

a voice
for the natural
landscaping
movement



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Celebrating natives
plant and natural
landscapes
since 1979.

The Grapevine

By Maryann Whitman

Advocacy at work

The Meijer grocery-retail chain, with 170 stores in Michigan, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, and Kentucky has entered into a partnership with The Nature Conservancy to combat invasive plants.

Not only is the Meijer's chain donating \$450,000 to the Nature Conservancy to support its efforts against invasives in the Great Lakes dunes, but next spring they will stop selling a number of invasive plants, and launch a campaign to promote non-invasive plants. "People want to help the environment, but don't often know how," Hank Meijer, co-chairman and co-CEO of Meijer, said. "This will help educate consumers, while they're shopping, about what plants are best-suited for their back yard to avoid a detrimental effect on the landscape we all share."

The mission of The Nature Conservancy is to preserve the plants, animals, and natural communities that represent the diversity of life on Earth by protecting the lands and waters they need to survive. The Nature Conservancy embraces a non-confrontational, market-based approach for accomplishing its science-driven mission.

Wild Ones efforts are at a more "grass-roots" level, specifically advocating the use of regionally native plants to further our equally "science-driven" mission. Is it possible that the time for these ideas has finally come? One can only hope...

The kind of friend Wild Ones Headquarters needs

The Helen Bader Foundation will donate \$750,000 to build a model of the Great Lakes at the Discovery World at Pier Wisconsin. The model will show museum visitors how the Great Lakes are connected, explain their features, and detail how water circulates through the lakes, ground, and atmosphere. "Teaching people of all ages and socio-economic backgrounds about freshwater will help families and communities understand how to better use and appreciate this great resource," said Daniel Bader, president of the family foundation.

Ask Wal-Mart, Home Depot, and Lowe's to stop selling cypress mulch

As the nation looks to invest billions to restore coastal Louisiana, endangered cypress stands are being clear-cut to feed an unsustainable and unnecessary cypress-mulch industry. Promoting other effective gardening choices, like pine straw and eucalyptus mulch, will help stop destruction of irreplaceable cypress wetlands that provide important habitat for endangered species and valuable barriers to flooding and hurricanes.

Wal-Mart, Home Depot, and Lowe's have the ability to save endangered cypress forests. Leveraging their massive purchasing power, they can rein in the logging operations that are grinding the Gulf Coast's natural storm protection into mulch.

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To have the maximum impact on the policies of Wal-Mart, Home Depot, and Lowe's, we need to speak with a loud, collective voice. Take action at www.healthygulf.org and learn more at www.saveourcypress.org.

It cuts both ways

In March, 2006, Belgium announced the opening of their first and only national park. It occupies more than 5,000 hectares – about 12,500 acres. One of their issues: management of two alien “pests” – *Prunus serotina* and *Quercus rubra* – our North American black cherry and red oak.

The word is Velcro

From the journal *Biological Conservation*: Velcro, whose name is an abbreviation of velours (the fuzzy part) and crochet (the part with hooks), has become ubiquitous in our culture. It is the fastener on kids' shoes, and is used by shuttle astronauts to anchor bits of gear in zero gravity. Some Australian botanists have discovered that its effectiveness is posing a threat to the planet's most pristine places. They inspected scientists and staff arriving at Macquarie Island, the jumping off point for the research stations of Antarctica. Using vacuum cleaners and forceps, they sucked and plucked every seed, spore, and plant fragment from clothing and equipment. On the 64 arrivals they found 981 seeds and fruits belonging to 90 species, some of them invasive and a serious threat to local flora. While lint in pockets and on woolly socks carried some of the seeds, the majority came attached to Velcro fastenings on clothing and gear.

This is something serious to think about as we hike around natural areas, picking up seeds with crochet hooks on our velours – and on our ever-present Velcro fasteners. On this same subject, we should also think about mud in the cleats of our hiking shoes, and the seeds it carries.

The birds and the bees...

According to a study released this fall by the National Research Council (NRC), not only are population numbers

of honeybees dramatically down, but the report also shows that, “Long-term population trends for several wild bee species (notably bumblebees), and some butterflies, bats, and hummingbirds are demonstrably downward.”

“Despite its apparent lack of marquee appeal, a decline in pollinator populations is one form of global change that actually has credible potential to alter the shape and structure of terrestrial ecosystems,” says NRC panel chair May R. Berenbaum, of University of Illinois, Champaign.

Habitat degradation and habitat loss, pesticide use, deployment of crop plants genetically engineered to express insecticidal proteins in pollen, “pathogen spillover” through contact with diseased managed populations, success of invasive alien plants which interfere with native nectar and pollen-producing wildflowers, are all indicated as causative factors.

Guides to Bee genera identification developed by USGS Native Bee Inventory and Monitoring Lab are available for use and viewing at: www.discoverlife.org/nh/tx/Insecta/Hymenoptera/Apoidea/#Identification.

Consider going to www.seeds.ca/proj_poll/howto.php at the Pollination Canada web site and downloading information on counting and reporting native pollinators. The manuals were written by Jim Dyer who recently won a Pollinator Advocate Award for his role in developing a volunteer insect pollinator monitoring program. The award was provided by the North American Pollinator Protection Campaign. Also try: www.pollinator.org/ and www.xerces.org/.

November 29, 2006

The bullfrogs in my pond are out and about today, and I think I heard a tree frog! By being active this late in the year I worry they are depleting their bodily stores that will be necessary for them to survive the winter. I wonder what effect this unnaturally warm weather will have all around.

Maryann is Editor of the Wild Ones Journal, and comes to the position with an extensive background in environmental matters of all kinds.