



Growing through Education

Wildflowers

Summer 2009 • Volume 14, Number 2

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BRINGING NATURE HOME

This is the second article from the interview with Dr. Douglas Tallamy after the WAM conference in March. Here he answers questions about the function of a local food web and why it is important to attract native insects to our backyards.

What kind of expertise do people need to understand Bringing Nature Home?

"I wrote the book specifically for people who don't have any expertise in natural history. I am trying to stay away from the term 'native' these days because it has caused so much confusion about what to plant. I prefer to say to use plants that support your local food web. Here is how a food web works.

The basis of all food webs is plants. **Plants are what generate food.** Insects can't eat just any plant. Insects are chemists. They have developed specialized enzymes that enable them to break down the chemical defenses that plants have. Over thousands and even millions of years, insects and plants have developed together.

Ninety-six percent of terrestrial birds must feed their young insects to get the protein they need. If you take away insects, you lose the birds. Landscaping with 'pest free' plants creates a lifeless landscape; the insects can't eat the plants, so they are not there, and then the birds don't have food. Most people don't realize how important insects are and how many animals rely on them.

Once people get this, they can see that a plant from China is a plant our local insects haven't adapted to, and therefore it won't support the local food web. These are not difficult concepts; people just haven't heard them before. **Insects are bird food.** Seventy million people in the U.S.A. feed birds during the winter. But they starve them in the summer by having the wrong landscape. If they simply plant a native bush instead of one from China, for example, they will provide summer bird food.

"You talk about using pesticides; I thought that was a no-no for native landscaping."

"The native plant movement seems to be associated with a no herbicide movement. But the United States has over 3,400 species of alien invasive plants that are destroying our food webs. When people don't want to use herbicides to fight these aliens, they usually lose the battle, become frustrated, and give up. Mechanical removal of alien plants is not effective if you have something that regenerates from root stock. Some plants can regenerate from a root the size of pinky finger nail. These plants need to be treated with herbicides.

An example of this happened in Alaska when purple loosestrife first showed up. There is a state law against the use of herbicides on state land, so officials refused to allow their use to fight the loosestrife. The purple looses-

~ Continued on Page 3 ~

WAM

By increasing awareness and knowledge, the Wildflower Association of Michigan encourages the preservation and restoration of Michigan's native plants and native plant communities.

~ ASSOCIATION NEWS ~



President's Note...

Michigan's landscape is green and flowering again! The wild columbine, round leaved ragwort and lupine are in full bloom, and we've begun to harvest prairie smoke seeds at our farm. It's weed n'seed time, and suddenly there are not enough hours to complete all the outdoor tasks.

Plans are well underway for the 23rd annual Wildflower Conference scheduled for March 7-8, 2010, and I'm excited to report that William Cullina will be our keynote speaker. Some of you may remember Bill when he presented at the 2002 WAM conference. Bill is the Plant & Garden Curator for the Coastal Maine Botanical Gardens. I am impressed by his knowledge of native plants, especially plant propagation and the practical and personal way he conveyed his message. I have recommended his *The New England Wildflower Society Guide to Growing and Propagating Wildflowers of the United States and Canada* to numerous wildflower enthusiasts over the

years and refer to it frequently myself. *Native Trees, Shrubs and Vines; Understanding Orchids and Native Ferns; Mosses & Grasses* are considered Bill's native plant trilogy. Just released is his book, *Understanding Perennials: A New Look at an Old Favorite*. Full conference information will be provided in the winter issue of *Wildflowers*.

I introduced you to Kathy Prelesnik and Judy Webber in our last issue. They are hard at work and re-inventing *Wildflowers* by developing a new format with regular features such as book reviews, native plant articles, and grant project articles just to name a few. I invite you to contact Kathy or Judy with topics that you would like to see featured, as well as topics you would like to learn more about. *Wildflowers* is for YOU, so please take a moment and let them know how this newsletter can better inform and inspire you. Contact information for Kathy and Judy can be found below.

I wish you a wonderful summer with many opportunities to experience Michigan's unique natural heritage.

Esther Durnwald

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~ BRINGING NATURE HOME (continued) ~

~ Continued from Page 1 ~

fringe got out of hand and is now everywhere. There are just some invasive plants that can only be controlled with herbicides. Of course, you must use herbicides properly.”

I know people who are afraid of insects. What do you say to people who have a fear of insects?

“This is a problem. However, fear is learned. Most of us have learned fear from our parents or other adults when we were kids. Often it’s not just a fear of insects, but a fear of all of nature. Even our media have painted nature as a dangerous thing that we have to control.

A landscaper friend told me this story. She had gone to interview a lady about working on her garden. While they were talking, the woman’s daughter picked up a worm crawling across the driveway. The mother yelled at her, ‘You put that down, that’s terrible, that’s dirty, you put that down, that’s horrible, don’t you ever touch that again, get in the house!’ What a negative experience for a child who was trying to have some experience with nature. Seeing fear in a mother’s face teaches fear; it is not based on reality. When a child hears that kind of response from an adult, it’s very difficult to change.

I can say this because I’m afraid of spiders. I don’t like spiders. When I was little, I had a friend who used to throw them at me. And it created this ... gut reaction! I don’t want a spider on me! I know I don’t want a spider on me, but I don’t kill them. At home we

have little ‘spider removal kits’ that we use to move spiders outside. I don’t have to play with spiders to accept them as part of the natural order. I think other people can get to this point too.

You don’t have to like insects or handle them. Most of the time you aren’t even going to see them in your yard. You have to go out and look for most insects to find them. Because you know they are around, you can be happy when a bird comes and eats one. I’ll bet most people who hate insects do like birds. Even if they are not active birders, they like to look at pretty birds.

We can know insects are in our yards. Even learn what they are. Insects sit still compared to birds. Turn over a leaf and find a caterpillar. Enjoy the thrill of the hunt, stalk them, and observe them. In the early morning bugs are slower; sit outside on a chair and be still. They will come around after they become acclimated to your presence. Don’t be afraid to enjoy the diversity of insects that feed your birds.”

As you say, most people like birds, how else can they get them into their yards?

“Set up things that make them come in. I have a dogwood next to bathroom window. The birds come in to eat berries. I have seen 10 different species of birds on that tree. I can sit there and watch them. People pay big bucks to go on birding trips. I just have to go to the bathroom! But I created that situation by planting a tree there. If I want to see cedar waxwings, I plant serviceberry. Birds are hard to sneak up on; they see you first. The house is a great bird blind; they can’t see you inside, but you can see them. With a little bit of planning you can create situations that bring nature close to you.”

Can you give us some tips on educating others, especially plant growers and master gardeners?

“That’s why I wrote the book, so everyone can hear the story they are not hearing in their training programs. Master gardeners are receptive to the idea of improving the food web. It is simply a matter of education. They are trained by horticulturists. Horticulture is an artistic industry, not an ecological

one. It asks the question, ‘how do we paint the landscape with beautiful plants?’ So, that’s what they teach master gardeners.

Horticulturists typically use alien plants because they offer a broader palate of colors than the small set of plants in our local food webs. Plus it’s ‘neater’ to show off a plant from somewhere else in your yard. A plant from Asia has more status than a plant from your back yard. Some people think it’s not ‘landscaping’ if you only use plants that used to be there. Horticulturists are now beginning to think about the function of landscapes and the ecological role of the plants in our landscapes. This should make a big difference in the future.”

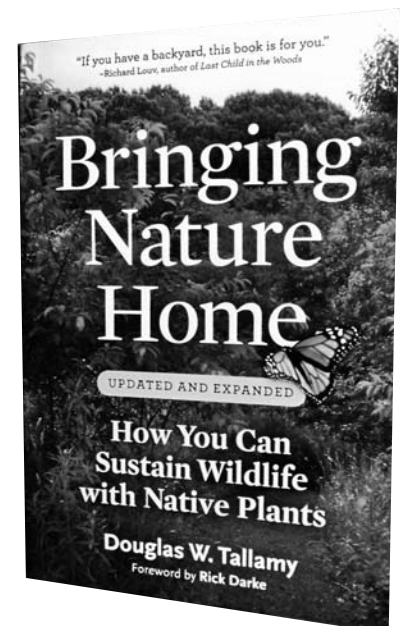
So there you have it. With this “enlightenment” from Dr. Tallamy we can begin to educate ourselves and others on the need for a healthy local food web. Next time you share plants with a friend, make them native plants. Go out in the garden with a child and explore nature. Plant some bird food. Make a difference!

Tallamy’s book, *Bringing Nature Home: How Native Plants Sustain Wildlife in Our Gardens*, is now out in paperback. He will be back at MSU in March of 2010 for Garden Days.

Kathy Prelesnik

We are looking for artists who would be willing to do an occasional cartoon or a sketch of a plant. Is that you?

Please contact Kathy or Judy for more information.



~ TOP 20 PLANTS FOR BUTTERFLIES ~

20 most valuable woody and perennial native plant genera in terms of supporting biodiversity in the mid-Atlantic region					
Woody Plants			Perennials		
Plant Genus	Common Name	# of Lepidoptera species supported	Plant Genus	Common Name	# of Lepidoptera species supported
<i>Quercus</i>	oak	534	<i>Solidago</i>	goldenrod	115
<i>Prunus</i>	black cherry	456	<i>Aster</i>	asters	112
<i>Salix</i>	willow	455	<i>Helianthus</i>	sunflower	73
<i>Betula</i>	birch	413	<i>Eupatorium</i>	Joe Pye, boneset	42
<i>Populus</i>	poplar	368	<i>Ipomoea</i>	morning glory	39
<i>Malus</i>	crabapple	311	<i>Carex</i>	sedges	36
<i>Vaccinium</i>	blueberry	288	<i>Lonicera</i>	honeysuckle	36
<i>Acer</i>	maple	285	<i>Lupinus</i>	lupine	33
<i>Ulmus</i>	elm	213	<i>Viola</i>	violets	29
<i>Pinus</i>	pine	203	<i>Geranium</i>	geraniums	23
<i>Carya</i>	hickory	200	<i>Rudbeckia</i>	black-eyed Susan	17
<i>Crataegus</i>	hawthorn	159	<i>Iris</i>	iris	17
<i>Picea</i>	spruce	156	<i>Oenothera</i>	evening primrose	16
<i>Alnus</i>	alder	156	<i>Asclepias</i>	milkweed	12
<i>Tilia</i>	basswood	150	<i>Verbena</i>	verbena	11
<i>Fraxinus</i>	ash	150	<i>Penstemon</i>	beardtongue	8
<i>Rosa</i>	rose	139	<i>Phlox</i>	phlox	8
<i>Corylus</i>	filbert	131	<i>Monarda</i>	bee balm	7
<i>Juglans</i>	walnut	130	<i>Veronica</i>	veronica	6
<i>Fagus</i>	beech	126	<i>Schizachyrium</i>	little bluestem	6
<i>Castanea</i>	chestnut	125	<i>Lobelia</i>	cardinal flower	4

© Tallamy Used with permission.

Although these plants are designated as being native to the mid-Atlantic States, local Michigan native plant growers sell local varieties. For more information go to: [http:// bringingnaturehome.net/](http://bringingnaturehome.net/)



*What seems dead
And what seems dying
makes for butterflies to be*

Eveline Beumkes



~ CREATING A BUZZ ~

You say you don't like bees, but you do like broccoli, apples and cherries! Well, you can't have one without the other. We may not all live in farm country, but we do all add to the native insect populations when we use plants that are part of our local food webs. The following excerpt from *MSU Today* explains why it is important to plant those native trees, shrubs, and forbs that bees and other pollinators need.

It's estimated that one of every three bites of food consumed in the world is made possible by pollinators. But in recent years, honeybees – the powerhouses of agricultural pollination – have been disappearing at alarming rates, leaving beekeepers and scientists perplexed.

With as much as 80 percent of Earth's crops at stake, MSU entomologists in the College of Natural Science are seeking rapidly deployable solutions for protecting honeybees from colony collapse disorder (CCD), the complex disease that is characterized by the disappearance of all adult honeybees in a hive, while also finding new ways to attract other pollinators to help ensure crop survival.

The decimation of honeybee populations throughout the nation became a widespread problem for beekeepers in 2006, and by 2007 the entire agriculture industry was aware of the crisis. The winged workers are the main pollinators for hundreds of crops grown in the United States, including almonds, blueberries, apples, avocados, cherries and broccoli. The value of honeybees as commercial pollinators is estimated at about \$15 billion nationally, in Michigan alone about \$455 million worth of crops each year depend on bees for pollination.

...(I)n the effort to ensure the survival of crops that rely on pollination, MSU entomologists Rufus Isaacs and Doug Landis and a team of graduate students are working to make Michigan landscapes more attractive to other pollinators that can pick up where honeybees leave off.

In 2003 – before pollinator decline hit the headlines – Isaacs and Landis received a U.S. Department of Agriculture grant and began to attract natural enemies of insects that attack crops. These enemies, including lady beetles and parasitic wasps, allow growers to control pest insects without chemicals that are harmful to honey-

bees. The team received a second round of funding to expand the project and determine which plants are most attractive to various species of pollinators. They chose to test native prairie and savanna plants that, although once abundant, are now quite rare. Currently, the researchers are conducting field trials over a several-year period to determine whether more natural enemies and pollinators are attracted to crops that are bordered by these native plants.

MSU pollinator studies have been influenced by research on bio-fuel crops that Landis is conducting with the Great Lakes Bioenergy Research Center, a national center funded by the U.S. Department of Energy in which MSU is a partner.

"As we grow mixed biofuel crops in Michigan, we are finding that we're attracting the beneficial insects at the same time, so it's a win-win," says Landis. "The more diverse the biofuel crops (switchgrass, mixed prairie grass and woody biomass) we grow here, the greater the number of beneficial insects and pollinators."

In a study targeting Michigan's blueberry farms, Isaacs and a graduate student found that more than 60 percent of the yield from Michigan's \$165 million blueberry crop is made possible by bees. Most of that value comes from honeybees, although native bees can be abundant in some fields.

According to Isaacs, blueberry fields with natural areas nearby, along with flowers for bees to feed on during the rest of the year, have higher native bee populations. These insects may act as 'insurance' if the honeybees are unable to provide sufficient pollination. By providing the right resources around their farms, growers can make their land more suitable for native bees and reap the benefit of free pollination. Testing which native bees are most suitable as an alternative to honeybees is similar to testing the viability of alternative energy sources to power cars.

"You've got a resource everyone relies on, and it's becoming more scarce," says Isaacs. "That's why we need to look at these alternative bees to ensure we can pollinate crops in the future."

MSU Today, Spring 2009 (Used with permission)



Where can you find one of the greatest spring wildflower displays in Michigan? Dowagiac Woods Nature Sanctuary. The sanctuary, located in Cass County, is protected and maintained by the Michigan Nature Association (MNA). Plants flourish at Dowagiac Woods in countless numbers, with more than 50 species of wildflowers that bloom in the spring.

MNA recently purchased a 149-acre addition to the sanctuary and is currently fundraising \$375,000 for the acquisition and endowment costs. All contributions are tax-deductible. For more information and to contribute, go to www.michigannature.org.

*Let the bee be and the
bee will let you be.*

Unknown



~ GLASSEN GRANT GARDEN ~

Where the Fairies Live

Sometimes our lives are changed by happenchance, and so was the case with a casual introduction to a woman one day. At the time, three of my children were attending Hugger Elementary School in Rochester, MI. As a parent volunteer, I had developed a comfortable working relationship with the principal of the school. My focus was the environment and related projects which all operated under the title H.O.M.E. (Helping Our Mother Earth). But, I yearned for a “green” space for our students. The concept was to create an alternate to the traditional classroom. Ideas were simple at the time, perhaps a mammoth sunflower garden with paths and sunflower houses. Enter... Maryann Whitman, WAM board member, editor of *The Wild Ones Journal* and advocate for green space preservation and education.

Maryann was interested in my ideas and ended our first, short conversation by



saying, “We have money that can help you.” Call it serendipity if you like, but timing is everything, and her timing was perfect. The offer of money was by way of the Glassen/WAM Grant.

Over the months following our introduction, Maryann and I met to discuss plans. We walked the 22 acres of school property and identified the ideal location, a barren L-shaped space against the school building with three Norway maples. Having no background in botany or horticulture, our meetings proved very educational. Maryann explored concepts

of native plants and their historical significance as well as the plight of our native plants due to invasive species. A landscape design was produced and my simple idea of a few sunflowers evolved into an “outdoor classroom” with a waterfall and pond. Students further inspired our design by submitting ideas on scrap bits of paper to the “idea jug”. With administrative support and Maryann’s expertise, we moved forward and submitted the grant proposal for a sun/shade native planting.

Our proposal was accepted, and in March 2005, I proudly received the grant for our project and took up the pen again. The Glassen/WAM Grant would cover our native plants, but other funding was needed. I became aware of a program called “Ponds for Kids” and wrote a grant through our school district to cover expenses. Electrical modifications were covered by a grant from our PTA. Creative financing for fencing materials was covered by bottle drives, paper recycling and selling of recycled juice pouch purses fabricated by Hugger moms. Community donations of skills and materials lessened our financial burden and expanded our potential. Together we completed the transformation. The once ignored plot of land took on a new identity, the outdoor classroom!

Our outdoor classroom continues to mature and is truly magical. This spring we will measure the emerging milkweed and look for returning monarchs, perhaps the offspring of the tagged butterflies our students released in the fall. The white flowers of wild strawberries signal the kindergarteners that we may soon forage for the fruit. And let’s not forget to watch for the fairies that sleep in the Jack-in-the-pulpit and live in the old stump by the pond...it really is enchanted.

We teach our children to “stop, look and listen” before they cross the street, a lesson applicable to our walk through life. This small “green” space also imparts a life lesson. It slows one’s gait with the invitation to stop, look, and listen. To stop and remember the once barren plot of earth next to our school that now thrives with native plant types which once swayed on the plains with the buffalo; to look closer and witness the unfurling of ferns and tendrils grasping trellises; to lis-



Photos by Kim Zajac

ten to the water as it dances over the falls only to rest in the pool below. Our students are learning to do this.

This vision has been shared by many but not all. Our biggest obstacle has been caused by those who never learned this... we have come to know them as vandals. But, our success is rooted in our students; their ideas inspired the outdoor classroom, their work established it, and their enthusiasm carries it forward from year to year.

Surprisingly, this project has been as much about human nature as it has been about nature. If ever I feel discouraged, I look into the eyes of 70 first graders eagerly perched on the fence. As the gate latch opens and children enter the outdoor classroom, we all begin to walk a little slower and gaze a little longer, a practice that will serve us well through life. It is my hope that as our students become better observers of nature, they will grow up to become stewards of our planet.

Kim Zajac

This is YOUR newsletter and we appreciate YOUR input. Do you have something to say about your experience with native plants? Are you able to supply information for or write an article for *Wildflowers*? Is there something you would like to see covered in *Wildflowers*? Do you have questions you’d like answered in this newsletter?

If so, email

Kathy at bottletreegirl@yahoo.com
or Judy at jlwebber8117@charter.net

~ WAM GRANT PACKETS AVAILABLE FOR 2010 GRANT CYCLE ~

With the generous monetary support of the Harold and Jean Glassen Memorial Foundation, WAM is pleased to announce a 2009 grant cycle. Each applicant may request up to \$500 in support. The application deadline is December 15, 2009. All applicants will be notified if they are or are not recipients of an award no later than January 30, 2010. Awardees will receive their funds at the WAM annual conference. These grants are meant primarily for educational projects involving the planting of native wildflowers, shrubs, and trees. The committee looks kindly at applications that involve schools, children and the public, have an education component, and offer a sustainable garden for all to enjoy.

Guidelines and applications can be found at...

www.wildflowersmich.org

Electronic submission (email) is encouraged. Please do not fax your application. Thank you for your interest in WAM's Glassen Educational Grant Program and good luck.

Maryann Whitman
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~BOOK REVIEW~

The Wildlife Gardener's Guide by Janet Marinelli (2008) is a tidy, little 119 page reference for the gardener who may be new to using native plants. It is full of wonderful photos and helpful lists.

The Wildlife Gardener's Guide provides basic information on ten garden projects: bird gardens, stopover gardens for migrating songbirds, evergreen refuges, container gardens, flower borders for wildlife, hummingbird and butterfly gardens, water for wildlife, food for beneficial insects, and housing projects for birds, bats, and bees.

Marinelli talks about why native plants are necessary for a healthy environment. She describes ten steps to building a bird garden and the types of natural foods they should contain.

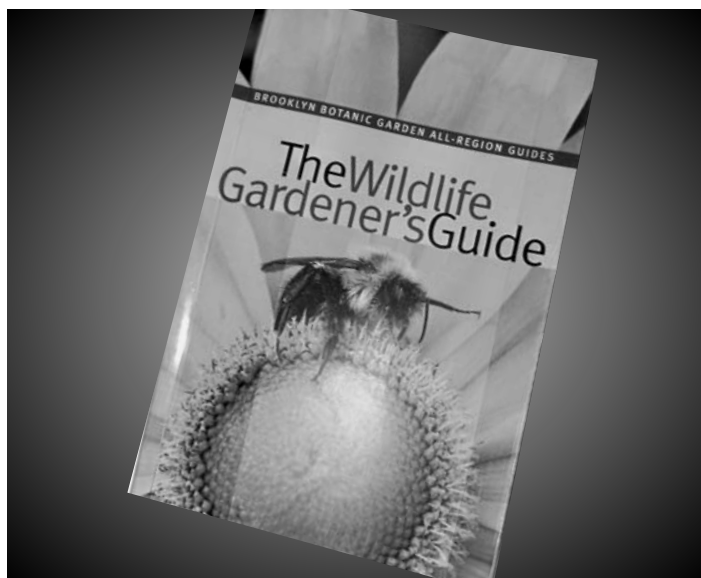
A chapter on bird feeders answers such practical questions as "Do bird feeders help or harm birds?" or "How can I keep hawks and other predators from picking off my backyard birds?" Helpful information on birdbaths and other sources of water such as mud puddles, water misters, and stone puddles are presented as a bird's point of view.

An aspect of bird life often overlooked is providing food for migrating birds. Michigan is in a migrating songbird flyway. Some of the birds that pass through our area come from as far away as Central America. They need to feed and find shelter all the way through the country until they reach their northern nesting sites. We can help these birds be successful as they come and go, by providing what they need along their way.

The importance of trees, especially conifers is another topic covered. Conifers provide birds with nesting sites and food as well being a refuge from storms and predators. Borders of native flowers, grasses and shrubs are also important to birds. Marinelli provides planting schemes for several types of borders.

This book has something for everyone. If you need to garden in containers, Marinelli suggests several ways to use them as wildlife feeders. She points out why predator insects are important in a garden and what blossoms attract beneficial insects. Finally, a table of nest box dimensions will help anyone with a hammer and a few nails put together a home for their favorite "house loving" birds or for bats or bees.

My only criticism of this delightful book is that Marinelli does not include plant lists specifically for the mid-west region.



However, I did find, that by considering the northeast and plains listings, I could come up with the information I need for my local Michigan food web. The wonderful photos in this book more than make up for this minor transgression. At ten bucks *The Wildlife Gardener's Guide* is a great deal.

Marinelli is the former director of publications at the Brooklyn Botanical Gardens, Brooklyn, NY. She now works as a freelance writer and consultant on sustainable garden design. Visit her website at: <http://janetmarinelli.com/>

Veronica Lake, Staff writer

*To renew the forests, to care for the plants,
to protect the creatures, we join with the
earth and with each other.*

U.N. Environmental Sabbath Program

~ ANOTHER GENERATION OF NATIVE PLANT ENTHUSIASTS ~

Although the annual conference of the Wildflower Association of Michigan isn't the prime spring break destination for a 22 year-old college student at Michigan State University, it was in fact on my agenda this year. Cozumel is overrated anyway.

If you had asked me in my high school years what the likelihood was of my attending any sort of botanical conference, I would have probably told you slim to none. At that time I pictured botanists (with no real evidence) to be an odd breed of biologists, eyes glued to compound microscopes in a lab somewhere, preferring to associate with plants rather than people. I did aspire to become some type of biologist however.

I first stumbled into birding, and before long I was hooked. Birding required a large chunk of my time in the field, and soon I couldn't help but be actively intrigued by the Michigan flora that served as the stage for my beloved new hobby. I had seriously underestimated and overlooked the same subtle beauty and the colorful diversity in plants that lured me to birding. Newcomb's acclaimed *Wildflower Guide* soon sat next to my *Peterson's Field Guide to Birds* inside my pack, and in the absence of birds in the field, I turned into an amateur botanist.

Fast forward a few years, hundreds of dollars earned in the local native plant industry, a summer of work on a wildflower farm, and a couple of butterfly gardens later, I felt more comfortable rubbing shoulders with "botanists" at the 2009 annual WAM conference than I did with many of my college peers. I was completely impressed, entertained, and stimulated with the diversity of presentations and lectures available at the conference. I

expected lectures of a somewhat narrow scope, covering particular plant species and/or plant communities. I never expected to learn about photography techniques, predatory nematodes, and certainly not spider mating rituals.

The way that I thought about landscaping, ecology, restoration, and the use of native plants in general, was fundamentally challenged by Doug Tallamy's talks. Dr. Tallamy's pioneering research doesn't take place in a pristine ecological setting, but in a highly altered suburban scenario. This makes his work very accessible and useful to more of the community than scientific research typically does. Dr. Tallamy's work caused me to think of nature from the ground up, focusing on the little things that are often overlooked, yet are vital in sustaining higher organisms such as ourselves.

I hope to go into conservation and/or plant restoration as a career soon. The conference and Dr. Tallamy's book and presentation have caused me to question what those things actually mean. Is conserving an undisturbed woodlot more an act of conservation/ restoration than convincing your neighbors to plant sugar maples rather than Norway maples? In the U.S. our parks are dwarfed by the amount of Kentucky bluegrass grown as lawns. Does this mean landscaping businesses are in a better position to carry out conservation activities than conservation land managers? Although I am still unsure how I will spend my working career in the field, I know that I will be taking the concepts I gained from the conference with me.

Mitch Lettow



~ NEW SCIENTIFIC NAMES FOR NATIVE PLANTS ~

The Latin names of several native plants have been changed. You may encounter these name changes when you shop. Here are just a few of them. Watch for more in future issues of *Wildflowers*.

<u>OLD NAME</u>	<u>COMMON NAME</u>	<u>NEW NAME</u>
<i>Aster laevis</i>	Smooth Aster	<i>Symphyotrichum laevis</i>
<i>Aster novae-angliae</i>	New England Aster	<i>Symphyotrichum novae-angliae</i>
<i>Aster pilosus</i>	Hairy Aster	<i>Symphyotrichum pilosum</i>
<i>Aster puniceus</i>	Swamp Aster	<i>Symphyotrichum puniceum</i>
<i>Aster umbellatus</i>	Flat Top Aster	<i>Doellingeria umbellata</i>
<i>Eupatorium maculatum</i>	Joe Pye Weed	<i>Eupatoriadelphus maculatus</i>
<i>Eupatorium rugosum</i>	Snakeroot	<i>Ageratina altissima</i>
<i>Gentiana crinita</i>	Fringed Gentian	<i>Gentianopsis crinita</i>
<i>Gnaphalium obtusifolium</i>	Catsfoot	<i>Pseudognaphalium obtusifolium</i>
<i>Hystrix patula</i>	Bottlebrush grass	<i>Elymus hystrix</i>
<i>Kuhnia eupatorioides</i>	False Boneset	<i>Brickellia eupatorioides</i>
<i>Petalostemum purpureum</i>	Purple Prairie Clover	<i>Dalea purpurea</i>
<i>Scenecio obovatus</i> Round-leaved	Ragwort	<i>Packera obovata</i>
<i>Solidago riddellii</i>	Riddell's Goldenrod	<i>Oligoneuron riddellii</i>
<i>Solidago rigida</i>	Stiff Goldenrod	<i>Oligoneuron rigidum</i>

Courtesy of Michigan Wildflower Farm

~ WILDFLOWER CORNER ~

ROUGH BLAZING STAR IS A STAR IN YOUR GARDEN



The perennial questions (no pun intended) that many gardeners ask are, “What can be done to make my garden better?” “What interesting plants can be added to it to provide more interest?” “Will wildlife be attracted to it?” This is a good time for such analysis since our gardens have reached their full summer maturity.

A most interesting flower for any type of garden is dense blazing-star (*Liatris spicata*), one of 34 species of blazing star in eastern North America

and one of seven in Michigan. This member of the composite family has simple, erect stems, growing from a height of one to five feet, with simple, narrow grass-like leaves arranged alternately on the stem. It is the lavender, thistle-like flowers that provide the show with blooms from July-September. The many flower heads are located at the ends of the stems and are usually sessile (having no stalks), with each head containing five to nine florets. There are few bracts which are long and blunt at the ends and may be purple in color. White flowers are rare, but according to *Part III of Michigan Flora*, they have been seen on St. Harsen’s Island in St. Clair County.

Dense blazing star grows in moist sandy plains, marshy areas, swamps, roadsides, and fields. There are not huge numbers of it

though. However, according to Bill Schneider of Wildtype Design, it is not protected or endangered. I had good luck with it in sandy soil in my garden in Benzie County, so with good watering, it should do well in most places (the jury is still out on how it will do in my garden in Livingston County with its heavy clay soil). Dense blazing star’s unique spike shape makes it a good addition to the household garden because it contrasts well with other flowers, and it is a natural for the prairie garden. Plant it in groups of three to five to give the best effect. Since the leaves are not distinctive, put rough blazing star behind or among plants that have more substance.

Butterflies are attracted to it because of its nectar, which is another reason to plant it. To see additional photos of dense blazing star, go to the DNR’s website: www.michigan.gov/dnr then click on wildlife & habitat -> plant species-> wildflowers-> dense blazing star. The plants are listed alphabetically according to their common names rather than their scientific ones, with the scientific names following.

This flower should not be confused with prairie blazing-star (*L.pycnostachya*). According to *Part III of Michigan Flora*, *L. pycnostachya* is found in the wild only in Ottawa County. *L. spicata* is quite wide-spread throughout the lower third of the lower peninsula and around Saginaw Bay. It is not generally found in the wild in other parts of the state.

Do put this interesting flower in your garden; it is easy to care for and will reward you for many years to come. As an added bonus, you will get new plants from the originals. Happy gardening!

Judy Webber

*Photo Courtesy of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources
Used with permission*

Tent Caterpillars

There has been a huge outbreak of tent caterpillars seen this summer in the northern part of the Lower Peninsula. Duke Elsner explains this phenomenon.

What trees specifically are affected, and what caused them to die?

Eastern tent caterpillar (ETC) prefers to feed on various species of wild and domesticated cherry, plum and apple. Tree death is actually rare, unless individual trees are completely defoliated for several years in a row. Other stresses, such as drought, heat, diseases and other insects will also influence survival of trees defoliated by ETC.

Forest tent caterpillar (FTC) feeds on a wide variety of broadleaved trees and shrubs, but tends to prefer sugar maple and aspen in northern Michigan. It rarely kills trees, with the same exceptions as for the ETC.

Are there more tent caterpillars this year than usual?

Yes, far more, by the millions. ETC is in the second year of a very large outbreak, and FTC is present in astronomical numbers for the first time in almost two decades.

Are there not as many birds that eat them? If so, why not? What birds do eat them?

Very few birds like to eat tent caterpillars, due to their hairy bodies. Thrashers, cuckoos and starlings are the only birds I have heard to be significant predators. Their impact on populations during outbreak years is probably negligible.

What are the long-term effects of this phenomenon?

Typically, very few. The wild cherries are widespread and prolific, it will take more than the ETC to reduce their presence in northern Michigan. FTC outbreaks usually subside in 2-3 years, resulting in the loss of relatively few trees in a forest stand that is otherwise healthy.



Duke Elsner, Ph.D.

*MSU Extension Agricultural Educator, Grand Traverse
County*

~ WAM OF DIRECTORS ~

Esther Durnwald, the current WAM president has been a WAM board member for twelve years, serving as secretary, 2nd and 1st vice presidents. She and her husband Bill own and operate Michigan Wildflower Farm, a native plant seed farm, in Portland, where she resides.

Bob Kreuger, PhD., of Big Rapids has been a WAM member since the mid 1990's and currently serves as 1st vice-president and Glassen Grant chairman. He is the director of the K.K. Kazerovskis Medicinal Greenhouse and Gardens at Ferris State University. He does consulting, writing, and presentations on native plants.

Chad Hughson of Kalamazoo serves as WAM's 2nd vice-president and web-site coordinator. His life-long love of native flora and fauna led to the establishment of Hidden Savanna Nursery near Kalamazoo.

Susan Baldyga-Grubb of Portland has been a member of WAM for five years, serving most of that time as secretary. She is a master gardener and studied horticulture at Michigan State University. She works as a field specialist at Michigan Wildflower Farm.

Jean Weirich has been a member of WAM since the mid 1990's and currently serves as its treasurer and membership chair. She has been involved with numerous environmental groups for several years. She owns and operates Gaia Grass, which specializes in Michigan genotype native prairie grasses. She lives in Grand Ledge.

Trish Hacker-Henning is a resident of Ortonville and has been a WAM member since 1996 and a board member since 2008. She is an advanced master gardener and a member of Wild Ones. She has also served on a variety of boards and committees in her community that pertain to native plants.

Darwyne Heme of Lansing works in MDOT's wildflower program. His work involves the development of wildflower sites, from the bidding process for seeds to the establishment and monitoring of the actual sites. He has been a member of WAM for eight years and has been on the board for five years.

Cheryl Tolley is a charter member of WAM and past president. She is currently the WAM conference chairwoman. Cheryl owns and operates Sandhill Farm, a native plant nursery specializing in woodland species. She lives in Rockford.

Suzie Knoll has been in WAM for six years and on the board for three. She has served on the conference committee and web-site management. She works as a restoration biologist for Native Connections, a firm in Three Rivers committed to improving the environment by managing land for biodiversity. She lives in Kalamazoo.

Ray Rustem of Mason has been a WAM member for over ten years and a board member for six years. He is a program leader for the Michigan DNR in the Natural Heritage Unit, which works extensively with rare plants and systems. This unit also works to promote natural plantings in home and school sites.

Nancy Small is a retired Western Michigan University professor and now devotes her time and energy to the restoration of urban, suburban, and rural landscapes. She also educates people on the importance of native plants and has written extensively on native plants and the environment. She and her husband Tom are co-founders of Wild Ones in Kalamazoo, where she resides.

Maryann Whitman of Oakland has been a plant enthusiast since childhood. She is an ardent promoter of the use of local native plants and our dependence on them. She is active in other groups which promote the use of native plants. She has been a member of WAM since 1990 and has served on the board since 2000. She is currently coordinator of Glassen Grants and WAM's spring conference.

New Wildflowers Editors



Judy Webber & Kathy Prelesnik

Kathy Prelesnik is a free-lance writer and advanced master gardener. She was editor of the Plant-It-Wild newsletter. PIW is a Benzie/Manistee County wildflower group she helped establish in 2002. Along with her husband, Gene, she works to promote the use of native plants in backyards and public places.

Judy Webber is a retired teacher who has been interested in native plants for many years. She was a charter member of Plant-It-Wild in Benzie/Manistee County and was instrumental in the development of native plant gardens in Benzie County. She also served on the board of the Benzie County Conservation District.

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