

Volume 10, Issue 5

October - November 2015

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**Officers**

President- Mike Bruggink  
Vice President - Meribeth Bolt  
Membership - Gretchen Zuiderveen  
Outreach - Carol Phelps  
Treasurer - Harriet Bromberg  
Secretary - Nancy Bedell

**Planning Chairs**

Education Chair - Amy Heilman  
Newsletter Chair - Kim Davidson  
Ways & Means Chair - Meribeth Bolt  
Web - Roland Bouchard

**Advisory Board**

Melanie Manion - Natural Resources Manager Ottawa County Parks and Recreation Commission  
Steve Mueller - Environmental Education Consultant and Award Winning Interpreter  
Patricia Pennell - Award Winning Environmental Educator, Photographer, Botanist, and Consultant



NATIVE PLANTS, NATURAL LANDSCAPES

RIVER CITY CHAPTER - GRAND RAPIDS, MI

*Wild Ones is a not-for-profit environmental education and advocacy organization that promotes environmentally sound landscaping and the preservation, restoration, and establishment of native plant communities.*

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[www.rivercitywildones.org](http://www.rivercitywildones.org) / [www.wildones.org](http://www.wildones.org) (National Headquarters)



[facebook.com/rivercitywildones](https://facebook.com/rivercitywildones)

October Program: Annual Autumn Social and Potluck

Monday, October 19, 2015

6:30 - 8:30 PM (Note Early Start Time)

Bunker Interpretive Center - 1750 East Beltline, SE 49546 (MAP)

Bring a favorite appetizer or dessert to share

(and your name tag!)

While "meeting and eating" with Wild members and friends, enjoy a slide show of field trips from this past year as well as "The Solitary Bee", a 15 minute British film.



*Two brief break-out sessions will be offered by knowledgeable facilitators:*

*Shade and Deep Shade Plants and Prairie Plants*

**And...bring your Wild Selves to help out on our last NPEG work / fun session at 920 Cherry St, SE Saturday the 24th, from 10AM - Noon!**

## RCWO November Program: Botanical Latin with Patricia Pennell

Monday, November 16, 2015

6:30 - 8:30 PM (Note Early Start Time)

Calvin College Bunker Interpretive Center - 1750 East Beltline Ave SE, 49546 ([MAP](#))

Did you know botanical Latin can be oodles of fun? A plant can have many common names and that can make it confusing to know which plant people are talking about. This is where scientific names can help you! Don't let Latin names scare you. The history and meaning behind them can be fascinating.

## A Message from our Chapter President

Hello Fellow Wild Ones,

Monday evening we will be meeting for our Fall Social. It should be a wonderful time of reflecting on all the events that passed our way during 2015.

We also have some election business to attend to and we ask for everyone's participation. The River City Wild Ones board will be holding an election for the following board positions in November. We are seeking nominations for two board positions (2 year terms):

- President – Michael Bruggink's term is ending and we are seeking nominations for this position.
- Treasurer – Harriet Bromberg is stepping down from her role and we are seeking nominations for this position.

Nominations for these positions are open to the membership and will be added to the ballot for the November 16, 2015 program meeting. Please come prepared to submit your nominations at our Monday night social time.

Thank you and we hope to see you on Monday!

Michael Bruggink  
President, River City Wild Ones

Once again, River City Wild Ones will hand out milkweed seeds and information on Monarch butterflies at the 2016 Grand Rapids Home and Garden Show. Volunteer sign-ups will take place in January or February.

***You can help spread the beauty of native plants and save Monarch butterflies! Please save your milkweed seeds in an open paper bag, label the species and pass them on to Amy or Meribeth at the October or November Meetings. Seeds will be stratified over the winter and packaged in the spring.***



## August Programs Overview - Hike through a Tall Grass Prairie with Craig Elston

*By Ron Cammel - Contributing Member, Photos provided by Scott Davidson*

No two prairies are alike, and a single prairie changes a lot over time.

That was one of the messages of Craig Elston, naturalist for the city of Hudsonville. He led a Wild Ones tour Aug. 17 at the Hudsonville Nature Center, which includes a 25-year-old prairie of several acres surrounded by woods and I-196.

“I’ve watched this prairie for 25 years,” Elston said. “The first year it was solid Queen Anne’s lace. Now it is 60 to 80 percent grasses.”

The tall-grass prairie also has many forbes and features four silphium species: rosinweed, cup plant, prairie dock and compass plant. The group estimated one compass plant at about 10 feet tall. The group ventured off the path to find lead plant, several species of goldenrod that were in blossom and other plants.

Though Hudsonville’s prairie has developed into a gem that mimics prairies of the Great Plains with a great mix of species, it is not exactly natural. It was a beech-maple forest and then farmland. There is no prairie in the records, Elston said.

But now a prairie is maintained by cutting down woody plants that would take over it. Elston explained that prairies are more naturally maintained through fire, grazing and lack of moisture.





# August Programs Overview - Behind the Scenes Tour of Wild Type Native Plant Nursery

*Photos provided by Meribeth Bolt*





## September Programs Overview - Tour of Ody Brook Nature Sanctuary

*Report by Ranger Steve Mueller, Photos provided by Patricia Pennell*

Forty people walked the Big Field and Big Woods trails at Ody Brook with leaders Brad Slaughter from Michigan Natural Features Inventory (plants) and Dennis Dunlap (mushrooms). Dave Dister, Bill Martinus, Chip Schaddelee were professional botanists in attendance and helped with identifications.

A target species and individual to see was the large American Chestnut tree that had a three-foot diameter. Everyone stated it was the largest they had seen. Michigan's Big tree (about 4 feet diameter) is in Kent County but none of us have seen it. There are two other chestnuts that are about 1 foot in diameter and a small 2-foot tall chestnut growing along the Big Woods Trail.

We had 2 inches of rain on Friday that ended by Saturday morning and the skies cleared for the afternoon walk. The sanctuary is in the headwaters of Little Cedar Creek and the creek bed is usually dry at the east end of sanctuary in September. The channel was full from the rain and prevented us crossing to NE section. We did not cross the floodplain at the west end either because of standing water and mud near the bridges that cross the creek. The west end has springs that keep water flowing in the trout stream all year.

Some plants with a co-efficient of Conservancy rating of 10 were seen along with some others with a high number. Those with a 10 are considered to be remnants of pre-settlement relatively undisturbed habitat. Some with a high CC number observed were Wood Betony (*Pedicularis canadensis*), Swamp Saxifrage (*Micranthes pensylvanica*), and the American Chestnut (*Castanea dentata*), and Cardinal Flower (*Lobelia cardinalis*). Many trees, shrubs, and other species captured attention. The Frost Asters (*Symphyotrichum pilosum*) in the field had a cloud of about 1200 Clouded Sulphur butterflies over and among them nectaring.

Attendees said it was most butterflies they have seen at one location. It was a great joy to witness the massive activity. Ranger Steve mows the asters in late October to

prepare the area for the spring mating display of American Woodcocks but currently the plants are in high demand for wildlife. Various areas of the sanctuary are maintained to provide all stages of succession to enhance opportunity for sustainability the greatest biodiversity. Black-throated Green Warblers, Chestnut-sided Warblers, and Rose-breasted Grosbeaks were seen along with other birds. A Red-tailed Hawk soared over the field.

Ranger Steve welcomes people to visit the sanctuary to explore or volunteer with projects. The primary sanctuary purpose is to protect and enhance biodiversity but it is open to visitor use. We ended with cookies, brownies, and beverage.





## September Programs Overview - Tour of WMU's Asylum Lake Preserve with Steve Keto

*Review and photos provided by Meribeth Bolt*

On September 12, we met with Steve Keto, Land Manager of Asylum Lake Preserve for a hike through this gorgeous Western Michigan University property. Our tour began studying maps from the pre-European settlement era to the present time.

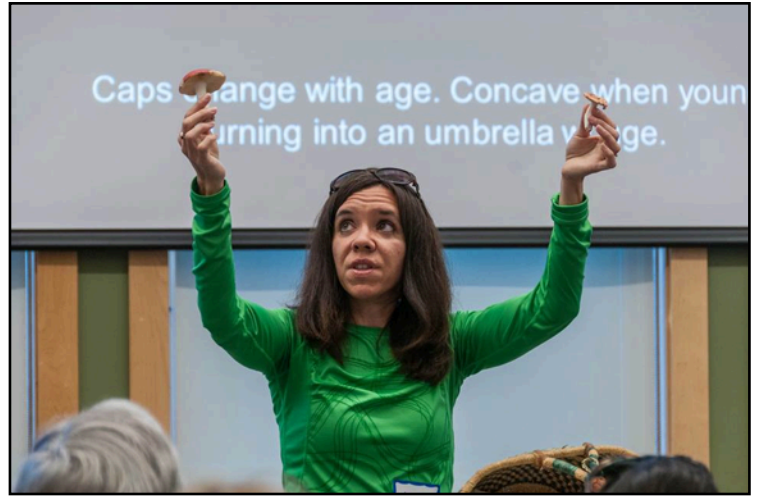
During our walk, we enjoyed a lively discussion about the native plants and numerous animals that make their home in the preserve and the surrounding Kalamazoo area. The Asylum Lake area is rich in fascinating history and I encourage you to go to the well organized website <http://wmich.edu/asylumlake/index.html> to view old photos and to read maps, newspaper articles and reports. You will want to put this historical location on your list of must see local natural areas. The preserve is open to people and their dogs on leash.

We have accepted Steve's offer to tour us through other fascinating WMU properties in 2016.





September Programs Overview - A Mushroom Adventure with Nicole Mathiasz and NPEG Saturday Work Session





Natives to Know - Culver's Root (*Veronicastrum virginicum*) *By Joyce Tuharsky - C.M.*

Culver's Root is a tall, durable perennial that can provide strong, yet airy structure to a landscape. Its stems grow 3 to 6 feet high, and are topped with clusters of erect, thin, candelabra-like spikes of flowers. Each spike, up to 8" long, holds numerous blossoms that are creamy white to pale pink (sometimes blue), with yellow stamens that play with the sunlight and seem to glow from within.

The sturdy stem of Culver's Root is round, smooth and unbranched except near the inflorescence. Along the stem, dark green whorled leaves are arranged in groups of 3 to 8. These leaves are up to 6" long and 1½" wide, narrowly ovate, with serrated margins. The root system has a central taproot as well as underground stems (rhizomes) which enable vegetative reproduction. The tubular flowers, about ¼" long, have no scent, and last about a month in mid to late summer. Small seeds are produced in large quantities within woody capsules, and dispersed by the wind.

A member of the Scrophulariaceae (Snapdragon) family, this plant was named after Dr. Coulvvert, an American physician that popularized the plant's use for folk medicine in the 18th century. It is native throughout eastern North America, occurring in moist to mesic

prairies, woodland edges, and swampy meadows along rivers and ditches. While widely distributed, it is not often seen and is listed as threatened or endangered in some states. It is not often found in disturbed habitats.

This plant's tall spikes of flowers produce nectar and pollen in abundance for pollinators. It is recognized as having special value for native bees and honey bees. Other insect visitors include butterflies, moths, Sphecid wasps, and Syrphid flies. Culver's Root is rarely bothered by leaf-chewing insects or mammalian herbivores. The seeds are too tiny to be interest to birds.

Culver's Root is adaptable and easily to grow in gardens, yet is not overly aggressive. It provides a dramatic show when massed for effect. It may also be mixed with other perennials in border areas, wildflower meadows, wetlands, rain gardens and along woodland edges. This plant prefers sun to part-shade and moist, acidic, loamy soil; but tolerates sand and clay.

Culver's Root is most easily propagated by divisions in the late fall or early spring. Each root segment must have a bud to be successful. Seeds should be sown in fall to provide cold stratification. The flowers are lovely in cut arrangements, lasting up to a week. If left standing,



**For more information and photos:**

<http://www.illinoiswildflowers.info/prairie/plantx/culverx.htm>

[http://plants.usda.gov/factsheet/pdf/fs\\_vevi4.pdf](http://plants.usda.gov/factsheet/pdf/fs_vevi4.pdf)

[http://www.wildflower.org/plants/result.php?id\\_plant=VEVI4](http://www.wildflower.org/plants/result.php?id_plant=VEVI4)

*Photo Courtesy of the website listed above*



## Paying it Forward...With Plants! RCWO Plant it Forward Grants

*By Amy Heilman, Education Chair, Photo provided by Amy Heilman*

2015 was a very productive year regarding community outreach and education. Our chapter's "Plant It Forward" grant helped 4 separate pollinator gardens come to life.

Two of the grant recipients from 2014 used their funds this spring. Walden Green Montessori School in Spring Lake added more milkweed and other nectar and larval plants to their school garden. They thanked us by sending artistically illustrated "thank you" notes from each student. Metro Health Hospital's community garden used their grant to purchase 200 native plugs to attract pollinators. Youth from the near-by YMCA spent time planting them and learning about the importance of native plants and their role in helping to pollinate the vegetables in their garden which help feed the employees of Metro Health.

This fall, two more lucky schools received funds. Sand Lake Elementary 4th graders learned about invasive species and native plants during a visit from Amy Heilman. These students are starting a new native plant outdoor classroom to their school yard with the help of our grant. Goodwillie Environmental School's 5th and 6th graders planted over 200 native plugs and dispersed quantities of seed last week under the guidance of several RCWO volunteers. These plants will enhance the area along a power line near the school where numerous blue bird houses were installed over the summer.

Huge thanks go out to all our wonderful members for helping to make these projects happen. The time you donate, the skills you contribute, your fund raising efforts and membership fees make it all possible!

*Youth from the near-by YMCA helping plant the Metro Health Hospital's Community*

## Plant It Forward Grant Program

This grant program is for nonprofit organizations, schools, scout troops, etc. who are interested in starting or expanding an area of natural landscaping with natives. This grant program is not intended for private/home landscaping, but for projects that have an educational aspect. This could be a small butterfly garden, a little prairie area, rain garden or a landscaping near a school or public building. Starting small is a great way to increase your chances of success.

This grant program will allow selected applicants to purchase Michigan native seeds, plants, trees or shrubs for their project.



## Paying it Forward...With Plants! RCWO Plant it Forward Grants

*Photos provided by Scott Moorehead - Goodwillie Environmental School*

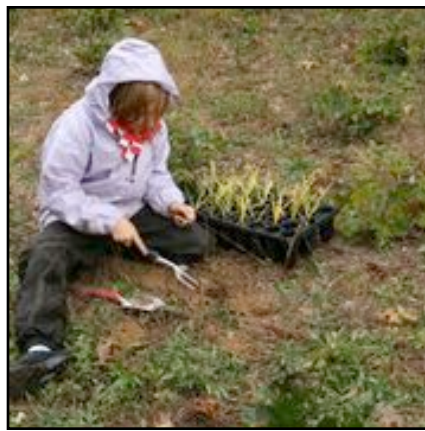
**By Anusha Balakrishnan - Goodwillie Environmental School Student**

The Wild Ones came to our school on Thursday, October 15th to plant native organisms. There are chapters of this organization all around the country, our local chapter in Grand Rapids, is called the “River City” Wild Ones. The members of this group help plant more native species, as development and invasive species has reduced the number of native plants significantly.

Before we did any physical work with the Wild Ones, we did some mental work. We learned that invasive species (Garlic Mustard, Multi-flora Rose, Autumn Olive, etc.) take over areas because they easily reproduce, and don't have organisms in this region that consume them. Not having enough native plants can eventually interfere with the food chain, as the insects, birds, and other animals that depend on them, struggle to find them.

Now, this is where we get our hands dirty. In groups of six, we went out into our living textbook and planted some native species. We recently put in new bluebird nesting boxes and we planted some flowers by them. We planted Sky Blue Asters, Prairie Dock, Goldenrod and other native species. Some of the plants can get up to eight feet tall! After we finished planting we sprinkled seeds like Milkweed, Swamp Milkweed, and Purple Lupine on the ground all around us. It was fun and it really helps the environment.

All in all, the River City Wild Ones are a great organization that really help the environment. Thank you to these fine folks for taking time to educate and work alongside us to replenish our native habitat.





Upcoming Dates to Remember!!



**The West Michigan Cluster of the Stewardship Network**  
**FALL FEATURE**

## CONSERVATION CONVERSATIONS

### Speed Dating Style

**Thursday, November 5**  
**6:30 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.**

DeVos Communications Center  
Calvin College Campus  
1810 E Beltline Ave, Grand Rapids, MI 49546

FREE Admission • \$5 donation encouraged

**Storm Water Management**  
Nate Gillette



**Landscaping with Native Plants**  
Mike Bruggink



**Buzz on Bees**  
Dr. Jason Gibbs



**Healthy Soil**  
Rebecca Finneran



**Opportunities for your Forest**  
Nick Sanchez



**Aquatic Invasive Plants**  
Drew Rayner



Participants will be asked to join in the conversation as we explore six different conservation hot topics.

In classic speed dating style, participants will have 15 minutes with an expert to gather highlights of the topic as well as engage in an exchange of information. Then on to the next topic!

Refreshments will be served.

The event is FREE but we encourage a \$5 donation at the door. (All the money goes to support the educational programs, events, and materials sponsored by the West Michigan Cluster.)

West Michigan Cluster of  
**The Stewardship Network**  
Connect to Conserve

**Black Friday Prairie Planting at Saul Lake Bog / Prairie - Land Conservancy of West Michigan**

Friday, November 27, 2015  
10:00 AM - Noon


**West Michigan Home and Garden Show**

March 3 - 6, 2016  
DeVos Place - Grand Rapids



**Smart Gardening**

MSU Smart Gardening Conference  
Saturday, March 5, 2015



The Science, Practice, & Art of  
**Restoring Native Ecosystems 2016**

**Stewardship Network Conference 2016**

**29th ANNUAL MICHIGAN WILDFLOWER CONFERENCE**  
**SAVE THE DATE**

The **2016 WAM Conference** will take place on Sunday, March 6th and Monday, March 7th. **Larry Weaner** will be the keynote speaker.

Check the website for updates as the conference agenda develops:  
[www.wildflowersmich.org](http://www.wildflowersmich.org)

This is the last newsletter of the year! We will see you in February 2016!  
Submission Deadline for Feb/March 2016 newsletter articles: February 1, 2016