

a voice
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movement



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For more information, or to join
Wild Ones Natural Landscapers,
here's how to reach us:

Phone

(920) 730-3986
(877) 394-3954 (Toll-Free)

Mail

PO Box 1274
Appleton, WI 54912-1274

E-Mail

ExecDirector@wildones.org

WebSite

www.wildones.org

Celebrating natives
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The Grapevine

By Maryann Whitman

Michigan wildflower conference

The 15th Annual Wildflower Association of Michigan (WAM) Conference took place as usual on the Michigan State University campus, the first Sunday and Monday in March. For two days, some 450 registrants from all over the state milled about trying to choose prudently from a line-up of 24 speakers, who addressed every conceivable topic related to native plants. Wild Ones members, of course, figured very prominently among the registrants. This is the annual conference not to be missed, with so much potential for learning and exchanging new ideas. I bring you three things I took away from this one.



At the book table I met Mike Tiedeck and Betsy Pollock of the Detroit Metro (MI) Chapter and asked flippantly, "And what did you learn today?" Mike launched enthusiastically into a tale about his stand of yellow lady slippers that each year comes up in the middle of a path. They looked so healthy he thought he could move them without doing much damage. That morning he heard Bill Cullina's talk. Mike said "I had no idea of how important mycorrhizae [fungus] were to orchids. And they must exist in the soil around those lady slippers because they planted themselves in that spot."

Cullina had explained how tiny orchid seeds are and how low the germination rate is. Though a flower might produce 10,000 to 20,000 seeds, so few germinate that orchids are a relative rarity. The seeds carry no endosperm to feed the new seedlings. Each seed needs to be infected by a soil fungus [mycorrhizae] and partly digest that fungus in order for a plantlet to survive. Once the plantlet has chlorophyll-producing leaves and a few roots it becomes less reliant on the fungus for sustenance. Some orchids, however, grow roots so slowly that they depend on a symbiotic relationship with the mycorrhizae even when they are mature.

From a drawing of a dissected lady slipper sac, Mike learned how to reach the pollenia with a Q-tip so that he could pollinate his flowers, control where the seeds fall (they're usually wind-dispersed), and wait for his stock to multiply. He added as an after-thought "I'm going to have to move that path."

Bill Cullina is the author of the *New England Wild Flower Society's Guide to Growing and Propagating Wildflowers of the United States and Canada*. He was the keynote speaker at the WAM Conference.

At lunch, Ann McInnis, of the Flint (MI) Chapter, positively could not wait to share a tidbit that had captured her imagination. In a lecture that morning she

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had learned that “our great galloping night crawlers are not native to this continent! Their eggs were probably introduced here on the boots of Europeans. Of course they do wonderful things for our garden soils but problems arise when they migrate into our woods. They eat the litter on the ground, depriving some moths, butterflies, lady-bugs, and other insects of protected places to spend the winter.” Now there’s a conundrum: an invasive alien that can also be most beneficial. It’s not an entirely unheard of concept, it’s just strange to think it in terms of earthworms.

And, as for me, I learned what to do about my ever-spreading stand of *Ailanthus*. (I refuse to refer to it as tree of heaven because of the sympathy that name might elicit.) It seems that because this genus is clonal, spreading by underground roots, when a freshly cut stump is treated with glyphosate, the larger plant simply gives up on that stump and channels its energies into the rest of the clone. Some new (expensive) tools have appeared on the market that are capable of injecting larger quantities of glyphosate into the stump than might be delivered by a sponge applicator, which is usually plenty to kill buckthorn and the like. Jack McGowan-Stinski, the lecturer, a steward and land manager for the Michigan Nature Conservancy, was proud of his own “more cost effective” invention. With a portable drill he drills holes into the tree trunks. Using a 3/8” drill bit he makes a series of 1-1/2” deep holes, at a 45-degree angle downward, about every 1-1/2” around the circumference of the trunk and fills the holes with glyphosate from a squirt bottle. He says he has a better success rate the more members of the clone he treats. He still pays attention to the five-minute rule: deliver the

chemical within five minutes of the cut, before it glazes over.

You’ve gotta love a good conference! If you’re interested in getting on the mailing list for next year’s conference, e-mail Marji Fuller at marjif@iserv.net.

Seeding the Snow

Loving the earth is a personal business, and we all express this love by whatever means we can. I envy the people who can express their feelings in words that touch or entertain me, in words that speak to my heart. The best writing both reflects and shapes my feelings and gives voice to my yet unformed thoughts.

Such is the writing I found in *Seeding the Snow*, a 28-page journal a friend shared with me recently. This journal aims “to provide a medium for writers and artistic expression of women about nature; to foster connections to our Midwestern landscapes; to build a sense of community among writers, artists, and readers through social and cultural events.” I should not have been surprised at how much I enjoyed reading the poetry and essays. As I leafed through, I recognized some of the names of women who supported this journal as fellow members of Wild Ones: Patricia Armstrong, Greater du Page (IL) Chapter; Celeste Watts, Detroit Metro (MI) Chapter; and Kim Herman, Ann Arbor (MI) Chapter. I recognized also some names of women who should be members of Wild Ones.

If you’re interested in subscribing or in submitting material, contact *Seeding the Snow*, 2534 N. St. Louis, Chicago, IL 60647 or Karengorge17@cs.com.

Maryann is a member of the Oakland (MI) Chapter and the Journal’s feature editor. “The Grapevine” is a place to exchange information about special chapter happenings or other things of interest to Wild Ones members. To submit items, please contact Maryann at Wild Ones Journal, PO Box 231, Lake Orion, MI 48361 or featuresedit@wildones.org.