

A WAUKESHA COUNTY LIVING MUSEUM

Since Europeans first settled in Big Bend in 1836, hundreds of native species have suffered local extinction. You are looking at this area's most diverse collection of native plant species, some of which are listed as rare by the Bureau of Endangered Resources' Natural Heritage Inventory Program.

People enjoy the native landscape for its ever-changing beauty and use it as an education resource relating to history, biology, ecology, climate, soils, geology, and numerous facets of culture. Native plant communities are also vital to dwindling populations of native wildlife.

Once established, a natural landscape is largely self-sustaining and requires little maintenance. Because of its historical significance and ecological benefits, landscaping with native American plants is recommended by federal, regional and state agencies including the Environmental Protection Agency and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources.

Approximately 80 percent of the plant species on this site were native to Waukesha County.

Illustration courtesy of Prairie Seed Source



We are responsible not only to those people who neighbor us physically, but also to those who neighbor us in time.

CAN WE BRING BACK THE PAST?

A true restoration cannot be viewed within a landscaper's lifetime. For instance, even the oldest restored tallgrass prairie¹ does not have quite the same density and diversity as a preserved prairie remnant. But take heart—a prairie started from seed will look pretty in three years. Bareroot shrubs grow quickly. Wetland plants are fast growers. Time will pass anyway, so go ahead and plant an acorn.

HISTORY

This neighborhood was long composed of sugar maple-white oak forest, savanna and marsh from which the Potawatomi derived everything needed for life: food, water, medicine, shelter, tools, and fibers.

On November 1, 1836, Prucius Putnam, John Dodge, and brothers Curtis and Orien Haseltine Jr. arrived from Vermont, built a log hut near present-day Highway L and Maple Avenue, and named the area "Vernon."

By the 1970s, the generations of Americans who neighbored us in history had reduced this property to lawn and weedy Japanese shrubs. The people who will live after our generation, however, will inherit from us a sustainable American landscape. For plants, sustainability means, quite basically, being allowed to have babies. For landowners, sustainability means the land can largely take care of itself as it used to.

¹ Curtis Prairie, University of Wisconsin-Madison Arboretum. Sixty acres begun in the 1940s.

“This continent has our fingerprints all over it. For 400 years we’ve been erasing passenger pigeons and Lakota Sioux alike, altering watersheds, leveling mountains.”

William Cronon

Hundreds of species that used to live on your property 150 years ago are gone.

- Throughout the United States, more than 200 native plant species have become extinct since the early 1800s.²
- Worldwide, nearly 34,000 species of plants are threatened with extinction.³
- In the U.S., 29 percent of our remaining native plants are at risk of extinction.⁴



Dwark Lake Iris is a threatened species

EXTINCTION

The civilized people of today look back with horror at their medieval ancestors who wantonly destroyed great works of art, or sat slothfully by while they were destroyed. We have passed that stage. We treasure pictures and sculptures. We regard Aztec temples and Roman triumphal arches and Gothic cathedrals as of priceless value, but we are, as a whole, still in that low state of civilization where we do not understand that it is also vandalism to wantonly destroy or to permit the destruction of what is beautiful in nature, whether it be a cliff, a forest, or a species of mammal or bird.

THEODORE ROOSEVELT

Modern economy relies on divesting the Earth of its natural resources.

WHAT DOES A NATURAL LANDSCAPE COST? If you took advantage of Wild Ones⁵ seed gatherings and plant rescues, you could conceivably landscape at no expense. Most natural landscapers choose to buy seed and plants from the many native plant nurseries. A prairie seed mix to cover 1,000 square feet costs only \$50 to \$100. Potted plants run about \$5 when purchased individually. Bareroot shrubs and trees may cost as little as \$1 apiece. Larger shrubs and trees cost the same as the cultivars you see at conventional garden centers.

Once established, a native landscape requires no fertilizer and no irrigation.



Ginseng can be cultivated or sustainably harvested from the wild with a license. The herbal market has spurred illegal harvesting that could threaten this species.

ECONOMY

Currently, we define progress, economic health, and prosperity by per-anum growth rates, the standard of living, and other indices that do little to forecast or ensure the security of tomorrow. Sustainable development is inherently cost-effective, not only in terms of reducing environmental costs, but also with respect to the reduction of initial capital development and long-term maintenance costs. Our experience indicates that annual maintenance costs associated with native plant systems can be as little as 10 percent or less than comparable maintenance of traditional landscapes.

JAMES PATCHETT, GEROULD WILHELM⁶

² Native Plant Conservation Initiative, 1999

^{3,4} World Conservation Union, 1998

⁵ Wild Ones Natural Landscapers is a national non-profit organization dedicated to promoting the use of native plants through its many educational resources. Contact Wild Ones at 877-FYI-WILD or visit www.for-wild.org.

⁶ Researchers from, respectively, Conservation Design Forum and the Morton Arboretum.

- A lawnmower pollutes as much in one hour as driving an automobile 350 miles.⁷
- Each year 580,000,000 gallons of gasoline are used for lawnmowers.⁷
- Each year \$700,000,000 is spent for pesticides for U.S. lawns.⁷

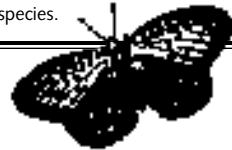
"We are rooted to the air through our lungs and to the soil through our stomachs."

John Burroughs

- Lawns occupy more of the U.S. than any single crop, including wheat, corn, tobacco.
- Of the 34 major lawn care pesticides, 32 have not been tested for their long-term effects on humans and the environment.⁸

"For the first time in the history of the world, every human being is now subjected to contact with dangerous chemicals from the moment of conception until death." *Rachel Carson*

The regal fritillary is listed as an endangered species.



POLLUTION

Natural landscaping can improve local air quality through reduced mowing. Additionally, native plants are better able than their conventionally maintained counterparts to remove both particulate matter and carbon dioxide (CO₂) from the air. Native grasses, shrubs and flowers are significantly more effective carbon sinks than traditional mown grass landscapes given their greater surface areas and more extensive root systems.⁹

Native vegetation in drainageways enhances the infiltration of contaminated stormwater. The dense, deep roots augment the permeability of the soil and help uptake of certain pollutants.¹⁰

⁷ *Redesigning the American Lawn*, Bormann, Balmori, Geballe; Yale University Press, 1993.

⁸ *Newsweek*, June 21, 1993.

⁹ Bureau of Environmental Services, City of Portland, Oregon.

¹⁰ Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission

"I would not argue an Eden lost except I live in Eden. Heaven? After this earth, who needs a bonus?"

—Mel Ellis

"The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes, but in having new eyes."

—Marcel Proust

"The more I simplify inside my home, And the more I diversify outside it, The happier I am, and the fewer the chores."

—Joy Buslaff



DIVERSITY

Who's counting?

Number of plant species in our yard ...

from which to make TEA: at least 20

from which to make WINE: at least 10

which provide human FOOD: at least 45

Number of BIRD species to visit our yard: 28

Number of MAMMAL species: 14

Number of AMPHIBIAN and REPTILE species: 4

Approximate number of INSECT

species possible in our 1/2 acre yard: 3,000!¹¹

¹¹ Estimate provided by Phil Pellitteri, Insect Diagnostic Lab, University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Species in our yard as of May 2004

(9 years after joining Wild Ones)

Italicized names are cultivars or non-natives, **asterisked (*)** names are represented in both native and non-native varieties, all other plants are native American species.

Underlined plants were discovered on the property.

We cleared many Honeysuckles and Boxelders from the property.

PRAIRIE SPECIES (52)	Yarrow	WETLAND SPECIES (10)	TREES (16)
Asters	Vervains	Burreed	<i>Arborvitae</i>
Baptisia	Wild Petunia	Iris*	<i>Boxelder</i>
Bergamot	<u>Wild Rose</u>	Jewelweed	<i>Crabapple</i>
Big Bluestem	Wild Senna	Marsh Marigold	<u>Elm</u>
Black-eyed Susans	Wild Quinine	Marsh Milkweed	Hackberry
Blazingstars		Pickeralweed	Hawthorn
Bottle Gentian	WOODLAND EDGE/	Soft-stem Bullrush	Hickory
Branched Coneflower	WOODLAND SPECIES	Tussock Sedge	Musclemwood
Buttercups	(30)	Waterlilies	Oak
Canada Wild Rye	Avens	Water Plantain	Pagoda Dogwood
Cinquefoils	Barren Strawberry		<i>Pear</i>
Com. Evening Primrose	<i>Bleeding Heart</i>	SHRUBS (24)	Sugar Maple
Compassplant	Bloodroot	<i>Arborvitae</i>	Tamarack
Coreopsis	Bottlebrush Grass	Chokeberry	Wafer Ash
Culver's Root	Columbine*	Currants	Wild Plum
Cupplant	Dutchman's Breeches	Dwarf Bush Honeysuckle	Witchhazel
Daisy Fleabane	Ferns	<i>Elderberry</i>	VINES (10)
Golden Alexanders	Foamflower	Gray Dogwood	Bittersweet
Goldenrods	Galiums*	Hazelnut	<u>Carrion Vine</u>
Gray-headed Coneflower	Germander	High Bush Cranberry	Dutchman's Pipe
Horetails	Heuchera*	<i>Juniper</i>	Grapes*
Ironweed	Jack-in-the Pulpit	Kalm St. Johnswort	<i>Hardy Kiwi</i>
Jerusalem Artichokes	Jacob's Ladder	<i>Lilacs</i>	<i>Trumpet Honeysuckle</i>
Leadplant	<i>Lily-of-the-Valley</i>	<i>Lo-Grow Sumac</i>	<i>Trumpet Vine</i>
Little Bluestem	Meadowrue	<i>Mockorange</i>	Virginia Creeper
Nodding Pink Onion	Moss	Nannyberry	Virgin's Bower
Obedient Plant	Sedges	Ninebark	Wild Cucumber
Pale Indian Plantain	Shooting Stars	Partridgeberry	
Pale Purple Coneflower	Spring Beauty	Purple-flowering	Miscellaneous
Penstemon	Solomon Seals	Raspberry	<i>Annual Vegetables</i>
Phlox	<u>Strawberries*</u>	Pussywillow	<i>Asparagus</i>
Purple Coneflower	Toothwort	Raspberries*	<i>Daylilies</i>
Purple Prairie Clover	Trillium	Red-osier Dogwood	<i>Forget-me-nots</i>
Pussytoes	Violets	Roses	Ground Cherry
Prairie Dock	Virginia Bluebells	Sweetfern Sage	<i>Hollyhocks</i>
Prairie Dropseed	<u>Virginia Waterleaf</u>	Thimbleberry	<i>Lilies*</i>
Prairie Smoke	Wild Geranium*		<i>Rhubarb</i>
Prickly Pear Cactus	Wild Ginger		<i>Russian Sage</i>
Rattlesnake Master	Woodland Sunflower		<i>Tulips</i>
Sideoats Grama			... A smidgeon of lawn and various 'weeds' on their way out
Sneezeweed			
Spiderwort			
Sweet Grass			
Switch Grass			
Tall Larkspur			
Thimbleweed			

What is this place with my name on its deed?

This place before you is my **reference library**, regularly consulted with queries about nature. It also serves as a **dance floor** to courtship rituals for countless species, including my own. It is a **living perfumery**, no doubt, and a veritable **gift shop** supplying bouquets, plants and seeds, teas and nibbles. It must be some kind of **market**, too, as it has brought forth rhubarb pies and berry jellies and State Fair first-place wines. At times, it is nothing more than a **canvas for a creative mind** laying traps for flattery, and thereby it becomes a **matchmaker of friends** who began as admirers.

This landscape works as a **demonstration of bioengineering** as it baffles noise, prevents erosion and channels winds. It further acts as an **agent of the environment** as it builds soil, filters pollutants and generates oxygen.

The assessor would appraise it as a **property of increasing worth**. The meter-reader would record it as an **energy-miser**. An Iraqi dictator, finding no power mower, would write it off as a **fossil fuel-free zone**. Those who own native plant nurseries, on the other hand, would find economic prosperity in a **half-acre consumer**.

The life scientist might regard its diverse species as a **pharmacopoeia of medicinals** or simply a **garden resisting infestation**. The patriot or historian would applaud its **tribute to provenance**. A wise teacher would recognize it as a **classroom**. Any child would see it as a **playground**. An artist would perceive it as an **infinite series of picturesque scenes**.

The contemplative would see this as a **holy place**. Those who fear God would think it a **veneration of His creation**; those who fear mankind would see it as an **act of preservation**. The people of third-world countries would see a **land of plenty** ... unsquandered.

Oddly enough, the very best definition for this **wildlife habitat** may be that it is our **home entertainment system**. The colors advance in their performance so as never to rerun a season quite the same way twice. The melodies hum, trumpet, whisper in improvisational collaboration.

From this **vantage point** we have beheld meteors and fossils, herons and hummingbirds, maggots and manure, hail and human tears. We have pond-soaked during July's heat, gazing up at hundreds of yellow blooms, and cross-country skied upon December's snow, admiring thousands of white-capped stems.

This **oasis** that rewards the senses and lifts the mind and comforts one's body is all things to this family. We have envisioned the grandeur of its **presettlement landscape** and resuscitated it to the best of our amateur abilities. We invite you to visit our **piece of Earth** and encourage you to restore the place to which you hold the deed. —Joy Buslaff

Joy Buslaff, Dan Savin & daughter Mandy