

Wild Ones®

NATIVE PLANTS, NATURAL LANDSCAPES

RIVER CITY CHAPTER - GRAND RAPIDS, MI

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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:

Sue – 616-450-9429 or membership@rivercitywildones.org

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

Nov 15th Program: Annual RCWO Auction

The Fourth Annual RCWO Auction and Social evening is November 15 at 6:30. It is being held at the Bunker Interpretive Center at Calvin College. The auction is our major (only) fund raiser for RCWO projects such as creating native gardens with schools, public education programs and scholarship grants.

The Silent Auction will formally start at 7:00 p.m. All are welcome to come earlier and preview the items and start enjoying all the tasty appetizers and desserts by members. If you are able to contribute some delectable goodies, such as a hotdish, appetizer or dessert that would be wonderful!

Thus far we have collected donations far above

those received in past years, so it should be a very exciting auction! Should you have questions about a possible donation please feel free to contact Sue at 450-9429 or via e-mail: Sue@bouchard.com.

Past auctions have proven that there are a lot of creative and talented members in our group. Let's make this our best auction yet and enable RCWO to support all of our great community projects. Encourage your friends to come and enjoy in this fun evening and find some unique holiday presents.

We will begin at 6:30 pm at the Calvin College Bunker Interpretive Center. See you there! Click [here](#) for a map to Bunker.

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—**Kory Manion**

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

October Meeting Recap: Sparking Interest in Plant Rescue

Nancy Hoover, Treasurer for River City Wild Ones, led a lively discussion in October on aspects to consider when carrying out a plant rescue. Nancy led off with a power point presentation of a plant rescue effort undertaken along the White Pine Trail, in a section that runs through Rockford, Michigan. A local developer, Eastbrook Homes, has asked the township board there for a zoning variance to build some 250 homes on 80 pristine acres that run alongside the trail. His plans to build include completely eliminating most of the majestic trees and native plant life on the acreage - losing forever the beauty of that spot. Nancy learned of these plans while working with the township on future planning for the Rockford area. She went on to discuss the steps necessary to intervene on behalf of the plants that would be eliminated if the developer gets the approval by the township board. Nancy also pointed out the importance of learning what we can do to help protect habitat in our own locale by visiting our local township offices and asking about future plans for development.

Nancy's research found that if plant rescue is warranted in the event of development, three State laws in Michigan would be a guide towards that effort. Those laws are the "Christmas Green Act of 1943, the Endangered Species Act and the Michigan Insect, Pest and Disease Act of 1931. These three laws were discussed in detail by those members present. Nancy stressed the need for "responsible plant rescue". Points to ponder include: where will the plants be relocated and the importance of duplicating growing conditions of the original site, protection required from browsing at the new location, problems in giving or selling the plants to knowledgeable parties, disturbing the smallest area possible during rescue and harvesting seed or taking cuttings if possible. Most members present had questions to the dilemma we all face in our communities; that is the loss of more native plant communities and wild spaces to profit a few individuals. Amy Heilman ended the discussion by noting the work ahead for all of us in helping to advance this important agenda.

-By Barb Olson



White Pine Trail. The trail is the longest rail/trail system in the state, connecting Grand Rapids with Cadillac in the north central lower peninsula. (Source: www.whitepinetrail.com)

A Tribute to Laurin Waldecker

We have just learned, with deep regret, of the recent passing of fellow Wild Ones member, Lawrence Waldecker. We would often see Lawrence and his wife Lois, resolutely trekking through the rough terrain of many a field trip over the past couple of years. Their interest and appreciation for nature and its wild creatures was evident. They were an inspiration to us all and a reminder that the thirst for knowledge should never end. We wish Lois peace and comfort in friends and family and hope she continues to grace our chapter with her presence in the coming year.



Getting to the root of the subject at Palmer School.

Palmer School Revisited

Late October brought members Bonnie Randall, Amy Heilman and Sue Bouchard back for another fun day at Palmer School in Grand Rapids with the 24 eager students of Ms. Vicki Boase's second grade class. Using the school's well established native plant garden as a teaching tool, the children were shown several types and shapes of seeds and we reviewed the various methods by which seeds travel. An interactive discussion of how native plants benefit birds and wildlife proved how well they were prepared by their excellent teacher. Vicki has been committed to native plants for several years and has brought her knowledge to many children. The many different ways seeds are transported from place to place was talked about and the giggles were many when each group found that their jackets and gloves were excellent seed carriers. The children learned why native seeds need to sleep in the cold and then groups of three children each, gathered and potted up containers to put the seeds to bed for the winter. Trowels, gloved and bare hands plus much enthusiasm helped to get the containers into the prepared ground and covered for winter. RCWO members will return in late spring to uncover the containers and transplant seedling. RCWO also brought a small bird bath to add to the garden.

The children were very excited about this addition and wanted to fill it almost immediately.



Palmer School's native garden was initially planted several years ago by Dr. Warner's class from Calvin College. The plants have been well taken care of by Ms. Boase with the help of her 2nd graders and have propagated and spread to the point of an abundance. We took advantage of that abundance and proceeded to divide plants and gather seeds which were donated for use in the Forest Hills East Middle School Habitat Garden project organized by Mark Fitzpatrick. So the cycle of life continues!

-By Sue Bouchard

Natives to Know: Eastern White Pine (*Pinus strobus*)

As the leaves of deciduous trees disappear, look to native conifers to add beauty and interest to your winter landscape...

The Eastern White Pine is one of our most magnificent native trees, with a straight trunk and crown of lateral branches, reaching heights of up to 110 feet and a trunk diameter of 4 feet. From a distance, this pine is distinguished by whorled spreading branches, with slightly upturned tips, giving the tree its picturesque asymmetrical or "windblown" look. Up close, look at its needles: It has soft, bluish-green needles, 2 - 5 inches long, and is the only native pine with its needles bundled in groups of 5. The cones, which mature at the end of a second season, are 4-8 inches long, narrow and slightly curved. The bark on young branches is smooth and greenish-brown; becoming dark gray, rough, and furrowed as a tree ages.

The White Pine is the largest conifer in eastern North America. In colonial times, the tallest were known as mast pines and reserved by agents of the Crown for the British Royal Navy. This was a point of contention among the colonists and played a role in events leading to the American Revolution. Native Americans used the inner bark of the White Pine as emergency food during winter. They also used the sap to waterproof baskets, pails and canoes. Today, White Pine is used for interior trim, intricate

carpentry, telephone poles, and Christmas trees.

The cone seeds of White Pines are eagerly sought out by squirrels, chipmunks, mice, and songbirds. The inner bark is a preferred winter food of porcupine, and white-tailed deer and rabbits browse the foliage. White Pines, especially those with broken tops, provide valuable cavity-nesting for wildlife. They are a favorite nesting choice of Bald Eagles, and Black Bear cubs are known to climb them to escape predation.

The White Pine is the state tree of Michigan, which is apropos since our state contains some of the few remaining virgin stands. These include Hartwick Pines State Park in the lower peninsula; and the Huron Mountains, Estivant Pines, Porcupine Mountains State Park, and the Sylvania Wilderness Area in the upper peninsula. Mature White Pines can easily be 200 to 250 years old. In Michigan, we have individuals dated over 400 years.

In landscaping, White Pines may be used as a focal point, screen, or along borders. They are easily transplanted and grown, preferring moist, well-drained, slightly acidic soil. They are not, however, well-adapted to urban stresses such as salt spray from roads or air pollution, and can suffer damage from strong wind and heavy snows.

-By Joyce Tubarsky



White Pine (Source: www.wildflower.org)

More White Pine

More information and photos on White Pine are available at:

<http://www.rook.org/earl/bwca/nature/trees/pinusstrob.html>

<http://www.tnloghomes.com/SpecialPages/Eastern-White-Pine.aspx>

<http://www.hort.uconn.edu/plants/p/pinstr/pinstr1.html>

http://www.hcs.ohio-state.edu/plantlist/description/pi_robust.html

Thoughts on Leaves and Landfills

The following information was generously provided by Kevin Sayers, Urban Forestry Program Coordinator with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and Environment.

With fall just around the corner, it won't be long before many communities begin their annual leaf collection/compost programs. This year, it might be worth considering, and promoting to your residents, the alternative of mulching leaves into the lawn instead of raking them to the curb.

Since before 1995 when the Federal Solid Waste Management Act eliminated the disposal of yard waste in landfills and the Clean Air Act simultaneously became more stringent regarding burning of tree leaves, homeowners have become accustomed to raking leaves to the curb for collection. However, ongoing research at Michigan State University, Purdue University and others has demonstrated numerous benefits to mulching leaves on-site including, improved soil organic matter, nutrient levels and reduced presence of broadleaf weeds.

With municipal budgets being squeezed further each year, the expense of leaf collection/composting programs is being scrutinized as well. One study reported the following average municipal leaf collection costs:

- leaf collection program cost per 1,000 population, \$2,353.41
- leaf collection labor cost per curb-mile collected, \$ 135.59
- leaf collection equipment cost per curb-mile collected, \$ 223.25.

Encouraging residents to mulch tree leaves into existing turfgrass may be an alternative to consider as a portion of your municipal leaf disposal solution. This fall, as you prepare to announce leaf collection schedules, think about adding the suggestion of mulching/composting leaves to your press releases, newsletters, websites etc.... Promote it as a benefit for the lawn and plants as well as a savings to the city's budget.



A young River City Wild Ones member contemplating the many benefits of mulching leaves instead of putting them into the landfill—or her mouth!

The “Top 3” Plants on the Unwanted List

This article was originally printed in the Plainfield Newspaper. The author has graciously allowed us to reprint it in this River City Wild Ones issue. As such, some editing has been done to allow it to speak to River City Wild Ones members and friends rather than just Plainfield residents.

“fugitives.” A single invasive on your property is a staging area for more of these aliens to quickly spread, on your property and beyond. If your property is “clean,” continue to monitor it, especially your less accessible areas. Talk with neighbors about these plants; elderly folks and those with larger properties may need help controlling invasives.

- **Why bother?** Because all of us are better off when the natural diversity of plants and animals remains rich and vibrant. Bully plants destroy our diverse landscapes and hurt our insect and animal populations.
- **Need more information?** [The Land Conservancy of West Michigan](#), [River City Wild Ones](#), and the [Dwight Lydell Chapter of the Izaak Walton League](#) are all local organizations that are knowledgeable about invasive plants.

Need help identifying invasives on your property? Please contact ahelman@rivercitywildones.org for assistance.

- By Gretchen Zuiderveen

The NIMBY (not in my back yard) reaction kicks in when people become concerned about something like a mall, highway, or municipal facility that is slated to become part of their immediate community. NIMBY is exactly how we should be responding to these bullies of the plants world: Some of these invasive plants were “invited” here but have long ago worn out their welcome. They are now overwhelming our native populations and have injected themselves into every bit of available soil in our yards, gardens, fields, wetlands, riversides, roadsides, and woodlands. Two of the county’s “jewels,” Rogue River Park and The White Pine Trail, have large populations of these invaders. The bad news: getting rid of these plants is difficult.

The good news: every household and/or place of business can immediately become part of managing these “un-wanted.”

- **How to begin?** Check your own property to see if you are inadvertently harboring

More Invasives

More information and photos on invasives can be found on the following websites:

Michigan Invasive Plant Council
(www.invasiveplantsmi.org)

Midwest Invasive Species Plant Network
(www.misin.msu.edu)

Midwest Invasive Plants Network
(www.mipn.org)

The Unwanted



Garlic Mustard

Impacts:

- Out-competes or displaces native plants and trees by controlling light, water, and nutrient resources
- Seeds can remain viable in soil for ten years or more
- Releases chemicals that hinder the growth of other plant species



Spotted Knapweed

Impacts:

- Thrives in disturbed soils, becomes a monoculture
- Emits chemical in soil that is toxic to other plants
- Flowers from mid-July to frost, producing millions of seeds



Autumn Olive

Impacts:

- This shrub exhibits prolific growth and creates nearly impenetrable thickets
- Late fruiting season may alter bird migration patterns
- Fixes nitrogen and alters soil chemistry

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Grand Rapids Chapter
River City Wild Ones

rivercitywildones.org
www.for-wild.org
(National Headquarters)