



# Twin Cities Chapter Quarterly Newsletter

May 2009 Volume 7, Issue 2

## Upcoming Events/Monthly Meetings

### 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)*

**Tuesday, May 19, 2009: Fascinating Nature: Gardens as Places of Transformation and Insight** with Fran Kiesling, Environmental Praxis Coaching, Inc. Peace, tranquility, beauty and a connection to nature -- these are many of the reasons people garden. Fran's talk will help us understand why and how we, as humans, become part of something much larger as we take part in the act of cultivation.

Fran Kiesling, Certified Life Coach, recently completed her Master's degree in Natural Science and Environmental Education at Hamline University. The research for her thesis revealed several interesting facts. One significant finding is that, in addition to environmental identity, there is an identity -- environmental gardening identity -- strong enough to be measurably separate from environmental identity. Fran combined her recent studies with her earlier Master's degree in Social Work to identify herself as an ecological social worker, environmental educator and sustainability coach. She helps people reclaim the importance of nature for their personal growth and development.

### SUMMER TOURS

Summer tours of gardens and restoration projects, using native plants and watershed friendly techniques, are taking shape. If you have ideas, questions, or want to carpool, contact us: Carmen Simonet at (wildonesTCtours@gmail.com) or Marty Rice at (952-927-6531). Information and new developments, as well as information on other local tours will be posted on our website calendar: <http://for-wild.org/chapters/twincities>.

### June

**Saturday, June 13<sup>th</sup>**. We'll join the St. Croix chapter to tour Prairie Restoration's native plant nursery in Scandia: Two Oaks Prairie Restoration, 21120 Ozark Court North (Hawkinson Business Park). More details to come.

**July and August** This summer on the first and third Wednesday evenings of July and August, we have tours planned all around the metro area.

**July 1<sup>st</sup>** 6:30 - 8:30pm OPEN

**July 15<sup>th</sup>** 6:30 – 8:30pm, residential gardens in St. Paul. Visit with the homeowners and learn about their experiences in gardening with native plants.

2128 Bayard Avenue, St. Paul: backyard  
391 Mount Curve Blvd, St. Paul: front yard  
355 Cleveland Avenue North, St. Paul: whole yard

*continued...*

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**August 5<sup>th</sup>** 6:30 – 7:45pm, Tour the prairie and woodland restoration of Lake Camelot Park in Plymouth, MN with Paul Buck, the City Forester as our guide. Meet at County Rd. 47 and Dallas Lane in Plymouth.

**August 19<sup>th</sup>**, 6:30 – 7:45pm. Tour a watershed friendly garden designed with both native plants and cultivars. The landscape designer and site manager will lead the tour, and answer questions about the design, installation, and maintenance of this very large and beautiful rain garden. Rain Garden at 7-SIGMA, 2843 26th Avenue South, Mpls, MN

### **Nokomis Naturescape Historic Walking Tours**

Throughout the summer, Julia Vanatta will be hosting tours of the Lake Nokomis Naturescape (Prairie Gardens and Oak Savanna Restoration) on the east side of Lake Nokomis in Minneapolis, near the intersection of Lake Nokomis Parkway and 50<sup>th</sup> St. Julia will talk about how settlement and development changed the landscape near and around Lake Nokomis as she leads guided tours of the Nokomis Naturescape demonstration gardens. In the event of severe weather, confirm tour by calling 612-382-2800. Tours will be on:

**May 26, 7:00**  
**June 23, 7:00**

**August 18, 7:00**  
**September 22, 6:30**

Opportunity to volunteer: Julia would like a volunteer from our chapter to assist her for each tour date. Assistant would help post signs before/after the tour, hand out our literature, and help answer questions about Wild Ones. Contact her via email at [juliakay@scc.net](mailto:juliakay@scc.net) or call 612-382-2800/

### **Nokomis Naturescape (Volunteer Gardening)**

*(Prairie Gardens and Oak Savanna Restoration located on the east side of Lake Nokomis in Minneapolis, near the intersection of Lake Nokomis Parkway and 50th St.)*



Join a friendly group of volunteers at the Naturescape on Tuesday evenings May through September, from 6:30 – 8:30. Choose your level of commitment - from occasional helper to adopting a section of a garden. The **Twin Cities Chapter of the Wild Ones** are the principle garden volunteers for the hillside garden. This is a great opportunity for the beginners to learn more about native plant gardening and for the more experienced to guide the novice. Gardening by the lakeside is an enjoyable time spent with people sharing your interest. We welcome all help to keep our garden a native plant showcase, inspiring park patrons to go native in their own yards and to see the beautiful liveliness of natural habitats. *For more information or to volunteer, call Vicki Bonk 612/727-3562*

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

We are now moving into that time of year that each of us looks forward to. Not only is the world awakening without, but it seems as if it is also doing so within. We are hoping that you are all feeling that urge to be outside working in your gardens and that our expo in February helped inspire you with new ideas for your own spot on this earth. The need for each of us to contribute to the enhancement of our environment was further emphasized by a speech by Douglas Tallamy at Macalaster College in early March. For those of you who missed his speech, read his book *Bringing Nature Home: How Native Plants Sustain Wildlife in Our Gardens*. His belief on how crucial native plants are to the health of our own ecosystem and thus to the planet as a whole is clearly elucidated in this volume. So go out and enjoy these beautiful days! (We know they are coming soon!) We hope that Wild Ones is contributing to your efforts by furthering your knowledge on native plants and increasing your desire to use them whenever possible.

MARY and MARTY

# Meeting/Expo Notes

*Editor's Note: For those of you who were unable to attend the Expo, it is hoped that this summary of presentations will give you some indication of the abundance of information from the really great speakers that shared their knowledge and enthusiasm with us.*

## February Exposition:

**Feature Address: How did we get here and what are we doing to change our ways?, Bonnie Harper-Lore, Federal Highway Administration.** As a restoration ecologist working within the Federal Highway Administration Bonnie Harper-Lore brought with her a wealth of knowledge from the national perspective. If one thinks of roadsides as our Nation's front yard, it is not a great leap to take her presentation and apply portions to our own yards. Besides which, we got a fascinating look into our highways past, present and future. The original efforts with regard to the upkeep of roadsides was not to keep them neat and looking good; but to make attractive and useful roadsides by preserving or creating a natural approach. As years passed and our highway system expanded, we eventually evolved into the Puritanical ethic of neatness and control. As we move forward we need to change our approach to these areas by embracing a conservation ethic. Ultimately this would mean having only a swath of mowed area along the edge of the road for neatness, vehicle pull-off, habitat protection and visibility/safety. There are an amazing 12,000,000 acres of corridors available for conservation opportunities.

The highway department has a number of items in their "toolbox" which are used to combat weeds:

- Herbicides: Here they are starting to use mostly spot spraying and less toxic chemicals.
- Biochemicals; Such as insects (for example a weevil used against purple loosestrife).
- Prescribed burns
- Regulations such as the Clean Water act, NEPA, TES. One of the latest, most interesting law is SAFETEA-LU 0.329 in which Federal aid can be used to control noxious weeds. Although this law is on the books, no dollars were set aside for this effort. So at the state level, there is competition with bridge construction, repair, etc for highway funds.

Many of us are aware of the effects of climate change. A number of impacts were highlighted as part of this presentation. These included:

- Increase in invasive plant species (generally CO2 favors invasives)
- Migration of plant species (usually about 1 meter a year migration)
- Extinction of some species
- Change in plant communities: Grassland to desert; potholes/wetlands to prairies

To help reduce the affects of climate change, a number of vegetation strategies were suggested some of which could also apply to our yards:

- Protect existing woodlands
- Reduced roadside mowing
- Protect grassland and wetland remnants
- Inventory each community type (need to know what our baseline is)
- Replace turf with native grassland communities (potential for carbon sequestration)

On a more personal level, she concluded with advice on what can we do:

- Learn to identify as many weeds as you can.
- Help public workers learn better, environmentally friendly methods to approach their work (Keep in mind that they really want to provide you with what they think you want).
- Contact your legislators and advocate for change.

## **Energy Scape; Designing Your Landscape for Clean Water: Douglas Owens-Pike, EnergyScapes, Inc..**

The ecological crisis that currently confronts us is a threefold challenge resulting primarily from human development, climatic change and introduced species. Our own backyard example is the fact that less than 0.1% of the original oak savanna remains in Minnesota. Douglas Owens Pike drove home the fact that we gardeners can do our bit in building a sustainable, balanced ecosystem through the design of our gardens. Thriving natives in our urban settings can mean less mowing and irrigation; a reduction in storm water runoff; and creation of beneficial habitats for plants, pollinators and animals. The key is selection of the right plants for the conditions that exist in each of our own micro-ecosystems - paying close attention to sun, soil and water conditions.

With regard to sunlight when approaching your space it was suggested that one keep in mind the following types of ecosystems and sunlight pairings:

- Prairie: full sun (a minimum of 8 hours and well-drained soil)
- Woodland edge: up to 8 hours of sun
- Woodland: 2 hours of sun
- Evergreen shade: less than 8 hours of sun

Throughout this presentation, numerous tidbits were given on minor improvements which can be made to help enhance conditions. These included: (1) putting “speed” bumps into your driveway to direct water into a rain garden or yard, so it doesn’t go directly into the street; (2) using a product called “clean burn” paper, one layer of which can be laid on grassy areas to kill grass instead of 20 layers of newspaper; (3) installing individual blocks with spacing instead of singly poured cement slabs so water percolates into the soil instead running into the street/alley; (4) growing a “no mow” lawn instead of turf; (5) in shoreline situations laying rip rap or planting emergents; and (6) as part of ongoing garden maintenance harvesting those desirable seeds and seedlings for use by yourself or others, controlling the exotics, leaving leaf debris in woodland sites, and managing those pests.

In the end, remember that every plant is significant, so make a contribution by planting natives to help improve the world around us.

**Layering Your Landscape for Clean Water (Designing For Aesthetic Appeal): Mike Isensee, Dakota County Soil and Water Conservation District.** Worried about having your native garden accepted in the neighborhood or do you just want a yard with a more tamed look? Mike Isensee listed a number of things to bear in mind when trying to accomplish this (which along with loads of photos helped illustrate each thought):

- Determine the overall shape of your garden area - do you want it formal or informal.
- Have lines/edges incorporated in your design, such as hardscape around your garden and/or paths through it.
- When developing your planting design, again decide if it will be formal or informal. If you want a more wild look consider a “country garden” approach.
- Look at backdrops and framing that can be incorporated into your garden area, such as trees or fences.
- Plant in groups or clusters creating a color mass.
- Select the scale of your plants. Do you want it to blend in with others surrounding areas? Is it better to have the garden “step up” from smaller to taller plants?

From these general suggestions, specific natives available for incorporation into your design were discussed. With regard to shrubs there are 30 species in our Minnesota, with 12 found naturally in our immediate area. If you are looking for a shrub less than 3 feet tall, there are the bronze leaf diervilla, running serviceberry and a cultivar, Gro-Low sumac. In the 6 to 12 foot range there are regent serviceberry, chokeberry, sand cherry, black raspberry and highbush cranberry. Those slightly higher shrubs included sand serviceberry, nannberry viburnum, arrowwood viburnum and American cranberry. Suggested ground cover to consider was wild strawberries, which sounded good to me! If vines are what you are looking for, two fast growing natives are Virginia creeper and wild grape. Suggested plants that are especially good in rain gardens were little bluestem, side oats gamma, prairie blazing star, northern blazing star, milkweed, bottle gentian and blue lobelia.



Photo from EnergyScapes, Inc.

**“Getting Started on Your Water Friendly Landscape” (How to Analyze Your Home): Todd Rexine, Great River Greening.** This presentation emphasized how native plants can improve the environment by decreasing the use of fossil fuels and improving water quality. The latter is best done in forest environments where 80 to 100 % of the water infiltrates. Following forests, in a continuum from best to worst are residential, cultivated, and urban areas. In Minnesota, given the huge amount of agricultural land and several major cities, 40% of our water bodies are on the impaired water list as defined in the Federal Clean Water Act. Under this act water quality standards have been established and a water body is considered to be “impaired” if it fails to meet one or more of these water quality standards. There are huge benefits in using natives not only for improvement of water quality; but also because they help create a strong sense of regional identity, enhance the overall beauty of the landscape, decrease the risk of flood, provide food/cover for wildlife, increase diversity, and cost less after plants are established because of their low maintenance. Finally, there is no need to fertilize. Their roots help condition the soil and absorb water and they better endure climate change. In Minneapolis there is an added benefit in that under certain circumstances (rain gardens, for instance) it is possible to get storm water credits for these areas with a reduction in your storm water bill.

When approaching your land, take into account the key components of a good design : (1) site preparation; (2) installation and (3) maintenance. Then combine these with the principles of success: aesthetics and an understanding of native plants. With regard to site preparation remember to do a thorough site analysis in which sun/shade, wind, sounds, soil, drainage and views are taken into consideration. Further, consider the fact that a mowed edge around your garden areas or other items that give these areas a manicured look help make your space acceptable to your neighbors. Creating pathways through your gardens also improves aesthetics and provides interior access. Drawing on all of these thoughts, prepare a concept plan. Once this concept seems satisfactory, then produce a detailed planting plan. There are about 2,400 plants native to Minnesota so there is a large palette from which to choose. Ground covers as replacements to lawn areas should also be considered. No mow lawns and wild strawberries are wonderful options. Above all, when selecting plants avoid invasives!



A pathway through Julia Vanatta’s garden

**The Latest and Greatest Techniques for Clean Water (Where is the Water Going Dad?): Peter MacDonagh, Kestral Design Group.** First some interesting facts. The Mississippi River has 1/10 the volume of the Amazon at its mouth; however, it has a dead zone of roughly 8,000 square miles (2008 statistic), whereas the Amazon has none. Our area of the Mississippi/Minnesota used to be a recharge area now it is a discharge area. In essence, our cities are made of rock and the first order streams here are out gutters.

Peter MacDonagh placed a new emphasis on what we should be striving for: a green infrastructure with the goal being to wet the uplands (NOT the wetlands). Here, we are really concentrating on a 1-inch or less rainfall solution (these are the rain events which occur 90% of the time). If we could capture these events, we would be solving 80 to 90 percent of the problems associated with runoff. As an example, statistics were given on the removal of metal contaminants by soil (which is pretty amazing).

	Contaminant/Removal		
	Copper	Lead	Zinc
1 foot depth of soil	90%	93%	87%
2 foot depth of soil	93%	99%	98%
3 foot depth of soil:	93%	99%	99%

In approaching the design of a green infrastructure (which would help retain runoff), one needs to think of the natural analog that would apply to each urban sub area. For instance, think of a green wall on a building as akin to a limestone bluff (perhaps in a shady area). From there, determine what grows in this environment in nature and then figure out how this could be applied to a building in a downtown area.

Green types of infrastructure improvements in urban areas include:

1. Green parking lots with trees, porous paving, and infiltration islands. Other improvements could include underground rainwater retention, reduced stall size (to decrease hard surface area) and shared parking.
2. Net lawn: which captures debris such as leaves.
3. Rain gardens: (Covered in numerous other presentations at the expo).
4. Green roofs.
5. Trees: It was noted that research is ongoing to improve the life span and size of trees that are planted in concrete areas.
6. Green living walls: basically the concept is to take a green roof and turn it on its side. The soil depth is typically 3 to 5 inches, with watering by a drip system and weeding done on ladders.
7. Stream bank stabilization.

**Where Do We Go From Here?: Rusty Schmidt, Washington Conservation District in Minnesota.** This presentation started with a table showing the percentage of runoff versus various impervious surfaces, which set the stage for what we should do next. .

<u>Area</u>	<u>Forest</u>	<u>Suburb</u>	<u>Urban</u>
Impervious surface	0%	35-50%	75-100%
Runoff	10%	30%	70-90%

The ultimate goal is to have clean water which can partially be achieved by slowing or eliminating runoff. With changes in the landscape, water is being sent faster to our streams and lakes. In the last years the amount of nitrogen found in wetlands has doubled. There is 300 times more phosphorous present than there used to be which causes algae problems. One pound of phosphorous produces 300 to 500 pounds of algae.



Raingarden Photo/Design from EnergyScapes, Inc.

So what can we do?... Install rain gardens!! Rain gardens can significantly help in the reduction of storm water runoff. These low spots catch runoff and the deep-rooted plants within (preferably those found on native plants) help with infiltration once the water is present by loosening the soil and creating numerous channels for water to travel through. The channels are created because approximately 30% of the plant's roots die each year and then decompose leaving voids in the soil. A concrete example of the success of these gardens was proven by a controlled experiment conducted in Burnsville. Here almost all property owners in a small neighborhood installed rain gardens along their rights-of-way. An adjacent neighborhood with similar characteristics did not. When measuring runoff and comparing it to the control neighborhood, within the first year 83% of the runoff in the area with rain gardens never made it to the downstream receiving stream. As plants flourished in

each garden, the second year saw 90% retention and the third 93%. This seems to verify the tremendous good that can come from rain gardens.

Organizations that are promoting rain gardens in a big way are Metro Blooms and Blue Thumb. Beyond technical assistance from these organizations, many counties offer folks financial incentives to establish rain gardens. For information on whether your county and/or watershed district provides assistance contact your local entity.

## Monthly Meetings

**January 2009 Meeting: Weeds 101, Simba Blood.** What is a weed anyway? Simba Blood talked about that and much more at this monthly meeting. As to the first question, a weed was defined as a plant out of place or a plant that comes into a natural community and disrupts it. To rank as an “invasive” it should also be aggressive. Finally an “exotic” is a non-native.

Non-native plants typically have a number of characteristics that help ensure their success: they lack predators, leaf out early, are prolific reproducers and thrive in diverse conditions. There is the usual trail of suspects with regard to their original entrance into a local environment - from food and fibers, in erosion control efforts, for ornamental use, and in land improvement. Once here they are spread by birds/animals, water, wind, vegetative means (rhizomes or fragmentation) and human intervention. Most important is the kinds of problems they can produce such as promotion of soil erosion through a shallow root system; alteration of soil chemistry (pH, nutrient availability by fixing nitrogen for example), as alternate hosts for disease; and in the ability to form monocultures thereby reducing biodiversity and crowding out natives.

We all have the urge to purge those weeds once we are aware of their existence. However, we need to be careful, as some weeds have native plant look-alikes. A few that were pointed out include (weed/native): creeping Charlie/wild mint; horseweed/blazing star; stinging nettle/blue vervain; giant ragweed/brown-eyed Susan; dames rocket/phlox; butter & eggs/yellow snapdragon; catnip/anise hyssop. So all you weed pullers be cognizant of this possibility, use available identification information and wait until you really need to act before pulling (thereby giving you a chance to figure out if it is a weed or not). A number of sources were recommended to help one in identifying weeds and natives. On the WEB you can Google: Portrait of the Earth; Connecticut Botanical Society; USDA Plant database, and Wisconsin State Herbarium among others. Recommended books included: Northland Wildflowers (Moyle); Wildflowers of Minnesota (Tekiela), Newcomb’s Wildflower Guide; Invasive Plants of the Upper Midwest (Czarapata), and Lake Phalen Shoreline Restoration Walking Tour and Plant Guide.



Poison Ivy

The final portion of the evening’s presentation concentrated on specific weeds and organizations that combat them. Weeds are classified by the Minnesota Department of Agriculture, which leads to some surprises. There are three categories of noxious weeds: (1) Prohibited (these must be removed) which includes field bindweed; hemp; purple loosestrife; garlic mustard; poison ivy; leafy spurge; sow Thistle; bull thistle; Canada thistle; musk thistle; plumeless thistle; (2) Restricted (can’t be sold, imported, or transported): buckthorn; (3) Secondary (weeds that may be added to the previous categories). As for who’s watching for weeds there are a number of organizations. At the Federal level: Federal Interagency Committee for the Management of Noxious and Exotic Weeds (FICMNEW); Department of Agriculture (USDA); Department of Transportation (DOT); Bureau of Land Management (BLM); Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS). At the State level: Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and Department of Agriculture. Locally other landowners, the Nature Conservancy, cities, and counties are all pitching in. A relatively new local endeavor is through the Ramsey County Cooperative Weed Management Area. One of the efforts of this group is to try and stop the massive incursion of weeds that have not yet gained an overwhelming presence. Included in their list of target species are: yellow iris, wild parsnip, Japanese knot weed; common tansy; miscanthus, hydrilla, Grecian foxglove, flowering rush and cut-leaved teasel. For additional information on these weeds, go to their website: <http://www.co.ramsey.mn.us/cd/cwma.htm>.

Finally, everyone was reminded of what they can do if they spot noxious weeds: remove them from your own property; report their presence to a responsible land manager; and keep volunteering when organizations are looking for folks to go out and remove some of these pests.

## **March 2009 Meeting: Sedges of Minnesota; Jason Husveth (Critical Connections Ecological Services).**

Clearly Jason Husveth loves his work, is truly excited about sedges and really knows tons about them. We received a thorough overview of the sedge family (Cyperaceae) whose numbers make up about 10 percent of the flora in Minnesota. The actual number of genera/species found in this state varied - probably because more continue to be discovered. Information provided by the speaker even contained variations of 12 to 14 genera and 193 to 229 species. In fact, in our state there is only one non-native within this family and that is the Yellow Nut Sedge.

The best way to differentiate a sedge from grasses or rushes is through the flowers and fruits although I think most of us have been told to look for those triangular stems. With regard to the fruit, it consists of a single nutlet (seed) in a sack or, more scientifically stated, an achene surrounded by a perigynia. Rushes on the other hand have a three-part capsule which contains thousands of microscopic seeds. Grasses have a spikelet with florets surrounding the reproductive parts.

Following a detailed discussion of sedges in general, Jason Husveth spent most of the remaining time talking about members of the genus *Carex* of which there are 150 species in our state. He started with wetland species, moving to drier areas and ending with those that are found in upland areas. The latter being ones that are probably best (and most easily) used in our gardens. A brief list of only a few of the sedges that were talked about:

- *Carex stricta* (Tussack sedge): One of the most common in Minnesota, It is long-lived with some plants hundreds of years old.
- *Carex lacustres* (Lake sedge): A robust sedge common in eastern and northern Minnesota
- *Carex lasiocarpa* (Wire sedge): Found in acidic, boggy wetlands with a pH of 5 to 6. This brought up a reminder that we need to be careful about pH when planting sedges especially since the pH of tap water in Minneapolis is 8.0.
- *Carex tuckermanii* (Tuckerman's sedge): Good in shady areas - is about 2 ½ feet in height.
- *Carex lupinia* (Hop sedge): Good for shady areas in rain gardens
- *Carex aurora* (Yellow Fruited sedge): Six inches in height also a shady rain garden candidate
- *Carex lophina* (Cattail sedge): It is at the western edge of its range here spreading all the way east to New Jersey. Growing in partial shade, it likes big variations in moisture. It is on the Minnesota list of special concern.
- *Carex pensylvanica* (Pennsylvania sedge): One commonly found in gardens and in "no mow" areas. Germination is difficult, so it is best to propagate by division.
- *Carex albursina* (Blunt Scaled Wood sedge): Great plant for shady areas.
- *Carex pedunculata* (Peduncled sedge): At 6 inches this is a good groundcover, liking shady moist areas. .

Many more *Carex* species were presented as well as sedges from other genera with only a few listed above to wet your appetite. I think it certainly did for the audience as many went home with visions of what to add to their own yard.

## **Member Spotlight - - Chapter Officers and Board Members**

*(Editor's Note. We have had a number of changes in our officers and board members since November 2008. Some stalwart folks continue to serve, but I thought it would be good to introduce the new members. Thus the short interviews that are presented below. For information on those who are not shown below, please refer to the past issues February and May 2008.)*

**Programs Co-Chair, Laurie Stone Goldsmith** (Years in WO: I've been a member of the Twin Cities chapter of Wild Ones since 2005. Prior to that, I had membership in the St. Louis, MO chapter from 1999 - 2002 (the interruption due to grad school obligations).

**Occupation:** I currently work for the Ramsey-Washington Metro Watershed District, in Little Canada, collecting data on our green roof, maintaining the demonstration rain gardens and prairie plantings, and leading site tours. Come by this summer and I'll show you around!

**What drew you to native plants?** I originally became interested in native plants through a field experiment in college with agricultural applications. I kept asking the greenhouse manager the names of wild plants on the periphery of the field site, and he recommended the local Native Plants Society. Although growing up I had helped my parents maintain the gardens in our suburban New Jersey yard, until college, I hadn't really paid attention to what was native versus ornamental. My environmentalist tendencies led me towards ecology restoration, and I was fortunate to learn through participation in volunteer restoration activities.

**What is your favorite native plant?** I have often been asked what my favorite native plant is (mostly in job interviews or occasionally by other native enthusiasts), and I still don't have just one. In seasonal order, pasque flower, hepatica, marsh marigold, swamp milkweed, blazing star, and several of the asters rank among the highest. I gravitate towards plants that have unique ecological niches (temporal as well as spatial), good, long-lasting color, or diverse ecological functions. Of course, sometimes I'm just a sucker for "pretty." I am still exploring woody plants, but as of now the herbaceous perennials retain highest billing.

### **Merchandise Chair, Trudy Poquette** (Years in WO: 1)

**Occupation:** Retired, Formerly a teacher

**What drew you to native plants?** Birds led me to natives. When I retired I was told to follow your passion, which I did by becoming very active in birding. Right away I found that habitat was crucial. All my life I have loved plants and gardening. When I was teaching I usually renovated myself from stresses of the profession by working in my garden. All of these factors lead me to a avid interest in natives.

**What is your favorite native plant?** I don't have a favorite. I do think that the most awesome is the Cup Plant. It was such an shocking huge plant when I first saw it and I was so impressed to discover that birds bath in it!

### **Nokomis Naturescape Chair, Vicki Bonk** (Years in WO: 7 years - give or take a year.)

**Occupation:** My background is in visual arts (inter-media including earth art, film, photography, drawing and graphics). Currently I do office administration/reception for a neighborhood business.

**What drew you to native plants?** I have always been drawn to the "wild" places where nature flourishes. In the neighborhood I grew up in there was a marsh at the end of our block. I enjoyed being in nature there, marveled at the plant variety and the abundant life buzzing around. Eventually the marsh was filled in to become a ball field and to me, became a hard, dry dead zone. The difference was stark. I wanted to return the diverse liveliness to the area but didn't know how – only felt the loss of nature. That was in the 1970's. Flash forward to the early 1990's, - after living in the country and returning to the city, I wanted to be connected with nature here. Through a project with the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board – the Nokomis Naturescape - I learned about native plant restoration and the plants I've been naturally attracted to throughout the years. Want to add life? Plant native!

**What is your favorite native plant?** Native plants are about their plant community. It is hard to choose a favorite when most have their unique charm and ecological contribution. However, the one plant genus, I would wholeheartedly recommend to have in ones yard would be milkweed - asclepias. My attachment to this plant goes back to early childhood and the neighborhood marsh. Common milkweed (*Asclepias syriaca*) pods highlighted by the sun and the ripe seeds blown into the wind are embedded in memories of days well spent outdoors. Today, nine graceful, dried milkweed pods are attached simply to a wall in my home – a tribute to their wonderful form. There is a reason I would suggest planting milkweed that goes beyond sentiment. A milkweed patch is a habitat for many creatures – a lively center of food web activity- an entertaining place to observe and appreciate nature. Notably, milkweed is the only host plant for the monarch butterfly. The phenomenal monarch migration from Mexico, across the United States (east of the Rockies) and into southern Canada is absolutely dependent on the presence of milkweed along the route. With the ongoing loss of milkweed habitat, it is imperative for land stewards to help out and plant milkweed. With the addition of milkweed to the garden, you are almost assured of flagging in monarchs and having a front row seat to the marvels of metamorphosis. I have taken the eggs inside the home to watch and photograph the awe-inspiring transformation. My affection for monarchs deepened, as did a commitment to help restore essential monarch habitat. Welcoming the milkweed family to the garden has challenges. With the exception of Butterflyweed (*Asclepias tuberosa*), milkweeds have a way of rapidly spreading. I edit the easily identifiable upstarts and check all plant under the leaves for monarch eggs before pulling mature plants. There are ways of limiting milkweed rhizome expansion such as planting in an area hemmed-in/contained (i.e. bordered by sidewalk, the alley etc). I have found the corralling is well worth the effort since the milkweeds are a structurally intriguing plant at all stages of growth, including winter when the dried pods add interest to the landscape. The milkweed family gives a dynamism to the garden I find irreplaceable!

## Gardener's To-Do List (May, June, July)

Spring has sprung and we hope you are enjoying signs of your garden coming to life. What insects and birds have you been noticing return? Here are a few reminders as the gardening season gets into gear.



- \* The garden centers and native plant nurseries will be opening their doors soon - do you have a list of your plant wants yet?
- \* Start turning your compost pile, if you have the energy .... Or a helper!
- \* A little time spent weeding early in the spring while weeds are tender will save you extra work later, when the weather is hotter.
- \* After the ground has warmed, spread 2-3 inches of mulch on beds to help conserve water and reduce weeds.
- \* Keep an eye out for the return of wildlife to your garden: dragonflies, caterpillars and hummingbirds, to name just a few.
- \* Water any newly planted seedlings during drier periods to help them get well established.
- \* Cut off dried seed heads of spring blooming flowers. Save seeds for propagating next spring or direct sow into the ground now.
- \* Do you remember thinking any of your plants were a bit leggy or just too tall last year? Pinch them back to encourage denser, shorter growth - and with more blooms, too!
- \* In May start moving out seedlings that you germinated indoors over the winter. Gradually accustom them to their new surroundings.
- \* Divide crowded clumps of late summer and fall bloomers as shoots emerge from the ground.
- \* If you have a small prairie garden, burn, cut or mow (with mower at a very high setting from the ground) as needed.
- \* Don't get so busy with your gardening work that you forget to enjoy the beauty of your native plants, while sitting in the shade sipping an iced tea. Your back needs a break.

## Featured Native Plant: Anise Hyssop

**Common Names:** Anise Hyssop, Anise Mint, Licorice Mint, Giant Hyssop, Blue Hyssop

**Scientific Name:** *Agastache foeniculum*

**Family:** Lamiaceae (mint family)

### IDENTIFICATION

**Habitat:** Dry, open areas such as upland woods and upland areas of prairies.

**Height:** 24 - 36 inches (2-4 feet)

**Leaves:** The large leaves (up to 4 inches long and 2 inches wide) are opposite and lanceolate with toothed margins. The dull green upper surface is conspicuously veined, while the lower surface is white with soft felt-like hairs.

**Flowers:** The upper stem ends in spikes of purple flowers (3 to 6 inches long). The small individual flowers are approximately ¼ inch wide and are found in dense whorls along the spike. The corolla (petals) of the flower has a short upper lip and a longer lower lip. Four stamens with blue-violet anthers are found at the throat of the flower. Blooms in mid to late summer to early fall (June/July - September)

**Fruit:** The fruit consists of small, oval-shaped, smooth, black seeds. To capture the ripening seed, bag the seed heads and let the seeds dry on the plants or cut off the flower spike, turn it over and twirl so the seeds fall off. Dry the seeds on a paper towel for a day or two, remove chaff and store in a clean, dry container.

**Overall characteristics:** The stems are square (four sided), branched and mostly hairless. The leaves have a strong anise (black licorice) scent when crushed.

### **GARDEN TIPS**

**Plant Hardiness:** Zone: 4-9

**Sun/Shade Needs:** Sun to partial shade.

**Soil Needs:** Moist, well-drained soil.

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

**Propagation:** Easy to grow from seed. Germinates in 1 to 2 weeks, but starts off very slowly with flowers usually appearing the second year. If you start indoors, stratify for 60 days. Otherwise sprinkle the seeds outside in the spring or fall. This plant self seeds readily, can be increased by root division and is also easy to transplant.

**Care:** Water regularly but don't overwater. Keep moist or it will stop flowering in late summer. Pinch back in early summer to encourage branching. Can get leggy from a lack of sunlight so it may need staking when grown in partial shade.

**Companion Plants:** Black-eyed Susans; zigzag golderoed

**Friends & Foes:** Bees, butterflies and birds are attracted to this native. Bumblebees, honeybees and other long-tongued bees pollinate the plant while seeking its nectar. Most birds are wanting its seeds; however, hummingbirds the nectar from its flowers. This plant is generally pest and disease free, although slugs and insects occasionally feed on leaves. Deer tend to avoid the plant, but rabbits love it.



Anise hyssop at Nokomis Naturescape (by Vicki Bonk)

### **NOTES**

**Current Use/Interest:** Used for respiratory disorders such as colds, flu and bronchitis. It may also be used for fevers as it promotes sweating and for sluggish digestion. The leaves and flowers can be harvested for use in seasonings, salads and making teas. When doing so, cut off the leaves starting at the bottom of the plant. There were numerous recipes using this herb when searching the internet. Some that looked interesting included: Chow.com which suggested honey, butter and hyssop blossoms creamed together on pancakes and <http://earthnotes.tripod.com/anhysop.htm> which had cookies, sauces, bread and Chinese beef.

**Historic Use/Interest:** Generally used as a breath freshener, tea infusion, or cough medicine. Also considered a magic herb by some Native Americans. The plant was brought to Europe by beekeepers for its fragrant honey

## **Welcome New & Renewing Members**

As of 1 April 2009 according to the national website, our chapter had 99 active members. Thank you to these new and returning members for their support of Wild Ones. Whether you've just joined or have been a member for several years we look forward to your participation. Besides this newsletter, visit us at [www.for-wild.org/chapters/twincities](http://www.for-wild.org/chapters/twincities) <<http://www.for-wild.org/chapters/twincities>>.

Blood, Simba, Bobbit, Cathy, Brennan, Diedre/Skemp, Vincent, Bullock, Hilary; Dean, Mollie; Dunnette, Joel & Sandra; Erickson, Sheryl; Gibson, Debra; Harrison, Catherine; Herman, Donna; Hippert, Beth; Liege, Carol; Medin, Kim & Thomas; Poling, Sylvia; Poquette, Molly; Poquette, Trudi; Rankin, Donna; Rosenberg, Molly; Sidles, Kathy; Vaillancourt, Michele; Doering, Dean; Holm, Brent & Heather.

### **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  
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Nokomis Naturescape: Vicki Bonk  
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Photographer/Historian: John Arthur  
Programs: Laurie Stone Goldsmith/John Arthur  
Public Relations: Julia Vanatta  
Spring Expo: Kris Martinka/Marty Rice  
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 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)



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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 education and advocacy organization.