



Growing through Education

Wildflowers

Winter 2011 • Volume 16, Issue 1

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MARCH CONFERENCE KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

Scott Russell Sanders, our keynote speaker on Sunday, for the 2011 WAM conference, emphasized in a recent interview how pleased he is “that WAM has chosen ‘*Growing Arks*’ as the conference theme.”

“I believe,” he tells me, “the ark is a potent metaphor for the kind of work we are called to do at this time in human history.” In his keynote talk, he will elaborate on ideas expressed in his latest book, *A Conservationist Manifesto* (2009), where he describes an ark as “any vessel that protects and fosters things which are vital to human well-being and to the well-being of other species.”

For Sanders, museums, libraries, wildlife refuges, seed banks, and organizations devoted to cleaning up rivers or restoring prairies are among many examples of arks. For his talk at WAM, Sanders will concentrate on the role of land trusts, community gardens, and natural landscaping as arks, “havens for biodiversity.”

In his *Manifesto*, Sanders affirms that “every scrap of land can serve as an ark.” It’s vitally important to grow an ever larger vessel for preservation “as one yard after another goes native.” “Building an ark when the floodwaters are rising,” he writes, “is not an act of despair; it’s an act of hope. To build an ark is to create a space within which life in its abundance may continue.”

While uncertain whether we as a species are “capable of changing our ways fast enough and radically enough to avert disaster,” Sanders finds hope in solidarity with “countless others, across our nation and around the world,” who are working for “the sort of future I wish to serve.” Sanders, Distinguished Professor Emeritus of English at Indiana University, is the author of almost

Janet Marinelli, is the keynote speaker on Monday. She shared the following in an ‘electronic’ interview. “Through Blue Crocus Consulting, I help public gardens, nature centers, and other ‘living museums’ develop lively and artistic new ways to engage their visitors in conversations about sustainability, including the importance of native plants and plant communities. Sometimes this involves what’s known as *interpretation* in the museum world -- for example, the Green Trail we did for Queens Botanical Garden, which tells visitors how the garden is going green, and how others can too. Sometimes it involves full-blown program planning -- like the comprehensive program plan for Duke Farms in New Jersey, the former Doris Duke estate, which is being transformed into a regional center for sustainability. This plan included everything from demonstration gardens and education programs to green technologies and research collaborations with academic scientists. We also do print and electronic publications of all types, such as *Landscape for Life*, which is based on the Sustainable Sites Initiative. While the Sustainable Sites Initiative (www.sustainable-sites.org), the country’s first rating system for sustainable landscapes, provides technical tools for landscape professionals, *Landscape for Life* provides the same information in an easy-to-use form -- a series of best practices that gardeners and homeowners can use themselves to make their home landscapes more sustainable. We created a *Landscape for Life* website (www.landscapeforlife.org), downloadable workbooks in pdf format, and various outreach materials in print. The website is in development and should be completely functional by the end of October.

I also work with landscape architects to make sure that sustainability programming is reflected in their site plans. For example, I collaborated with the Great Park Design

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

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~ ASSOCIATION NEWS ~



President's Letter...

I wish you all a happy, healthy and prosperous 2011!

WAM Board members met via teleconference on Oct. 20th and got right down to business. We welcomed Ruth Vrbensky of Oakland Wildflower Farm, as our new secretary. Cheryl Tolley resigned her board membership to open this position for Ruth. Cheryl will be missed; her advice and counsel were always deeply appreciated. She set a high standard for all of us to follow.

The board passed a resolution to request funding from the Glassen Foundation for the next round of our education grant cycle. Additional fund solicitation will also be undertaken to support the conference.

Our website experienced numerous downtimes due to hackers but thanks to Chad Hughson, it is now up and functioning normally.

Looking forward to elections at the annual meeting held at the March Conference, the board discussed the need to fill four positions. The term of office is four years. Present board members Tom Small and Darwyn

Heme have agreed to place their names in nomination. A third candidate Betsy Skare, who introduces herself, in this issue, will also be on the slate. Jean Weirich informed the board that she will step down as WAM treasurer this coming spring after the annual meeting. Both she and her husband are retiring and plan to travel. Jean has contributed her incredible talent and time to making WAM and its annual meeting function beautifully, for which we all owe her our thanks. She will assist a new treasurer in learning the duties of the position, easing that individual's transition to office.

Last year we were unable to hold the educator's workshop. This year the board is pleased to announce that Michelle Serreyn has agreed to organize this part of the conference. Complete information on the schedule and presentations for this part of the conference is listed in the conference information.

As you will note in this newsletter, our *Wildflowers* editor, Kathy Prelesnik, will be stepping down after this issue. She will however, work with a new person to ease the transfer of the editorship. In the several years Kathy has edited *Wildflowers* it has evolved into a top notch, high quality publication, evident to all who read and enjoy it. Her expertise and technical knowledge was clearly evident and greatly appreciated. Kathy leaves the next newsletter team with many resources including; a group of writers, guidelines, materials, and contacts for future publications. The board recognizes that *Wildflowers* is the 'glue' that holds us together. We are looking for a team of people to produce the newsletter. If you or someone you know is interested in becoming editor or working on the newsletter staff please see the qualifications listed on page eleven. For more details contact Bob Krueger at: kruegerr@ferris.edu

Robert Krueger, President

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Esther Durnwald

After more than two years as your editor, it is time for me to move on to areas of my life that have been put on hold. I have enjoyed bringing you *Wildflowers*. I have learned a lot and hope our readers have learned something too. Regrettably, we do not have a replacement for editor, but hopefully that will be rectified soon. I encourage you all to continue to restore a healthy environment to your little part of the world.

Kathy Prelesnik

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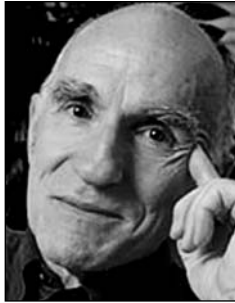
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This is the last edition of *Wildflowers* until further notice.
Please keep in touch with WAM through our website:
www.wildflowersmich.org.

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thirty books, including nine novels—some of them for young adults; six illustrated story books for children; and many books of reflective essays on the human place in nature, social justice, the culture of “place,” and the search for a spiritual path. His recent work includes *Staying Put: Making a Home in a Restless World*; *Hunting for Hope*; *The Force of Spirit*; and *Wild and Scenic Indiana*. His essays appear often in *Orion*. Sanders has won many major prizes for his writing, including the Great Lakes Book Award, the 2009 Mark Twain Award, and the 2009 John Burroughs Award.

I first encountered Sanders's reflections on the importance of “arks” in his essay entitled “A Fleet of Arks” in an issue of *Wild Earth* almost ten years ago. The essay spoke to me very powerfully, and I obtained permission from Sanders to print excerpts in the newsletter of our Kalamazoo Area chapter of Wild Ones. Now, “Building Arks,” a new version of the essay, leads off the opening section, “Caring for Earth,” in *A Conservationist Manifesto*.



Sanders

His message about caring for Earth is reflected in his own home-ground practices. In his 55 x 110 foot city lot in Bloomington, Indiana, he and his wife host eleven species of native forest trees, understory trees, and shrubs such as spicebush and highbush cranberry, ferns, and many species of Indiana native spring ephemerals and prairie wildflowers. He has also done some restoration on eighteen forested acres outside of town, land he and his wife have now donated to the local land trust.

“Our little yard,” he says, “is wild and woolly. We had no over-all plan, but only fitted plants in wherever we could, and wherever they would take hold.” When they began, thirty years ago, theirs was the only “wild” yard in the neighborhood; now over half the households “have replaced part or all of their grass with a mixture of wild and domestic plants.”

One patch of grass remains in the Sanders's yard, for the granddaughters to play croquet and where Scott and his wife stand to pin clothes on the line to dry. They mow with a push mower. His next book will be his first novel in fif-

teen years. He has “ideas and notes” for more children's books, and the final essay in *A Conservationist Manifesto* is “For the Children.” The essay, he tells me, is “in the form of a letter addressed to children of the future, in which I tell them what I have loved about the natural world and what I hope they will have a chance to experience when their turn comes to inhabit this marvelous planet. The essay is a reminder to myself and to my readers of our obligation to pass on an undiminished Earth to the generations that will come after us.”

In *Hunting for Hope*, Sanders affirms, “In order to live in hope we needn't believe that everything will turn out well. We need only believe that we are on the right path.” Scott Sanders has devoted his life as a teacher, writer, and naturalist to exploring for the right path. In his presentation Sanders will share with us his passion for nature and his hopes that together we will build and grow enough arks to protect and foster our own species and all other species of the earth.

(See www.scotrussellsanders.com for more information.)

Tom Small
WAM Board Member

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Studio to create a master plan for the botanical garden at the Orange County Great Park in Irvine, California, a huge municipal park that is being developed at a former marine base. Unlike traditional public gardens, which are basically landscapes frozen in time, the Great Park Botanical Garden will be a living laboratory where visitors will collaborate with horticulturists, scientists, educators, and artists to build a sustainable future for Southern California.”



Marinelli

Janet says she's always been interested in nature. “I was the kind of kid who loved to watch bees at work in flowers and crack open rocks to see what's inside. I inherited my love of plants from my Italian grandma, who moved into my parents' home and transformed it into a Neapolitan home-stead, complete with at least half an acre of tomatoes. As I was growing up, I saw suburbia obliterate most of the natural landscape on Long Island, a suburb of New York. In college and graduate school I studied the work of writers like Thoreau and Emerson, who were very much interested in the relationship between nature and human culture.

I became a serious advocate for native plants

after accompanying a botanist colleague at Brooklyn Botanic Garden in a search for the seabead amaranth, an imperiled little plant that hadn't been seen on Long Island for forty years. We searched the ocean beaches of eastern Long Island, trudging through the sand for days. No luck. My legs were killing me. I had blisters on my toes. I wanted to collapse in the sand and take a nap. Just as I was sure I would faint from exposure, we found the plant growing at a beachfront mansion in Southampton, Long Island's glamorous summer playground. It had just been flattened by an SUV.

This got me thinking about the plight of plants, and the potential of a new kind of landscape design to nurture a greater richness and variety of life. The result was my book, *Stalking the Wild Amaranth: Gardening in the Age of Extinction*.”

When asked about her personal gardening practice, Janet responded; “In our garden on Shelter Island, which is off the east end of Long Island, my husband Don and I are restoring the coastal forest that was on the site before the previous owners decided to get rid of it and plant a lawn. We've been trying to bring back the understory, planting small flowering trees like dogwood, and shadbush, blueberries, viburnums, and other

native shrubs. And lots of ferns and wildflowers! All of which the deer have promptly eaten. I even planted the stuff they never touch along roadsides, like lady ferns. Wouldn't you know, they think they're delectable in our yard. Finally, about three years ago, we decided to build an eight foot deer fence on the back half of the property and let the deer have the front half. Now, when we plant a \$300 tree or other expensive plant in the front we spray it with Liquid Fence or some other horrible smelling stuff to keep the deer from devouring it; which seems to work.

As a result of her work Janet finds that making the connection between native plants and native wildlife is one of the best ways to get people excited about being a positive force for the environment. “And now we actually have data from studies showing that native plants support lots more native animals than most conventional landscape plants do. Reassuring people that a formal native garden is just as effective for wildlife as a naturalistic one with no straight lines is also effective.

The response I get from my books and lectures is very gratifying. It's difficult to say, though, whether there has been a major change in the public's perception of native plants. We just have to keep chipping away.

Kathy Prelesnik, WAM Editor

~ A CONVERSATION OVERHEARD AT A WAM CONFERENCE ~

Want native trees in your yard?

Who me? Why should I? Because, native trees make your yard something special.

I don't have time to think about something special for my yard. Sure, you do; winter gives us all more time for thinking about, studying, and planning our yards.

Only if you don't go to Florida or you don't have to shovel a ton of snow. Even if you do, look around your property, whether large or small, and think about what else you would like in your space.

Maybe I would like a bigger garage or a Jacuzzi. Those things are nice, but native trees are great because they can be used in your landscape to beautify, attract important insects, and provide screening, a windbreak, or shade.

And provide the leaves I have to rake every fall! You make it sound hard. Don't forget you can use those leaves for mulch or compost in other parts of your landscape! You may think you cannot do this; but you do not even need a professional landscaper. You just need to consider what **you** like and what **you** want. With a little bit of thought you can then begin to study and plan.

So what makes a native tree beautiful?

Shape is very visual and can add beauty to your landscape. There is the triangular shape of the white pine and pin oak, the rounded canopy of the bur oak, or the round shape of the white oak, the straight, bullet-shaped arborvitae, or the V-shaped hackberry. Beauty can also be found in a tree's flowers. White flowering dogwood, pagoda dogwood, redbud, serviceberry, and native fruit trees such as the American wild plum, the American crabapple, and the persimmon all have spring blossoms for you to enjoy. *Oh! Trees full of flowers in the spring; that would be pretty and add warmth!*

What about beautiful bark? We all may have seen and admired the shagbark hickory, shellbark hickory, sycamore, and the native birches - both paper white and yellow.

Birches yea! Hickories and sycamores nay! Raking leaves is easier than raking peeling bark. Have you seen the striped maple? *Huh?* It has green, white and black vertical stripes. It is very attractive all year round. It would look good in front of evergreens or the



Serviceberry

white siding or even the snow! But, because they attract moose it is illegal to plant them in suburban yards in Maine. That is probably why their nickname is moosewood.

Fall color can also contribute to the beauty of a native tree. *First comes the color, and then down come the leaves!* There are the yellows of the birches, sugar maple, quaking aspen, the hickories, silver maple, tulip tree, and the black walnut. You can see the red leaves of the red maple, red oak, scarlet oak, white oak, winged sumac, white flowering dogwood, and the black gum.

If the red oak has red leaves, why does the black gum have red leaves? The "black" in black gum really refers to the black bark in young black gum trees. Its red leaves appear before leaves on other trees turn their fall colors. So the autumn leaves on the black gum are truly spectacular! Native trees can have several attributes that make them a beautiful addition to your yard. Combinations of colors appear on the American mountain ash, American wild crabapple, American plum, sassafras, serviceberry, and the smooth and staghorn sumacs.

Native trees attract bugs, butterflies, moths, and mammals.

Why would I want a buggy yard? So you can see more native birds. You want those birds to be able to find native bugs to feed the fledglings. Native bugs have developed through the centuries on native plants. Native trees are less likely to show the holes bugs eat in the leaves. And butterflies and moths will only lay their eggs on leaves of particular native plants because their caterpillars are only able to eat the leaves of certain native plants.

Oh, that's right! Like the giant swallowtail butterfly needs to lay its eggs the wafer ash and the zebra swallowtail needs the pawpaw tree! So if I have those trees I will get the really cool butterflies? Yes, and you will have the opportunity to see really cool caterpillars and bugs, too! According to Douglas Tallamy in his book

Bringing Nature Home, our native oaks could be host to as many as 534 "cool" butterflies and bugs, too.

You have got to be kidding me! I don't see that many. No, but the birds do! There are other trees that act as insect hosts: willow (456); wild black cherry, pin cherry, and American plum (456); paper white and yellow birch (413); aspens, poplar and eastern cottonwood (368); American wild crabapple (311); maples (285); and many others. Why not put Dr. Tallamy's book on your reading list for this winter.



Pagoda Dogwood

Does it have pictures? Lots. Okay! I will check it out at the library. *So do these same native trees feed mammals?* Sure they do. All of the native trees that produce nuts or fruit have mammals that depend on them to live. If we do not have enough native trees producing food for the mammals, then they will look to the farmers' fields and our gardens to survive.

So because there are fewer native trees producing fruit and nuts in an area, our native mammals will move in on our flowers, gardens, and even bird feeders? Yes! So, now are you beginning to see how important native trees are? *Ummm...*

What's it going to cost you to heat your home this winter? *Lots!* *We pay year round to just spread out the cost.* Well, if you plant a windbreak, you can cut the cost of heating up to twenty-five percent. Planting a row of evergreens on the northwest side of your home is an easy one-time fix for your heating costs for years into the future. *I never thought of it that way.* *Could that windbreak also work as a living snow fence?* Now you are thinking! Using native trees, shrubs, and grasses can keep the snow from piling up in your driveway.

Whoa! Let's back up a minute. *If native trees can keep my home warmer and keep snow out of my drive, can native trees also help cool my house?* Of course, they can. This time you just plant trees with leaves on the southern side of your yard. In the summer they will provide shade and cool your house up to thirty percent. In the winter when the leaves have fallen, they will allow the sun to filter through their bare

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