



Inside this issue:

RCWO News and Notes	2
Native to Know	3
Winter Reading	4

Wild Ones promotes environmentally-sound landscaping practices to preserve biodiversity through the preservation, restoration and establishment of native plant communities and is a not-for-profit environmental education and advocacy organization.

For more information, please contact:

Amy – 616-308-8176 or president@rivercitywildones.org

A New Year to Learn, Share and Grow Begins February 21st

Greetings Wild Friends! Another new year is upon us and though we are knee deep in snow yet, it is time to turn our thoughts to the coming months and all the wonderful opportunities out there to learn about our natural surroundings. We have another great season of informational programs lined up this year that I am sure you will enjoy, see a listing of these programs further on down this newsletter. We will continue to hold our programs on the third Monday of each month and begin at 7 pm. Our inside programs will, once again, be held at the wonderful Bunker Interpretive Center (BIC) on the campus of Calvin College.

We have taken a two month break from chapter activities to plan for the new season but still our chapter's membership continues to grow! It seems there are plenty of folks who need a Wild Ones "fix" to get them through these long days of winter so a February program has been added this year to help us reconnect with our wild side and neighbors.

On Monday, February 21 at 7 pm we will meet at the BIC for a movie and popcorn night. Come on over and bring a friend to enjoy the following 1 hour documentary:



"America's Lost Landscape: The Tallgrass Prairie" tells the rich and complex story of one

of the most astonishing alterations of nature in human history. Prior to Euro-American

settlement in the 1820s, one of the major landscape features of North America was 240 million acres of tallgrass prairie. But between 1830 and 1900 – in the space of a single lifetime – the tallgrass prairie was steadily transformed into farmland. This drastic change in the landscape also brought about an enormous social change of native Americans; in an equally short time their cultural imprint was reduced in essence to a handful of place-names appearing on maps. The extraordinary cinematography of prairie remnants, original score, and archival images are all delicately interwoven to create a powerful and moving viewing experience about the natural and cultural history of America.

I viewed this video recently and was awed by the beauty of it. It was also very informative, thought provoking and sobering...but ultimately hopeful. I think you will enjoy it, and the sight of many beautiful grasses and forbs feeds the soul! We will also take some time to review last year's accomplishments, discuss the season ahead, list a few upcoming events to put on your calendars and talk about the array of community stewardship projects we can get involved in. It will be a great chance to catch up with each other and share some ideas!

Remember – non-members are always welcome to any and all chapter programs - come check us out!

Location: The program will be held at 7 PM at the [Bunker Interpretive Center – Calvin College Ecosystem Preserve at 1750 East Beltline Ave S E, Grand Rapids, 49546](#)

Officers

President—**Amy Heilman**
V. President—**Rebecca Shilt**
Membership—**Sue Bouchard**
Outreach—**Carol Phelps**
Treasurer—**Nancy Hoover**
Secretary—**Betsy Ford**

Planning Chairs

Newsletter—**Rachel Ford**
Hospitality—**Bonnie Randall**
Webmaster—**Roland Bouchard**

Advisory Board

Mark Fitzpatrick —Director
Ada Parks and Recreation
Dept.
Julie Francke—Director of
Horticultural Education—
Frederik Meijer Gardens &
Sculpture Park
Steve Mueller—
Environmental Education
Consultant
Patricia Pennell —
Environmental Consultant,
Photographer, Botanist, Eco-
friendly Landscaper

RCWO News and Notes

2011 River City Wild Ones Program Schedule

All programs (unless otherwise specified) will begin at 7 pm on the third Monday of each month. For details see newsletter at www.rivercitywildones.org. Non-members are always welcome!



Calvin College's Bunker Interpretive Center (Source: Calvin College)

Monday, March 21 – Dr. Robert Krueger

Professor, College of Pharmacy, Ferris State U.

Lecture on the facts and fallacies of Michigan native plants and their medical properties.

Location: Calvin College Bunker Interpretive Center (BIC), 1750 East Beltline Ave SE, Grand Rapids, 49546 ([map](#))

Monday, April 18 – Mary McKinney Schmidt

Writer, Photographer and Lake Michigan Advocate.

Photographic tour and details of how her book “Discovering Tiny Treasures” came about. It is a tale of her adventures exploring the eastern shore of Lake Michigan and the wildflower species she encountered.

Location: Calvin College Bunker Interpretive Center (BIC), 1750 East Beltline Ave SE, Grand Rapids, 49546 ([map](#))

Monday, May 16 – Kristen Hintz

Naturalist, Ottawa County Parks and Recreation Commission.

This fieldtrip will focus on riparian ecosystems and wetland plant species that grow in this 162 acre park along the banks of the Grand River.

Location: Grand River Park, 9473 28th Ave., Jenison, MI 49428 ([map](#))

Monday, June 20 – Carol & Fritz Rottman

A much anticipated return to the Rottman's 15 acre prairie to see it in all its flowering splendor. We will also learn about environ-

mental research being conducted by Calvin students.

Location: 11300 Hart St., Greenville, MI 48838 ([map](#))

Monday, July 18 – Nathan Haan

Project Manager for Plaster Creek Stewards.

We will learn about the importance of the Plaster Creek Watershed, its diverse community of plants and view restoration work along the creek banks.

Location: Meet at Ken-O-Shay School, 3155 Kalamazoo SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49507, Park at end of Kenosha Park Drive ([map](#))

Monday, August 15 – To Be Announced

Monday, Sept 19 – Dr. David Dornbos

Associate Professor, Biology, Calvin College.

Discussion of his research into invasive woody shrub species includes a fieldtrip into the BIC Ecosystem Preserve. Focus is on autumn olive and glossy buckthorn competition and control.

Location: Calvin College Bunker Interpretive Center (BIC), 1750 East Beltline Ave SE, Grand Rapids, 49546 ([map](#))

Monday, October 17 – To Be Announced

Monday, November – Fifth Annual Auction!

This event gets bigger each year. Have fun, find great gifts, all while helping us raise funds for local native garden projects.

Location: Calvin College Bunker Interpretive Center (BIC), 1750 East Beltline Ave SE, Grand Rapids, 49546 ([map](#))



Grand River Park in Jenison (source: Michigan.org)

Natives to Know: Wintergreen (*Gaultheria procumbens*)

Although the term “wintergreen” applies to any plant that remains green throughout the year, the “Wintergreen plant” is a title that refers to the genus *Gaultheria* and is notable as the original source of the wintergreen oil used in flavoring candies, chewing gum, and toothpaste.

Gaultheria procumbens is native to northeastern North America. Technically a small shrub, it grows 6 to 12 inches tall and spreads only about 4 inches annually. The dark green glossy leaves are less than an inch long, alternate, simple, and oval-shaped with bristly-toothed edges. When crushed, the leaves release the distinct scent of wintergreen.

In favorable conditions, our native Wintergreen can bloom twice a year, in spring and then again toward summer's end; so a plant can have ripe berries, green berries, & blooms all at once. The small dangling flowers can be difficult to see, but are uniquely urn-shaped, pale white in color, sometimes tinged with pink. The bright red berries are actually dry capsules surrounded by fleshy calyx, 6–9 mm in diameter. The fruit, which are edible, can be positively identified by a five-pointed star on the underside.

Wintergreen is not eaten in large quantities by wildlife, but its regularity of use points to its importance. The berries, which persist

throughout winter, provide food for squirrels, chipmunks, deer, mice, grouse, partridges, bobwhites, turkeys, and even red fox in emergencies. One of the few sources of green in winter, the leaves are relished by deer and bears.

Wintergreen has gained a number of regional names such as Teaberry, Leatherleaf, Boxberry, and Canadian Mint. Once famous as a native tea, its use as tea has fallen since people have forgotten how to prepare it. While the leaves can be harvested at any time of year, they must be fermented before drying to make tea.

Native Americans taught white immigrants to use Wintergreen leaves medicinally. It actually contains the same methyl salicylates that are in aspirin and also has antiseptic qualities. However, the oil of wintergreen can be toxic if ingested in large amounts.

Wintergreen provides a beautiful ground cover suitable for woodland plantings, rock gardens, or heather gardens. But it can be difficult to grow unless it has the right conditions: cool, damp, well-drained, acidic soil amended with organic matter, light to full shade. It will not tolerate heavy clay or limey soil. It is propagated by seeds or rhizomes.

-Joyce Tubarsky



Wintergreen (Source: www.wildflower.org)

More Wintergreen

More information and photos on Wintergreen are available at:

<http://www.paghat.com/wintergreen.html>

<http://www.fs.fed.us/database/feis/plants/shrub/gaupro/all.html>

<http://www.rook.org/earl/bwca/nature/shrubs/gaultheriapro.html>

<http://www.hort.uconn.edu/plants/g/gaupro/gaupro1.html>

Native Landscapes—A Growing Business Starts up in GR



Need help with a native garden design or installation? Looking for local genotype seed/plants? Need a consultation with a qualified native landscaper? At last we have a local business that can help on all fronts!

Native Landscapes, a new business based at Calvin College is a not-for-profit that intends to provide native plants to businesses, schools, churches and residential customers. Among the services they plan to pro-

vide are: consulting, site design, native Michigan plants, installation and education. And, according to their brochure, “Our profits are used to fund Plaster Creek Stewards and to subsidized gardens for schools and community groups who can’t otherwise afford them.”

Interested in learning more? See the brochure for Native Landscapes that was attached to the newsletter email. We are also hoping to get it up as a link on our website (www.rivercitywildones.org) sometime very soon. Have more questions? Contact Nate Haan, the Acting Director at nlh3@calvin.edu or at (616)526-6496.

www.rivercitywildones.org

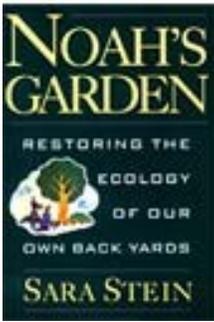


Grand Rapids Chapter
River City Wild Ones

rivercitywildones.org

www.for-wild.org
(National Headquarters)

Winter Reading: Noah's Garden: Restoring the Ecology of Our Own Back Yard, by Sara Stein



This classic book by noted author Sara Stein is the "Bible" of practical native landscaping and has been highly influential for those who have desired a more natural way to approach gardening and create habitat on their property.

Its message is as pertinent today as it was when it was published in 1993. This review was taken from Wild Ones national website. - Amy Heilman

It's quite an education to read a field guide. One places oneself mentally in, in my case, broadleaf forest about halfway between Maine and Maryland and sees what one can see. *Ilex opaca*, our fine American Holly? Never saw it. *Rhododendron viscosum*, our fragrant Swamp Azalea? Not in these woods. Such pioneer species as American Sycamore (*Platanus occidentalis*), Winterberry (*Ilex verticillata*), and Common Witch Hazel (*Hamamelis virginiana*) should have been early arrivals on the moist pond shore, but there were none. A boggy area was perfect for Summersweet (*Clethra alnifolia*), a rise just right for Rosebay Rhododendron (*R. maximum*), deep clefts angling up the rock face of an imposing outcrop should have been thick with Mountain Laurel (*Kalmia latifolia*), but not a seedling of any of these was present. Where there might have been at least four species of dogwood – *Cornus florida*, *C. alternifolia*, *C. racemosa*, and *C. sericea* – as edge and understory in such a habitat, both niches were so filled by aggressive barberry and buckthorn that there was hardly an inch for shyer seedlings to get started.

The disappointment fueled my curiosity. I began to accumulate other reference books in order to learn what native species ought to be around. Sometimes I used the books

to identify a sprig or blossom found on walks around the countryside; more often I wandered aimlessly through the pages of a world strangely new.

Surprise caught me up continually. Plants I knew well and assumed were native turned out to be exotics, and not only weedy species like the Japanese Barberry and Alder Buckthorn we had cleared from the choked fringes of our land, but also lovely things like Burning Bush (*Euonymus alata*), Cornelian Cherry (*Cornus mas*), and all wild apple trees whose fruits are red, not green. What dismayed me was not just the number of species that had failed to appear on our particular plot, but the number of species that in 50 years of acquaintance with this area I had neither seen nor heard of.

The nicknames of the unfamiliar plants I stumbled across only in books – Staggerbush (*Lyonia mariana*), Fetterbush (*Leucothoe racemosa*), Hog-apple (*Crataegus crus-galli*), Toothache Tree (*Zanthoxylum americanum*) – suggested an eye-winking, elbow-jabbing intimacy with species that must once have been as common as traveling salesman jokes. Where were they? In guides and encyclopedias, but seldom here, in what once had been their native habitat.

Gradually I realized that the remnant meadows, thicketed roadsides, and extensive woods of this regrowing area are a mask of naturalness that, once one is trained to recognize the species, drops away to reveal an appalling blankness. **Biodiversity remains only in scattered preserves; elsewhere, what has grown back over the fields of our forefathers is merely a fraction of the species that can, and once did, grow here.**

The reason struck me forcefully: our rage to clear, first for farms and now for yards, has made once common

natives too rare in the wild to repopulate the land.

Our intelligence, however prodigious we like to think it, is trivial compared to the accumulated wisdom of the hundred million species that make up Earth's biosphere. Since each microbe, animal, and plant possesses some minute portion of the know-how that makes the whole Earth work, the loss of any species erases some portion of organic intelligence, and leaves the land more stupid. Moreover, an ecosystem's intelligence – its ability to run itself and to sustain its inhabitants – is more than a summation of the information each of its species represents. The intelligence of any system, whether a computer, a brain, or a meadow, arises from the complexity of connections among its separate elements. Removing an element unplugs many connections and therefore has a stupefying effect much greater than the mere subtraction of a part. By removing many parts and thus unplugging these connections, we have left our land too retarded to take care of itself, much less to be of any help to us.

This is not someone else's problem. We—you and I and everyone who has a yard of any size – own a big chunk of this country. Suburban development has wrought habitat destruction on a grand scale. As these tracts expand, they increasingly squeeze the remaining natural ecosystems, fragment them, sever corridors by which plants and animals might refill the voids we have created. To reverse this process – to reconnect as many plant and animal species as we can to rebuild intelligent suburban ecosystems – requires a new kind of garden, new techniques of gardening, and, I emphasize, **a new kind of gardener.**