome New & Renewing Members

As of 1 October 2009 according to the national website, our chapter had 116 active members. Thank you to the recent new and returning members for their support of Wild Ones (see list below of those that joined in recent months). Whether you've just joined or have been a member for several years we look forward to your participation.

Bednarski, Joanne; Bonsignore, Gina; Buck, Paul; Cronin, Spencer; Damon, Paul & Susan; Domyancich, Laura; Eckhardt, Steve & Anne; Havlicek, Gail; Holm, Brent & Heather; Houle, Terry; Keegan, Carol and Jack; Kraft, Barbara & Richard; Johnson, Phil & Weeks, Mary; Larson, Elaine; Lindgren, Diane; Martinka, Kris & Jim; Mayberg, Jeremy & Amy Ann; McClain, Tom; McGlynn, Ed & Rosemary; Modrack, Leslie; Nelson, Christian; Newman, Lynn; Nolte, Mary; Olsen, Bob & Marlene; Owens-Pike, Douglas; Sandstrom, Rita; Shea, Linc & Fran; VanCleve, Judy; Wardell-Gaertner, Becky;

## **2008 Officers**

Co-Chairs: Marty Rice/Mary Schommer

Secretary: Kris Martinka

Treasurer: Brent Holm

## **Board Members**

Hospitality: Rose Meyer

Membership: Marty Rice

Merchandise: Trudy Poquette

Newsletter: Mary Schommer

Nokomis Naturescape: Vicki Bonk

Outreach: Kris Martinka

Photographer/Historian: John Arthur

Programs: Laurie Stone Goldsmith/John Arthur

Public Relations: Julia Vanatta

Spring Expo: Karen Graham/Roger Miller

Tours: Carmen Simonet

## **MEMBERSHIP Benefits To You**

- Monthly meetings featuring excellent presentation on a wide array of native landscaping topics.
- Receive the new member packet, including our handbook full of information and activities on natural landscaping.
- Receive the Wild Ones Journal, with articles and information to inspire and educate you about natural landscaping.
- Free admission to most Wild Ones' events, such as our garden tours, and native plant walks and sales/swaps.
- Reciprocity with other chapters' meetings.
- Share experiences and expertise with other like-minded native gardeners.
- Access to the Wild Ones library of native landscaping books.
- Support for the Wild One's Mission.
- Membership dues and donations are tax deductible

## **Join or Renew**

1. Sign up at a meetings, or
2. Call Marty Rice at 952-927-6531, or
3. Access the national website at [www.for-wild.org](http://www.for-wild.org)



Twin Cities Chapter

c/o Marty Rice

4730 Park Commons Dr. #321

St. Louis Park, MN 55416

[www.for-wild.org/chapters/twincities](http://www.for-wild.org/chapters/twincities)

## **OUR MISSION**

Wild Ones: Native Plants, Natural Landscapes promotes environmentally sound landscaping practices to preserve biodiversity through the preservation, restoration and establishment of native plant communities. Wild Ones is a not-for-profit environmental