



Twin Cities Chapter Quarterly Newsletter

August 2005 • Volume 3, Issue 3

Inside This Issue

National Conference.....	2
Weather Woes.....	2
To-Do List for Gardeners.....	3
Join Us.....	4

Announcements

Want to have some fun? Have your name in print and/or 60 seconds of fame? Sponsor a Saturday speaker of your choice at the Wild Ones Conference.

If you'd like, you can do their introduction as well. Your name will go on the "Acknowledgment" list in the handout to all attendees. Your \$60 will cover their expense (although they are speaking gratis, they will be receiving free lunch, snacks and banquet ticket).

It'll be fun, appreciated by all, and tax-deductible! If interested, just send your \$60 check payable to "Wild Ones Conference", to Elaine Larson, 2800 Robbins Street, Minneapolis 55410 and let her know which speaker you'd like to sponsor. Questions? Call Marty Rice at 952-927-6531.

Treasurer's Report By Jim Martinka

As of 7/16/05 the state of our treasury is healthy with a balance of \$1,852.97. The Spring Expo and the plant sale were great successes, contributing \$662.22 and \$197.00, respectively. Our last report from the National office showed our chapter with 92 members.

Upcoming Events

Nokomis Naturescape Hands-On Garden Care

- Thursdays, August 11, 25, 30
- Tuesday, August 16
6:30 pm to dusk

Meet at the northeast corner of Lake Nokomis, along 50th St. Members are invited to participate as we help maintain the native plant demonstration site. It's fun, easy work, and companionable to garden with other native plant enthusiasts. Keep the movement growing and come be part of our team one evening. The setting is beautiful and gratification is immediate.

Green Rooftop Tour

Sunday, Aug. 14, 3:00 - 4:00 pm
2801 21st Avenue South, Mpls

See the green rooftop of the Green Institute in the Phillips Eco-Enterprise Center. There's also a prairie restoration area on the west side of the building and Hennepin County's Eco-Yard Midtown, on the north side of their parking lot. There is restricted access to the building, so please arrive promptly. Then bike or drive on over to:

Longfellow 2nd Annual Native Plant Garden Tour

Sunday, Aug. 14, 4:00 - 6:00 pm
Start at 3724 40th Avenue S., Mpls

This free self-guided tour of native plant gardens features 5 watershed-friendly yards. See native plant rain gardens and rain barrels. The gardens are mainly within walking or biking distance, so we encourage you to leave your car at home! There will also be a mini-native plant sale. Sponsored by Longfellow Community Council's River Gorge Committee, Wild Ones, and Mississippi Watershed Management Organization.

National Conference

September 9 - 11

Bunker Hills Regional Park

Hosted by the Twin Cities Chapter, The Q03 and annual meeting will also be held at this 6th Annual Conference. The location boasts 1,600 acres some of which is in native woodland, wetland and savanna. RV and rustic camping sites are available as well as bicycle and walking trails. A reception is scheduled for Friday night. Speaker sessions and a banquet are planned for Saturday. Tours are scheduled for Sunday. Click this link for registration or go to www.for-wild.org and select "Annual Meeting" from the right side.

Monthly Meetings

Nokomis Community Center
2401 East Minnehaha Pkwy, Mpls
6:30 pm - Social/Set-up time;
7:00 - Program Speaker

- Tuesday, September 20
"But Wait 'Til You See Them Next Year!" Forum on planning for next year. What went well for you, what didn't? Bring your questions. Share your experiences and tips. Pictures welcome, either "before & after" or "problem spots" to troubleshoot.
- Tuesday, October 18
"Native Plant Landscapes for Long-Term Beauty" by Douglas Owens-Pike. Come and learn the best design and maintenance tips, plus how to handle political considerations to ensure your native plant landscape becomes a site of enduring beauty as it succeeds ecologically.

Check www.for-wild.org/chapters/twincities for updates.

Want to enjoy a relaxing, educational mini-vacation on the outskirts of the Twin Cities? Sign up for the **WILD ONES NATIONAL NATIVE PLANT CONFERENCE** at Bunker Hills Regional Park in Anoka County, the weekend of Sept. 9-11. Come just Saturday if you prefer, or spend the entire weekend with us. We've been working hard on this conference since last year and we have excellent speakers on a wide range of topics. The Schedule is:

- Fri., 9/9: Reception 4:00 - 7:30 pm
- Sat. 9/10: Sixteen Breakout sessions available on a wide range of topics. Then, following Saturday evening's banquet hear former U of MN Professor Joan Nassauer talk about achieving success in maintaining native plants in metropolitan landscapes in light of public perception and ecological function.
- Sun., 9/11: Choose from among 5 different Tours.

See <http://www.for-wild.org/events.html> for details and Reservation form.



Weather Woes

By Douglas Owens-Pike

Hot enough for you? Or, was the spring cloudy and misty enough? What's up with our wacky weather?

Looking back through weather records, there have been only two times that central Minnesota had longer stretches with highs above 90 degrees. This July we had nine, the other two (of 11 & 14 days) were during the 30's. For those of you too young to remember or weak on history, that was the decade of despair. Not only did it follow the NY Stock Exchange crash of '29, but the heat and drought combined to create the "Dust Bowl." The day legislation passed establishing our Soil and Water Conservation Service the air in Washington, D.C. was black. It was filled with the soil of the plains blown east.

The most recent stint of days over 90 (also nine days) was 1988. You may recall it was referred to as a 100 year drought. That implied we would only see conditions that bad once in 100 years. Professor Dave Tillman has studied long-term trends of weather and extinction with his plots at the Cedar Creek Natural History Area (just an hour north of the Twin Cities). His research indicates that conditions as dry as 1988 happen about three times per century.

Minnesota's weather is noted for periods of too much or too little moisture. It now appears that we are living through greater magnification of those extremes. Global climate change, due to human activities, appears to be the cause. If so, it will be getting worse, even during our lifetime.

All these weather phenomenon add up to a powerful argument for landscaping with plants native to our region. Why is this true? They have evolved here, surviving despite record breaking stretches of dry cold with little snow cover, record number of rain days in one month, followed by record setting heat with no rain for weeks. They, or their genetic ancestors, have persisted through it all.

If native species are preferable to introduced or horticultural varieties, how do you decide which are the best species to use in your yard? Good planning for your new "lawn" and gardens simply requires a little time investigating your site conditions. The three primary conditions for plant growth include: sun, soil and moisture. Getting to know these three will predict which species will thrive. This includes not just measuring your own property, but looking at what influences your land. Perhaps the shadiest place is on the south side of your home due to a neighbor's tree or other structure. How do your neighbor's practices effect growing conditions on your side of the property line?

I once designed a full-yard plan for a home in a newly expanding suburb. The parent soil was pure sand. Our design was appropriate for existing site conditions and everything thrived, to the extent that the city gave them an award for their efforts, establishing an environmentally appropriate landscape. However, one side was not doing well. The client asked me to come take a look. The soil was so wet next to their drive and

(continued)

Weather Woes, continued

garage that it reeked of anaerobic bacteria. These critters thrive only in low oxygen conditions, found in waterlogged soil. Where was all this water coming from? Their neighbor ran their irrigation system every morning, whether or not the plants needed it. So, after attempting to enlighten them without success, we switched the design to witch hazel, grey dogwood, native holly and other species that thrive in waterlogged soil.

Measuring how much sun reaches the area you are designing is simple. Just note how long direct sun strikes the soil on an average day. When is the best time to do this? Right now is perfect because we are midway between the longest and shortest days of the growing season. The early European pagan cultures celebrated our August 5th with Lammias Day (midway between Summer Solstice and Autumnal Equinox). The spring equivalent is May Day, midway between the Vernal Equinox and Summer Solstice. If you measure sunlight available within a couple of weeks of either Lammias or May Day, you have an excellent average for the full growing season.

The next growth condition, soil texture, is easy to discern on your own. Sending a soil sample to our University gets you a printout showing how much N-P-K fertilizer to add. However, no fertilizer is needed for native plant gardens. Fertilizer will benefit weeds that can then out-compete natives. To learn your soil texture, peel back sod or whatever is on the surface. Dig down about 6". Get a handful of this earth and feel it with your bare hands. If it can be formed into a ribbon you have clay. If it feels rough, gritty and falls apart you have sand. The more holes you dig the more you will know.

Most of our metro area soils are at these extremes, unless you are blessed with living on old prairie loam that was not hauled

away before your home was built. My front yard, in south Minneapolis, has about 36" of perfect loam (other than its compaction). Underneath the loam is a coarse sand layer, deposited about 8,000 years ago, following the last period our region was covered with glacial ice.

Once you know your soil texture you then select a subset of plants from the sun conditions you measured. There is a long list of plants adapted to full-sun dry sand. If you have dark conditions with a poorly drained, clay soil, there is a smaller list to choose from, but you still have options.

A great way to learn what conditions these native plants prefer is to get a local nursery catalogue that shows sun and soil requirements. Some nurseries help you out by grouping their collection by these habitats. Two that have focused on local species are Landscape Alternatives (N of Stillwater) and Prairie Moon (near Winona).

There are some additional steps to creating a low-maintenance garden of natives, but I will save them for my presentation at the October 18, 2005 Wild Ones meeting. Look for follow up articles in this newsletter as well.

One last thing, if you are interested in giving us your questions, Shelley Shreffler and I are writing a simple book on how to create these gardens and alternative lawns. We want to address the list of problems and questions you have encountered as you began gardening for sustainability. If you have suggestions, please contact me at Douglas@EnergyScapes.com or call 612-821-9797 and leave a message. I look forward to your questions and meeting with you at the October meeting.



To-Do List for Gardeners: August, September, & October

Compiled by Rebecca Chesin

- Stay on top of weeding; just a few minutes a day (depending on the size of your garden) can catch them before they go to seed.
- Water newly planted additions to your garden during drier periods.
- If you plan to gather seeds to share with others or start more plants for yourself, watch seed heads for readiness to harvest. (*Come to our Sept. meeting to learn more.*)
- Clip seed heads before they ripen of plants that are too "exuberant" in your garden.
- The cooler temperatures of autumn are a great time to add plants. Keep watered to help them establish well before winter.
- Take pictures (and notes) to aid in winter planning for next year—and for our upcoming "show and tell". (*See Announcements.*)
- Consider doing your garden cleanup in the spring; standing plants bring winter interest to your yard and continue to provide shelter and food to wildlife.
- Determine where you might want to expand your garden and smother the grass with newspaper/cardboard and mulch. By spring, the area will be ready for planting (or winter sow some of your collected seeds).
- Don't forget to take time and enjoy the wildlife that makes use of your native plants.
- Replenish mulch, as needed (2-4 inches).

Membership Benefits To You

- Monthly meetings featuring excellent presentation on a wide array of native landscaping topics.
- Receive the new member packet, including the New Member Handbook full of information and activities on natural landscaping.
- Receive the Wild Ones journal from the National Office. It contains articles and information that will inspire and educate you about natural landscaping.
- Free admission to Wild Ones' events, such as our Native Plant Expo, garden tours, and native plant walks and swaps. Reciprocity with other chapters' meetings.
- Gather and exchange information and expertise with like-minded persons.
- Your very valuable support for the Wild One's Mission.

Join or Renew

- Sign up at a meetings, or
- Call Marty Rice at 952-927-6531, or
- Access the national website at www.for-wild.org

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.



Twin Cities Chapter
c/o Marty Rice
4501 Lakeview Dr
Edina, MN 55424
www.for-wild.org/chapters/twincities

DON'T BECOME EXTINCT!

Visit our website at www.for-wild.org, click on the "Member Login" button on the right side of the window to find your membership expiration date.

Our next newsletter will be published November 1st. Please send submissions to Newsletter Editor Rebecca Chesin by April 15th (spiralenso@yahoo.com).



2005 Officers

President: Marty Rice
Vice President: Karen Graham
Secretary: Kris Martinka
Treasurer: Jim Martinka
Newsletter & Website:
Rebecca Chesin
Publicity: Susan Damon
Hospitality: Rose Meyer

Programs, Plant Rescue, and Membership chairs are open.