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RIVER CITY CHAPTER - GRAND RAPIDS, MI

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

June 21st Program: Field Trip to Steve Mueller's Natural Habitat

Don't miss our June 21st program – it is bound to be informative! We will visit Ody Brook, which is the home and property of Ranger Steve Mueller. He has restored wild habitat on seven acres. A large portion of the property was a mowed yard with the flood plain cleared to the creek. Steve will show a slide of the clearing in 1979 so members can see the change. Wear footwear for walking on the floodplain where it may get muddy in places. Plan to ask questions regarding natural history of various habitats and the plant/animal species that share Ody Brook as home. Part of the habitat is maintained in early succession field/shrubland and with rest as forest to provide increased biodiversity. While here, we will visit Ranger Steve's research lab where his research insect collection is housed. More questions and answer will be discussed over refreshments.

[Ody Brook Directions](#) (click for Google map)

From Grand Rapids drive north on US 131 to exit 101 (M-57). Exit and turn east (right), travel about one mile to the traffic signal and turn north (left) onto Northland Drive. Ody Brook at 13010 Northland Dr. is located east of the road and back in the woods. It is the first drive south of the small bridge over Litter Cedar Creek. **Park at V&V Nursery on the west side of the road and north of the bridge.**

One can also drive north on the East Beltline from Grand Rapids to Ody Brook. The road name changes to Northland Drive but it is the same road as the East Beltline.

Remember to come prepared at these meetings for hiking, possible inclement weather and bring your water or sport drink. As always, some tempting goodies will be provided.

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Membership—**Sue Bouchard**
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Frederik Meijer Gardens &
Sculpture Park

Steve Mueller—
Environmental Education
Consultant

Patricia Pennell —Director
of Rain Garden Program, West
Michigan Environmental Ac-
tion Council

Recycling the Rain

Rain barrels can be a positive step forward in our quest to recycle and reduce our impact on the land. According to Patricia Pennell, West Michigan Environmental Council, "Storm water is one of the biggest polluters of our waters." Patricia is the Program Manager of WMEAC's Rain Gardens of West Michigan and is very involved with rain barrel education and training.

What is a rain barrel? A rain barrel can be any type of container designed to collect

rainwater from rooftop areas and store it for future use in your yard. The runoff is diverted from your home gutter into the rain barrel. The rain barrel has a spigot that lets you connect a hose for watering.

Rain barrels come in many shapes, sizes and price. Some have a very utilitarian barrel or trash can shape watertight container while others are designed as a landscape feature such as a fountain or even have a small planting surface on the top. All are water-

RCWO News and Notes

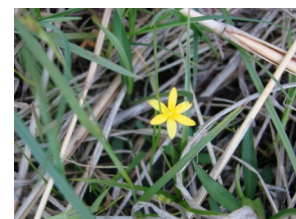
May RCWO Trip was a Fun Fen for All!



Exploring the native plants at
Lamberton Lake Fen

The May 17th program was a great success with over 30 people attending to explore the hidden jewel of Lamberton Lake Fen. This property is a preserve which is owned and maintained by the Land Conservancy of West Michigan. Stewardship Coordinator, Melanie Manion led us down the trail and explained that a fen is a type of wetland fed by either ground or surface water which precipitates through a limestone base creating alkaline or neutral water conditions. This type of ecosystems is rare and only specific types of plants can grow under these conditions. Melanie outlined the history of the area and helped us spot several varieties of birds and native plants. We also observed firsthand the successful

buckthorn eradication efforts of a portion of the land adjacent to Lamberton Lake. The removal of these invasives allowed many native forbs and grasses to re-establish themselves as well as the wildlife who need them for their habitat.



Yellow-Eyed Grass



Box Turtle

Plants for Palmer School

On June 1, 2010 River City Wild Ones members Carol Phelps and Sue Bouchard returned to Palmer School (part of GRPS) in a follow-up to the late fall visit. This time they brought small plants of Echinacea and Rudbeckia for the 24 2nd graders to plant and bring home. The children were very enthusiastic and excited that they could bring home the plants. They eagerly potted up plants and learned about the hows and whys of planting. Watering the plants was done with great enthusiasm. Another good experience for all involved. The second graders were able to tell us delightful versions of how native plants help bring bees and butterflies to the garden and how they help the birds and earth. Their teacher, Vicki Boase, has been a great example of how this type of education incorporated into an early elementary curriculum. Thanks to members Amy Heilman, Carol Phelps and Sue Bouchard for providing the plants and containers. We are all looking forward to working with Ms. Boase in the fall to start another group of 2nd graders on the path to native plants gardening.

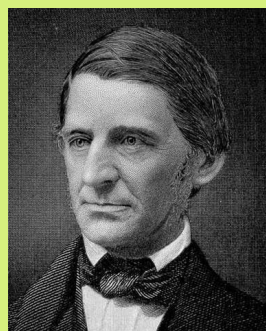


Palmer students watering
the newly potted plants.



Happy students with their native
plants donated by RCWO
members.

Ralph Waldo Emerson



In 1863
Ralph
Waldo
Emerson
wrote down
some lines
of poetry in
his journal,
composed
on one of

his walks around his property in
Concord. He wrote:

*Self-sown my stately garden grows;
The winds and windblown seed,
Cold April rain and colder snows
My hedges plant and feed.
From mountains far and valleys near
The harvest brought to-day
Thrives in all weathers without fear,—
Wild planters, plant away!*

Recycling the Rain (continued from Page 1)

tight designed with a covered top, a spigot to draw the saved water and an overflow valve.

In my interview with Patricia Pennell, she stated that WMEAC's focus is on protecting our water resource. Storm water is one of the problems contributing to polluted rivers and lakes. If you have a roof over your head, a lawn, sidewalk or driveway, you are probably contributing to storm water. If rain cannot be absorbed by the land, it runs off property and eventually ends up in our lakes and rivers. It is estimated that half of the polluted water in the river, streams and lake is washed in by storm water. You as a homeowner can help decrease this problem by use of rain barrels or rain gardens or both.

A rain barrel might have the added benefit of giving you a source of water where you did not have one before. As the water from your rain barrel is not subject to community water restriction, the water collected in a rain barrel might help to save your special plants during a drought. Use of a rain barrel can help with poor drainage areas by diverting water from your gutter and directing the overflow to other areas or holding the water until you can release it at a controlled rate later.

How much rain water can you gather? There are many factors including the size of your barrel, the size of your roof, how often you empty the barrel and the amount of rainfall per storm. A typical ½ inch rainfall will fill a 50-55 gallon barrel. In a major storm with several inches of rain, the rain barrel's overflow spigot will divert any extra water. If you have a small barrel but empty it frequently, you can capture more water to use than a large one emptied infrequently. If your home has more than one downspout with a rain barrel you can collect even more. An estimated number provided by Rachel Hood, Executive Director of WMEAC, is that a small house could collect up to 20,000 gallons per year. Think of all the plants you could water during periods of water restriction. To do a rough estima-

tion of just how much you could collect the formula quoted frequently is that an inch of rain on a 1,000 square foot roof yields 623 gallons of water. If you are interested in a more accurate estimate WMEAC's website has a link to help you get an estimate for your home.

Rain barrels are commercially available from many sources including environmentally active groups such as the Izaak Walton League and Kent Conservation District. They are commercially available at local hardware stores, big box stores and many online providers. Prices range from approximately \$60 to over \$300 depending on how large and elaborate a system the homeowner or business wishes. According to Rachel Hood, a new type of locally manufactured rain barrel will be available through WMEAC in the near future.

If you are a resident of the City of Grand Rapids you may be able to make your own rain barrel for free. WMEAC has partnered with the local Coca Cola Bottling Company who provides the food grade 55-gallon plastic drums. The rain barrel project is made possible through the City of Grand Rapids, The Frey Foundation, The Coca-Cola Company, and Michigan State University. This program has been very popular and last year over 300 rain barrels were built by community members. WMEAC has been able to reach out to so many people by running very successful "Train the Trainer Workshops". Groups of 6 to 8 people are taught how to build a rain barrel and WMEAC will then help these trainers set up workshops for their neighbors.

A word of caution, though it is hard to believe, some subdivisions may have covenants or deed restrictions that might prohibit the use of rain barrels. So check with your community guidelines and, if they do not allow the rain barrel maybe you can help educate the decision makers. The State of Michigan does not have any general restrictions on the use of rain barrels.

By Sue Bouchard



More Rain Barrels:

More information about the WMEAC's rain barrel workshop program can be found at their website:

www.wmeac.org/index.php/water. This website will also link you to excellent videos on both rain barrels and rain gardens. You can contact Kristi Klump at kklump@WMEAC.org or by phone at 451-3051 x 25. Visit the same website to watch excellent short videos and rain barrels and rain gardens.

Kent Soil Conservation District may be contacted at www.kentconservation.org or call Connie Redding at 616-942-4111 ext100.

The Izaak Walton League may be contacted at www.michiganikes.org

Natives to Know: Juneberry (*Amelanchier* species)

Perhaps knowing that a native species is edible will provide that additional incentive you need to add it to your yard....

The Juneberry is a small, often multi-stemmed, deciduous tree that grows to 25 feet in height. It is very easy to grow and provides year-round interest. In winter, its smooth gray bark is streaked with curving, vertical, dark gray fissures; and the twigs are slender, slightly zigzagged, reddish brown to olive green. In spring, delicate five-petaled white flowers (resembling apple blossoms) appear just as the leaves start to burst out. The flowers ripen into magenta berries that gradually turn to dark purple during the summer. Finally in autumn, the blue-green oval 4-5 inch leaves turn a beautiful orange-red.

The taste of the sweet, juicy Juneberries has been compared to that of pears or cherries. The soft seeds add a nutty, almond-like fla-



vor. People use Juneberries to make jellies, jams, sauces, and even wine. Native Americans used the berries in combination with fat and dried meat to make pemmican, a high-energy food for winter travel. The vitamin C in the berries helped prevent scurvy. George Washington planted several trees at Mount Vernon. But the fruits didn't ship well, so they never took off as a commercial fruit.

In the wild, the Juneberry fruits are devoured by songbirds, ruffed grouse, and mammals including squirrels, deer, raccoon, opossum and black bear. Many species of caterpillars feed on Juneberry leaves, providing high-energy food for baby birds and insect-eaters.

The Juneberry Tree is known by different names in different parts of the country. The timing of its spring flowers coincides with the shad run, hence the name "Shadbush." One of the first blooms of spring, the flowers were often used as decoration for funeral rites, thus "Serviceberry." Other common names include "Sugarplum" and "Saskatoon."

By Joyce Tuharsky

More Juneberry:

Photos and more information :

<http://www.wildmanstevebrill.com/Plants.Folder/Juneberries.html>

http://www.associatedcontent.com/article/269434/incomparable_juneberry_tree

<http://www.hort.uconn.edu/plants/a/amearb/amearb1.html>



Grand Rapids Chapter
River City Wild Ones

rivercitywildones.org

www.for-wild.org
(National Headquarters)

2010 River City Wild Ones Calendar

All programs (unless otherwise specified) will begin at 7 pm on the 3rd Monday of each month, March – November. Non-members are always welcome! Find more information for each event on our website.

Date	Speaker/Topic	Location
Jun 21	Ranger Steve Mueller/Property Tour and Insect Collection	13010 Northland Dr. Cedar Springs, MI 49319
Jul 19* (6:30 start)	Cheryl Tolley/Native Ferns	Sandhill Farm 11250 10 Mile Road, Rockford, MI 49341
Aug 16	Ruth Oldenburg /Native Meadow and Rain Garden Tour	7485 Cloudberry Lane NE Belmont, MI 49306
Sep 20	Rebecca Shilt/Rain Gardens	TBD Carpooling Suggested!
Oct 18	Nancy Hoovler/Plant Rescue	Bunker Interpretive Center 1750 East Beltline Ave. SE Calvin College, Grand Rapids
Nov 15	River City Wild Ones Fourth Annual Auction	Bunker Interpretive Center 1750 East Beltline Ave. SE Calvin College, Grand Rapids

www.rivercitywildones.org