



Twin Cities Chapter Quarterly Newsletter

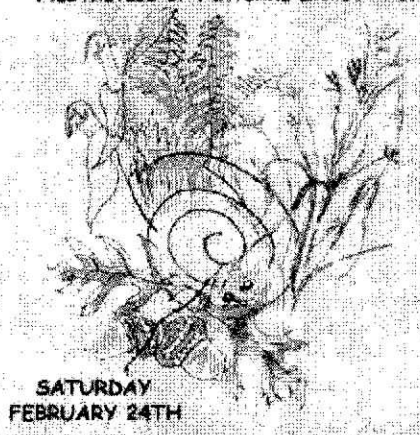
February 2007 • Volume 5, Issue 1

Upcoming Events

Twin Cities/St. Croix Savanna 2007 Native Plant Seminar

Through the Eyes of Nature: Aesthetics of Natural Landscapes

THROUGH THE EYES OF NATURE: AESTHETICS OF NATURAL LANDSCAPES



SATURDAY
FEBRUARY 24TH

- Saturday, February 24, 8:30AM to 4:00PM
- Best Western Maplewood Inn, 1780 E. County Road D, Maplewood; just off I-694 and White Bear Avenue.
- Fee is \$30 with current or new Wild Ones Membership, \$40 for non-members and includes a continental breakfast and buffet lunch.

This full day of presentations and interactive workshops offers a closer look at specific landscape components such as seedheads, mushrooms, and edible natives; it also examines broader topics like balancing wildness with order, working with time and change in a garden, and where to find native plant communities in the Twin Cities area. You'll also have a chance to strategize alongside designers as they develop plans for specific situations like shady or wet areas.

Visit <http://for-wild.org/chapters/twincities/expo.html> for a downloadable schedule and registration form.

Be sure to register in advance for this event, as we are not set up to accept walk-ins!

This program qualifies for Master Gardener education credits in Minnesota and Wisconsin -- check with your county coordinator.

Questions? Contact Evelyn Hadden at seminar2007@mac.com.

Ed Note: This seminar replaces our regular February monthly meeting. Currently pre-registration is required for entry to the Seminar. If you are unable to print the registration form from the Web, contact Mary Schommer (612-729-3274) who will send you a form.

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Monthly Meetings (6:30 p.m. Nokomis Community Center, 2401 East Minnehaha Pkwy, Minneapolis. Free & open to the public)
6:30 Social & set-up time 7:00 Update on chapter activities 7:05 Native Plant/Book of the month 7:10 Program:

March Program: Tuesday, March 20, Raising Minnesota Native Orchids in Your Back Yard. Presented by Dianne Plunkett Latham, who has been active in many plant-related organizations including service as a board member of the Minnesota Native Plant Society and president of the Edina Garden Council. Diane has photographed 42 of the 45 Minnesota native orchids and grows nine varieties in her own garden along with many other varieties of native plants.

April Program: Tuesday, April 17, Wonderful World of Herbalism. Presented by Elizabeth Heck. Join this herbal grower, wildcrafter and medicine maker for an introduction into the wonderful world of herbalism. Learn about the remarkable system of natural healing found in Minnesota's woodlands, wetlands and prairies. We will be experiencing herbal preparations from our native plants first-hand in teas, tinctures, oils, salves and dried material."

May Program: Tuesday, May 15, Photos of Rare Plants. Presented by Peter Dziuk. Enjoying the rare and threatened plants of Minnesota, one photo at a time, he will be sharing his outstanding photos of rare and endangered plants from around the state. He has been traveling throughout the state documenting what might disappear from our varied habitats in the not too distant future. Peter is a longstanding member of the Minnesota Native Plant Society and has been raising native plants in his yard for many years. His passion for recording the rare and threatened plants started a few years ago when he was asked, "How did you get where you are today?" That question set off a chain of events that lead to purchasing a digital camera, printing some post cards of the rare plants and now working toward completing this collection.

Editor's note: We hold monthly meetings on the third Tuesday of the month which are typically presentations on topics relating to native plant gardening, landscaping. Tours or field trips are substituted June through August; in February or March is our Spring Expo; and in December we take a break. In addition, from May-September we offer hands-on participation at the Nokomis Naturescape. Check for updates at www.for-wild.org/chapters/twincities.

President's Message

From Roberta Moore, Chapter President

Dear Members,

2007 is off with a running start for Wild Ones. We are busy finalizing the plans for the seminar, strategizing over the plant sale, and planning for the 2007 Green Expo. In all the flurry of activity I want to take a moment to pause and say a few thank yous.

Thank you to the 2006 Board for all their efforts in making last year the success that it was. We are very lucky to have many of these same people returning to the board in 2007. I look forward to working with the 2007 board in the upcoming year.

Thank you to everyone who has contributed their time and efforts to Wild Ones. I am impressed with the level of volunteerism in this organization. Handing out flyers, collecting volunteer names, providing treats for the monthly

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meeting, writing the newsletter, carrying the projector back and forth to meetings are just a few examples of the contributions made by Wild Ones Members. All of these efforts, allow us to act out our mission and collectively make a difference.

Thank you to our Wild Ones experts, who so generously share their knowledge with us. You allow us to learn and further ourselves. Whether it's working with you at Nokomis Naturescape, listening to your presentations or answering our questions, you give us the gift of knowledge.

Simply put, thank you Wild Ones, with your continued contributions 2007 promises to be an exciting year.

Introducing the New Chapter Officers

At the November 2006 monthly meeting new officers were elected. Roberta Moore has taken over of the reins of President and Julia Vanata is Vice President. You can see by the brief bios below that we have gained two really dedicated and able officers. Not so evident from this, however, is the great enthusiasm they are bringing with them! We have not lost the two co-Presidents as Kris Martinka is now Treasurer and Mary Schominer has become our secretary.

Roberta Moore, a WO member since 2005, has been passionate about native plants for about 16 years. She has been active in the Minnesota Horticultural Society and the Apple Valley Garden Club, where she is program chair. If you come to our February seminar, you'll see her demonstrating her talent in casting cement leaves.

Julia Vanata, another relatively new WO member, has been a lover of natives since childhood, growing up on wooded property in northwestern Minnesota. She has translated that love into her own yard which is mostly garden. Her boulevard has been recognized annually by the Minneapolis Blooming Boulevards program. Beyond WO she is active in the Longfellow Garden Club.

Meeting Notes

November Meeting

Kevin Bigalke, administer of the 9 Mile Creek Watershed District, gave an overview of water resource improvement efforts within this watershed. In addition to a pictorial tour of the major features in this approximately 50 square mile drainage area; citizens volunteer activities, ongoing data gathering efforts, and state and Federal regulations that need to be adhered to were discussed. Among the loads of information imparted, some highlights included the following:

1. Volunteer (and other participatory) opportunities abound and include: Citizen assisted lake monitoring program; Calendar photo contest; Citizen's advisory committee; Storm Drain Markers
2. Watershed environmental status

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a. Within the 9-mile creek watershed the fish index of biotic capacity, turbidity, chlorides and mercury, of concern from a regulatory standpoint, are being dealt with by the district.

b. Invasive of note, Curlyleaf Pondweed. This plant's ability to grow in winter gives it a jump on growth in the spring, crowding out natives. It also spreads out on water surfaces and when it dies drops a load of phosphorous. One method of ridding it from lakes is an autumn draw down of the lake.

3. Watershed issues relating to legal requirements:

a. Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4): Requirements to manage runoff.

b. Total Maximum Daily Loads and Impaired Waters under the Clean Water Act.

Trivia point: How 9 Mile Creek was named. It's not derived from its length (actually 15 1/2 miles), but the distance from Fort Snelling to the creek when settlers traveled to Shakopee via Old Shakopee Road. According to Kevin a camp was located near the creek and the Minnesota River at this point.

[Ed note: for further information on the district go to www.ninemilecreek.org. Visit your local library or web search MS4 and Impaired waters for further reading on legal requirements mentioned under item 3 above]

January Meeting

Nancy Schumacher, of the Vagary gave lots of helpful information on propagating plants from seeds. She also supplied a 3-page handout which outlined her presentation. Needless to say space is not sufficient to pass on all of these facts, but I will try and capture some of the major points of interest. When preparing seeds for germination most commonly stratification may be required. Nancy has found that a fine silica sand used for sandblasting (found at places like Menards) is an ideal medium for this phase although vermiculite and peat moss also work. Moisten this



media until water starts to run out of it. Once ready for germination (i.e., post stratification, scarification, or whatever), be sure your germination media is sterile (containing no soil) and your containers are clean (can use bleach as a disinfectant). Peat moss with either sand, perlite or vermiculite works well as a media for this phase. Wet the media thoroughly before sowing. Put in 2-4 seeds per cell. Use clean (NOT softened) water. Also should reduce the chlorine content in water, by letting it stand for a period of time before using. When watering think gentle, using tepid water and a soft sprinkling technique. Watch daily to keep tabs on water requirements as well as possible disease and insect problems. This is also a good time to hone your skills of seedling identification. When moving seedlings outside be sure to harden them off by gradual

adjustment them to outdoor conditions for at least a week prior to transplanting. Finally, the three most frequent causes of a lack of success in germination are: (1) improper watering - keep seed trays consistently moist until germination occurs; (2) inadequate light - cover seeds lightly when planting, or not at all if seeds require light and give seedlings sufficient light such as settings containers in south or west facing windows; and (3) overcrowding (separate seedlings if need be).

Member Spotlight: Carolyn Harstad

Occupation: Author, speaker, photographer, mother of five/grandmother of nine, church organist, elementary teacher, semi-retired

Highlight: In examining the WO members list, Carolyn was one of the longest standing members in our chapter. I thought it would be great to hear from someone with that length of dedication to the organization. As you will see from our conversation, circumstances curtailed her WO participation, but her involvement in plants, particularly natives, made her very appealing to interview. Although she said she was retired, I took the liberty of changing it to semi-retired given her ongoing activities!

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Length of Wild Ones involvement: Going on 9 years

1. Q: What drew you into Wild Ones in the first place all those years ago?

A: Although I had heard about Wild Ones in the early 1990's, I originally joined in 1998 after signing a contract with Indiana University Press to write my first book, *Go Native! Gardening with Native Plants and Wildflowers*. It seemed natural since I thought WO would be a great way to continue expanding my knowledge about natives. Unfortunately there was no chapter in Indianapolis where I lived, so my only real tie was through the newsletter. Once I moved to Minnesota in the fall of 2003 I became a member of the Twin Cities chapter and increased my involvement.

2. Q: Although not an active WO member, you must have been involved in the gardening scene or you wouldn't have been sought after to publish.

A: I am really a totally self-taught specialist. I actually worked as a first grade and pre-school teacher and then was a housewife/mother, with gardening and photographing my leisure activities. My interest grew over time. In 1990 I took the Purdue University Master Gardening course. Around that same time with no Native Plant Society in Indiana, a friend and I decided to create one. From the onset our emphasis was on attracting "John Q Citizen gardener", trying to promote their interest and involvement in plants. Since we started in 1993, this organization has grown to around 500 members state-wide, with 4 chapters. I'm really proud of my role in establishing this group. Throughout this period I was also actively speaking at garden clubs and major gardening organizations throughout the Midwest. I must admit that at one time WO encouraged me to start a local chapter, but at that point the efforts in founding Native Plant Society were enough.

3. Q: Tell me a little about your books and writing in general.

A: When I was first approached by Indiana University Press I had never written a book nor had I considered doing anything of this magnitude. However, I felt the offer was an opportunity I couldn't pass up so I plunged in (heeding the advice of my father who always said if you don't know how to do something, figure it out.) It took two years to write and many days I toiled for 14 hours straight. With the success of the first book I was asked to write a second entitled *Got Shade? A Take It Easy Approach for Today's Gardener* which concentrated on the problems gardeners have working in shady areas. Although I wanted to focus on natives, the press desired broader coverage, so non-natives are included.

4. Q: What are you absorbed with now?

A: Since moving into my current neighborhood I have become actively involved in our neighborhood group, in particular with removal of buckthorn. I'm known as the "Buckthorn Buster" and in that role, I strive to get people to remove these invasives and replace them with native species. We have a great program where home owners remove the buckthorn and replant, while we supply the chemicals to prevent re-growth. I'm also thinking about writing another book. In the meantime I'm writing a few articles, speaking and, of course, continuing to photograph. Most recently I have taken on the Science Museum board position with WO. I'm really excited about continuing my involvement in this grant and will be focusing on getting businesses to stock more natives. I think there is a growing interest in natives, but people will lose their enthusiasm if plants aren't readily available. We hope to make natives easy for folks to obtain at their local nursery.

Gardeners' To-Do List

February - March - April

- * Finalize your garden plans for this year. Order seeds or make a list of plants to pick up at garden nurseries.
- * February/March is a great time to start winter sowing hardy plant seed.

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* Prune trees and shrubs of dead or damaged limbs, shoots or waterspouts while they are still dormant; also shrubs that need shaping and rejuvenation. Better to trim up to 1/3 of the branches all the way back than to shorten all the branches.

* Prevent soil damage by using coarse sand to provide traction and make sidewalks and driveways less slick. If that doesn't do the trick, try de-icing products made from calcium chloride or calcium magnesium acetate (CMA) - they are salt-free melting agents.

* As the weather warms up, put away suet bird feeders; the suet doesn't keep and birds are switching to their warmer weather diets. Also clean up birdseed shells, since build-up can hinder growth of plants and become moldy.

* Apply corn gluten meal to hinder weed seed germination in late April/early May. Spread it at a rate of 20 pounds per 1,000 SF. Water it lightly to activate it. It will remain effective for 5-6 weeks. (Note that any seed contacted will be affected.)

* Sort your seeds by the date each needs to be planted if starting indoors; we're fast coming up on the time to start them, especially ones that need cold, moist stratification.

* Pull off mulch as it thaws (but be ready to put it back on if there's another deep freeze!)



From The Brown Thumb

Whiling away the winter months has included burying myself in a ton of blankets (in an attempt to stay warm given our 60 degree house setting) and reading. A paperback, "The Truth About Garden Remedies" by Jeff Gillman (associate professor, U of M Department of Horticulture Science) caught my attention at the library and proved to be an interesting read. It concentrated on the multitude of measures that can be applied to improve one's garden and, using scientific methods, presents conclusions on how each functions and their effectiveness. One section on composting raised this as an ideal discussion topic since (1) spring is great time to start a compost heap and (2) our house came with a full compost bin, which I need to empty and start afresh. Most elements needed for successful composting are well-known. In looking over composting information I was more caught up in the whys and wherefores on each item's role.

1. Carbon (browns) to Nitrogen (greens) should be about 30:1 by weight. These are the food and energy sources for microorganisms with the former found in long chains of sugar molecules and the latter in amino acids and proteins. "Browns" as the name implies include dry, dead yard and garden material, such as leaves (preferably shredded), wood chips, straw, twigs less than 12 inches, and shredded newspaper. "Greens" are fresh plant material, such as grass clippings, hedge trimmings, weeds without seeds, and kitchen scraps. When selecting leftovers from the chef, grab fruit and vegetable peelings, and coffee or tea grounds. Avoid meat, bones, or fatty foods like cheese, salad dressing and oil, which attract rodents and smell.



2. Water content should be 40 to 60 %, but my question was how does one tell when this is the case? The pile should be moist as a wrung-out sponge (at which point a thin coating of water should cover most particles). This can be tested by grabbing a handful of material from within the pile and squeezing it >> a few drops of water should come out. Why is water so important? Because microorganisms can only use organic molecules if they are dissolved in water. Also it makes it easy for these organisms to move about. "Greens" inherently usually have enough moisture. "Browns" don't and need to have water added when combining them into the pile.

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3. Air seems like an obvious requirement because aerobic organisms need oxygen to live. Anaerobic organisms also can slowly decompose material, but this isn't the growth one wants to encourage unless one loves the smell of putrefying garbage. Keep in mind that "Greens" and also wet leaves tend to mat down into slimy layers blocking air circulation, so break up or mix these materials. "Browns" on the other hand generally tend to be bulky, promoting good aeration.

4. Temperature is an indication of an active pile since heat is generated by microorganisms as they decompose material. Ideally if your pile is in the 90-140 degrees Fahrenheit range microbes are present and busy working away. To help attain this, a pile about 3 x 3 x 3 feet is the best, with plenty of mass in which billions of organisms can munch away. Smaller piles have difficulty holding heat in cooler weather and larger ones have trouble with air reaching the center.

With all of this in mind, what's a good compost recipe? I'll give you the gourmet version, knowing full well that (casual cook that I am) I will likely not take much care in developing my own brew.

1st layer: 3-6 inches coarse material such as brush, which allows air circulation

2nd layer: 6-8 inches mixed greens & browns (about 4 inches of browns to 2 inches of greens)

3rd layer: 1 inch of soil which serves as starter material by adding microorganisms

(Can add a 4th layer for nitrogen: 2-3" of manure or 1 pound of urea fertilizer per yard of leaves)

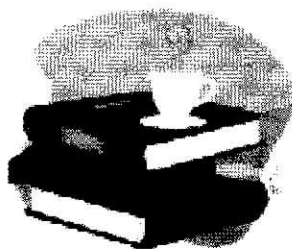
Repeat layers until your bin is full. At least once a month turn the pile, adding water as needed. With luck it should be ready in 3-4 months. You'll know it's done when the material is uniform, dark brown, crumbly with an earthy aroma. Not to worry if there are a few woody chunks. That's it for round one on composting. I'll let you know how I fair as the summer progresses!

Note for those with a scientific bent, some facts on contents: High nitrogen (N) found in coffee grounds (5% of dry weight), tea grounds (4.15%), fish scrap (2.7-5%), feathers (15.3%). Some vegetable matter is higher in potassium (K) such as grapefruit skins (ash at 30.60%); corn cobs (ash at 50%); cantaloupe rinds (ash at 12.21%); and banana skins (ash at 41.76%). Others have high phosphorous (P): cantaloupe rinds (ash at 9.77) and grapefruit rinds (ash at 3.58%). Oak leaves have .8% N, .35% P and .15% K. Pine needles have .46% N, .13% P and .03% K. (from the "The Truth About Garden Remedies" (Jeri Gillman)

Book Review

In lieu of a book review, as promised in the last newsletter, here are a few more books that may be of interest either because they specialize in specific habitats, cover a broader area of identification beyond the Midwest or are considered good reads

1. Perennial Combinations: Burrell, C. Colston
2. Native Trees, Vines & Shrubs: Cullina, William
3. The American Woodland Garden: Capturing the Spirit of the Deciduous Forest: Darke, Rick
4. Wetland Plants and Plant Communities of Minnesota: Eggers, Steve & Reed, Donald (This is a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers publication.)
5. Tallgrass Prairie Wildflowers: Falcon Guide
6. Apprentice to a Garden, Hadden Evelyn ++ (Experiences converting a city lot from grass to a variety of plant material.)
7. ++ Go Native - Gardening with Native Plants and Wildflowers!! Harstad, Carolyn ++
8. Native Trees, Shrubs and Vines for Urban and Rural America; Hightshoe, Gary



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9. Edible Forest Gardens; Jacke, David & Toensmeier, Eric (a 2-volume set)
10. Why We Garden: Cultivating a Sense of Place; Nollman, Jim
11. Second Nature: A Gardener's Education; Pollan, Michael (Thought provoking approaches to gardening and restoration.)
12. Weeds of the Northern U.S. and Canada; Royer, France & Dickinson, Richard
13. Planting Noah's Garden; Stein, Sara
14. On the Wild Side: Experiments in New Naturalism; Wiley, Keith

Notes:

** = Our Chapter has a few copies of this book for sale; contact Kim Medin medin003@umn.edu for details/

++ = Books written by Wild Ones Twin Cities chapter members.

Featured Native Plant: *Asarum canadense*

Common Name: Wild Ginger (Also called: Snakeroot, Indian Ginger, Canadian Wild Ginger)

Scientific Name: *Asarum canadense*, **Family:** Birthwort (Aristolochiaceae), **Habitat:** Native to shady woodlands

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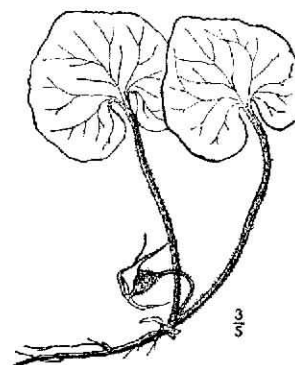
Height: 6-12 inches

Leaves: Opposite, entire, and basal, with only 2 leafstalks per plant. Each heart-shaped, leaf (3-6 inches wide) is hairy along both the leaf itself and the stem.

Flowers: Brown, hairy, thimble-shaped, single flower (1/2 - 1" in size) is hidden near the plant's base. No petals, instead 3 united sepals. Blooms in spring (April - May)

Fruit: fleshy capsule with 4-6 chambers. Early summer

Overall characteristics: Plant spreads via rhizomes, growing in colonies to form a carpet of greenery. Leaf stems emerge directly from the rhizomes which are found close to soil surface.



GARDEN TIPS

Plant Hardiness: Zone 3-8

Sun/Shade Needs: Partial to full shade.

Soil Needs: Moist, well drained humus-rich soil. pH: 5-7.5

Planting: Plant 8 to 12 inches apart. Spreads 6 to 12 inches (can go up to several feet)

Propagation: Can cultivate through seeds or increase by division either in early spring (before flower appears) or in autumn (when leaves start dying back) Try not to break roots when working with division. Mulch new plantings. Harder to grow from seed.

Care: Easy. Growth is slow but steady. Spread an inch or more of compost every year to maintain sufficient organic matter in the soil. Water as needed in dry periods.

Companion plants: Wild blue phlox (*Phlox divaricata*) and Virginia bluebells (*Mertensia virginica*).

Friends & Foes: No serious pests. Pollinated by ground-residing insects.

NOTES

Current Use/Interest: Rootstocks smell and taste like ginger. However, don't eat them, since it contains aristolochic acid which is a human carcinogen.

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Historic Use/Interest: Native Americans used it to flavor foods. Medicinally used by them for a variety of ailments (such as digestive problems, poultice placed on sores, general fever reduction) due to the plant's anti-microbial properties. In large quantities used as a means of birth control. Some early American settlers used it to get rid of warts. Also was added to a pioneer toothpaste to make it more pleasant to use.

Crossword Puzzle

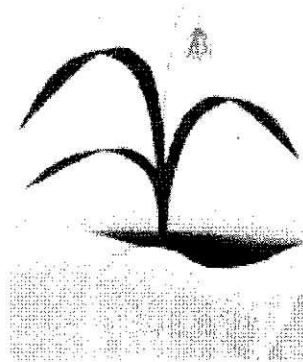
Editor's note: Rebecca Chesin, who did a super excellent job of producing the newsletter has stepped down from that position to devote more time to her chosen occupation. She will carry on as web site chair and we hope that she will continue to contribute articles occasionally!! With her departure we have lost our crossword guru and are looking for a replacement. Rebecca has even left me two crossword puzzles that are only in need of clues. So if any one is interested in continuing this feature, please let me know (Mary Schommer (interim newsletter chair): rmschommer@hotmail.com

Welcome New & Renewing Members

As of January 2007 our chapter has 97 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. Besides this newsletter, visit us at www.for-wild.org/chapters/twincities.

Barbara Gallagher; Gigi Siekkinen; Tom Tennant; Jim & Kris Martinka; Roberta Moore; Karen Graham; Lisa McDonough; Carolyn Carr; Lou Ann Kelcher; Patty & Lester Ott; Kathy Smith; Jim & Jan Coleman; Deirdre Brennen & Vincent Skemp; Arden Aarnestad; Mollie Dean; Alison Antoun; Mary Alyce Krohnke.

THINK SPRING!



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 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

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



Twin Cities Chapter

c/o Marty Rice
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Edina, MN 55424

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.