

## The Brown Thumb: Monarchs & Milkweed

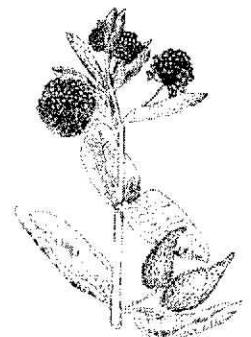


As I was out walking today monarchs were floating round me. This set me to musing over the many new facts I had learned about this creature and its related habitat these last few months. This knowledge was garnered from the final spring presentation at our monthly meeting (which I found fascinating), an article in the National WO newsletter and myriad other articles triggered by the curiosity these two sources inspired.

So what did I learn of late and how can I apply this to better garden with native plants? I was amazed to learn that the monarchs I spotted had not just flown directly up from Mexico, but were probably the fourth generation produced once their direct ancestors started northward. This last generation which emerges from the locally produced larval stage no longer concentrates on reproduction, but instead starts storing up reserves for the autumn trip back south which is accomplished solely by that these last butterflies. More astounding to me is they somehow are able to make this journey without ever having been there before or having any companions that have previously made the trip to lead the way.

I also had not realized that the foliage of the milkweed family (Asclepiadaceae) is the exclusive food source of not only monarch butterfly larvae, but also milkweed leaf beetles and milkweed bugs (remember you are starting with a native gardening neophyte here!). Some say that the common milkweed (*Asclepias syriaca*) is the monarch's sole food source; however, this may not be true - although it is at least the most frequently consumed milkweed species. Further, I was unaware that chemicals in the milkweed itself which when transferred to the larvae as food, make the larvae and ensuing adult butterflies distasteful, even toxic, to predators. Monarch Queen and Viceroy butterflies are similarly toxic and also have warning patterns to alert predators. Speaking of the common milkweed did you know about the scientific name derivation? "Asklepios" is the Greek god for medicine. This is apropos since the plant does have a number of medicinal properties. Native Americans used milkweed as a laxative, for stomach pains, chest discomfort, venereal disease and a wart remover, to name a few. However "syriaca" was incorrectly assigned originally by Linnaeus in the 1700's because he thought the seed had come from the Orient, not North America.

I hope you were inspired, as I was, by the information from Wild Ones this past year and have taken special care of your milkweed plants or planted more to help the Monarch butterfly reproduce and thrive. If not, think about getting started this fall by planting some seeds in your garden. Collect the seeds after the pods have ripened but not yet opened - and of course after you have obtained permission to do so! Test for ripeness is: pods open without difficulty when squeezed. You can plant the seeds immediately outside or start them indoors later, where they need to be cold stratified for 3 months. You can also propagate by taking stem or root cuttings in the fall. Typically these plants bloom the second year. If you would like more detailed information on starting and growing milkweeds, a great source is [www.MonarchWatch.org](http://www.MonarchWatch.org) (under milkweed/propagation). Finally I should put in a disclaimer about propagation since I am just going to try it for this first time this coming fall. I'll let you know how successful I was next year!



Signed... The Brown Thumb

*Editor's note: "The Brown Thumb" is a Wild Ones member who reports a reputation for killing (or at least seriously injuring) any unsuspecting plant coming under his (or is it her?) care. Look to each newsletter for interesting tidbits gleaned from WO meetings or readings to be passed on to us by this brave soul, on a journey to move from the "Black Thumb" category to that of a "Green Thumb".*

## Local News

### Rain Gardens in Burnsville Win Award, Protect Crystal Lake from Phosphorus

Residents of Crystal Lake in Burnsville are learning firsthand about the many benefits of rain gardens. The stormwater runoff reaching Crystal Lake from streets and other nearby impervious surfaces contributes heavy phosphorous loading, among other pollutants, into the lake system. In an effort to address the harmful runoff, the city of Burnsville and the Metropolitan Council funded the development of 17 rain garden sites on one neighborhood street, filtering runoff headed towards the lake. In order to measure the efficacy of the rain garden system, the project also developed a control site on a similar street. The first three years of data indicate the rain gardens reduced the levels of phosphorus coming from the neighborhood by 90 percent and stormwater volumes by over 80 percent. The project was recently recognized for its excellence in receiving one of the 2005 Minnesota Environmental Initiative Awards: [www.mn-ei.org/awards/finalistswinners.html](http://www.mn-ei.org/awards/finalistswinners.html). (Reprinted with permission from the Minnesota Lakes Association Lake Bulletin.)

### Mendota Heights Protects Pilot Knob

The Pilot Knob Natural Resources Management Plan by Great River Greening ecologists is the center of the City of Mendota Heights' work to restore the historic site above the Minnesota River. On November 1st the city council voted to acquire the 8.5 acre Pilot Knob site opening the way for the restoration work to begin. The site sits on the edge of Fort Snelling State Park, within a major bird migration route, and is mostly surrounded by dense urban development. You can learn more at [www.pilotknobpreservation.org](http://www.pilotknobpreservation.org).

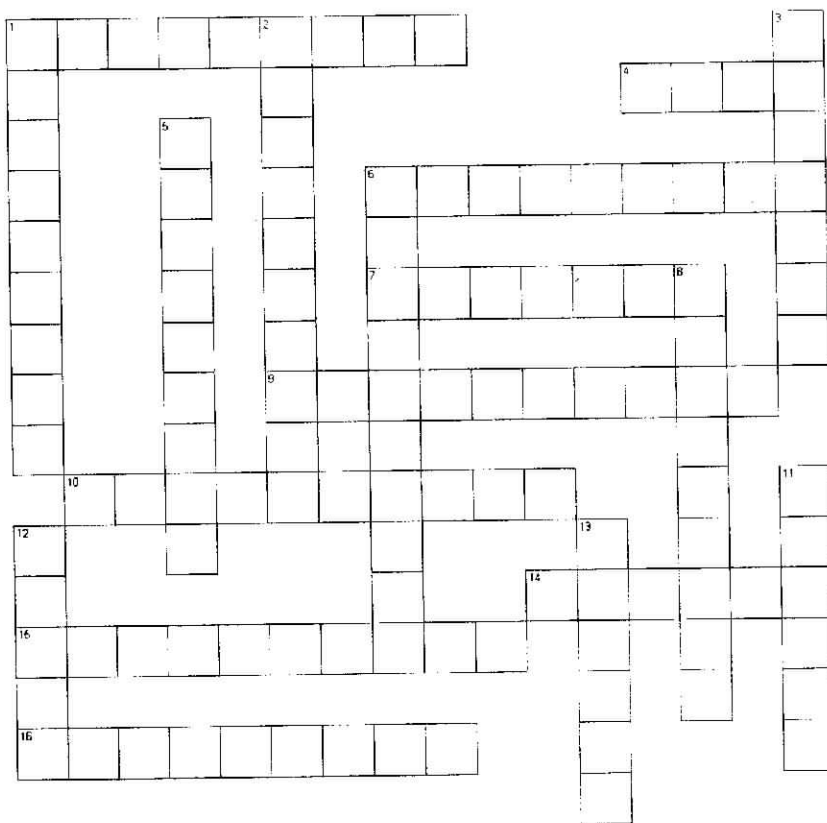
## New Membership Benefit: Show Me/Tell Me Program

The Twin Cities Chapter of Wild Ones is launching a new service to help members learn more about the benefits of using native plants in their gardens and landscaping in ways that work with nature and natural processes. Interested Wild Ones members will volunteer a little time each month to the "Show Me-Tell Me" program, a service designed to utilize the knowledge and skills of chapter members to answer questions posed by gardeners landscaping with native plants.

The way the service works, a person poses a question to Wild Ones, either by telephone or email, and a knowledgeable Wild Ones member responds in a timely fashion with information and suggestions for the caller. Common questions include those about how to use native plants in the garden, what kind of garden design is necessary for native plants, how to attract birds or butterflies, and how to create a rain garden. The Show Me/Tell Me volunteers will also be available to offer help and answer questions during the social time before the monthly meetings, every third Tuesday at 6:30 PM at Nokomis Community Center in Minneapolis.

Twin Cities Chapter WO members are being asked to complete a survey of their talents in order to create a skill bank the chapter can use to make the Show Me/Tell Me service effective and reliable. Contact Fran Kiesling at 612-722-7596 for more information about volunteering for this program.

## Crossword Puzzle - Native Plants



1 (across). A woodland perennial with white, eight-petaled flowers that has been used as a dye and herbal remedy.

1 (down). One of the common names of *Carpinus caroliniana*, an understory tree with smooth bark and attractive autumn color.

2. This moisture-loving tree is known for its attractive, peeling, white bark.

3. These plants have an important role in supporting forbs in a prairie.

4. The Twin Cities' USDA plant hardiness zone.

5. To sprout from seed.

6 (across). A low-growing perennial herb having leaves with whitish down and clusters of small white flowers.

6 (down). An insect that fertilizes blooming plants as a by-product of gathering food.

7. Many cultivars of this plant have been bred, the native versions include cardinal flower and great blue

8. This plant comes in "golden" and "heart-leaved" varieties and is a food source for swallowtail caterpillars.

9. A group of plants strategically located to capture and filter water runoff.

10. This shrub has yellow flowers, either in the spring or the fall, depending on the species. A medicinal, astringent extract is still made from its bark and leaves.

11. joeye This native perennial is probably one of the most common native plants with general gardeners. Its pinkish plumes of flowers often reach 5-feet tall, are very popular with insects, and provide striking winter interest.

12. The first part of a plant's botanical name indicates its \_\_\_\_\_.

13. One of the first native plants to bloom in the spring, this flower looks like some kind of alien as it emerges from the ground.

14. The new growth on the tip of an evergreen's branch.

15. This large shrub/small tree in the *Viburnum* family has drupes (a kind of fruit) that are attractive to birds and other wildlife.

16. This fern in the genus *Onoclea* gets its name from its observed susceptibility to frost.

Answers on page 9

## Welcome New & Renewing Members

Our chapter has 108 active members. Thank you to these new and returning members for their support of Wild Ones. Whether you've just joined or have been a member for several years we look forward to your participation.

Bednarski, Joanne	Jacobson, Ardis	McKasy, JoAnna	Rice, Marty & Jeff
Devlin, Heather	Kraft, Barbara & Richard	Meyer, Rose	Skinner, George &
Eckhardt, Anne & Steve	Larsen, Diana Lynn	Miller, Mary & Todd	Hanley, Anne
Foss, Mary & Darrell	Larson, Elaine	Moran, Jane & Jack	Torresani, Peter
Fossum, Merle	Lubinski, Sharon	Nelson, James W	Troha, Susan & Todd
Gimbel, Jill	Madlon-Kay, Richard	Olsen, Erik	Vanatta, Julia
Harstad, Carolyn & Peter	McGlynn, Ed & Rosemary	Owens-Pike, Douglas	Windschitl, Virginia E

## Other Events

### Friends of the Mississippi River

[www.fmr.org/calendar.html](http://www.fmr.org/calendar.html)

- Oak Savanna Workdays: Wed., 8/2, 6:30-8:30 pm at 36th Street & West River Parkway, Minneapolis
- Mississippi River Challenge: Saturday and Sun., 8/5 & 8/6 on the Twin Cities stretch of the Mississippi River (1- and 2-day options)
- Wildflower Walk at Grey Cloud Dunes Scientific and Natural Area: Thu., 8/10, 3:30-5:30 pm or 6:00-8:00 pm in Cottage Grove
- Oak Savanna Workdays: Wed., 8/23, 6:30-8:30 pm at 36th Street & West River Parkway, Minneapolis

### Great River Greening

[www.greatrivergreening.org/events\\_calendar.asp](http://www.greatrivergreening.org/events_calendar.asp)

- Indian Mounds Park Restoration: 10/7, 8:30 am - noon at Earl Street & Mounds Blvd in Saint Paul
- Flint Hills Resources Acorn Planting & Seed Collection: 10/14, 8:30 am - noon at Pine Bend Bluffs in Rosemount

### Minnesota Native Plant Society

[www.mnnps.org/Events.htm](http://www.mnnps.org/Events.htm)

## CROSSWORD PUZZLE ANSWERS:



1 across.  
bloodroot  
1 down.  
bluebeech  
2. riverbirch  
3. grasses  
4. four  
5. germinate  
6 across.  
pussycats  
6 down.  
pollinator  
7. lobelia  
8. alexander  
9. raingarden  
10. witchhazel  
11. joeye  
12. genus  
13. pasque  
14. candle  
15. nannyberry  
16. sensitive

**MEMBERSHIP****Benefits To You**

- Monthly meetings featuring excellent presentation on a wide array of native landscaping topics.
- Receive the new member packet, including our handbook full of information and activities on natural landscaping.
- Receive the Wild Ones journal, with articles and information to 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 sales/swaps. Reciprocity with other chapters' meetings.
- Gather and exchange information and expertise with other gardeners of all experience levels.
- Support for the Wild One's Mission.

**Join or Renew**

- Sign up at a meetings, or
- Call Elaine Larson at 612-925-4416, or
- Access the national website at [www.for-wild.org](http://www.for-wild.org)

**2006 Officers**

Co-President: Mary Schommer  
Co-President: Kris Martinka  
Newsletter/Website: Rebecca Chesin  
Hospitality: Rose Meyer  
Membership: Elaine Larson  
Merchandise: Kim Medin  
Nokomis Naturescape: Lisa McDonough  
Outreach: Marty Rice  
Photographer/Historian: John Arthur  
Plant Rescue: Carmen Simonet  
Programs: Mary Alyce Krohnke  
Public Relations: Barb Gallagher  
Secretary: Becky Wardell-Gaertner  
Show Me/Help Me: Fran Kiesling  
Spring Expo: Evelyn Hadden  
Treasurer: Jim Martinka

*Open chair positions: Tours*



Twin Cities Chapter

c/o Marty Rice

4501 Lakeview Dr

Edina, MN 55424

[www.for-wild.org/chapters/twincities](http://www.for-wild.org/chapters/twincities)

**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.