

a voice  
for the natural  
landscaping  
movement



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Celebrating natives  
plant and natural  
landscapes  
since 1979.

## The Grapevine

By Maryann Whitman

### **Do all serious gardening practices still come from Europe?**

In France, Belgium, and the Netherlands, where gardens occupy four times more area than natural reserves, ecologists are enlisting gardeners to leave several square meters of wild grass, brambles, and nettles in their gardens to feed butterfly larvae. "Spotless gardens with a well-mown lawn are true deserts which lack refuges for butterflies, while wild gardens can also be very pretty," says Jeremy Allain of one Brittany-based conservation organization. He adds: "We take the butterfly because it's a good ambassador for making people think about the problem of maintaining biodiversity. The idea is that everyone can do something concrete, it's not just a matter of the state or of associations."

"Protecting butterflies may seem odd, but it's to protect biodiversity and therefore man," explained another enthusiast.

### **A summary of a Royal Horticultural Society policy statement published in 2004**

"The Royal Horticultural Society shares public concern in reducing peat use to minimize the effects of global peat extraction on peat bog habitats. Many viable peat alternatives exist which are either completely peat-free or of reduced peat content. With improved labeling and information on packaging, gardeners will be able to make more informed decisions about peat alternatives. The RHS aims to transfer 90 percent of its own growing media requirements to peat alternatives by 2010." From [www.rhs.org.uk](http://www.rhs.org.uk) learning and education section.

### **Global warming and carbon sequestration revisited**

In the March April issue of the Journal, in his President's Message, Joe Powelka mentioned "global warming" and "climate change," and raised a few eyebrows. He mentioned "carbon sequestration" by native plants, and the eyebrows wrinkled quizzically.

Not open to dispute is some information published by NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association). Each year since global measurements of CO<sub>2</sub> began in 1958, the amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere has increased. Scientific measurements of levels of CO<sub>2</sub> contained in cylinders of ice, called ice cores, indicate that the pre-industrial carbon dioxide level was 278 ppm (parts per million). That level did not vary more than 7 ppm during the 800 years between 1,000 and 1,800 A.D. Atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> levels have increased from about 315 ppm in 1958 to 378 ppm at the end of 2004, which means human activities have increased the concentration of atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> by 100 ppm or 36 percent, over a period of about 200 years.

*Continued on page 2*



*Continued from page 1*

We are advised by people who think about these things that achieving 400 ppm would be a "Bad Thing."

One way to remove large quantities of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere is through the process of "carbon sequestration." What that can mean essentially is, tying up carbon atoms into complex organic molecules, and burying them out of contact with oxygen atoms. The native plants that Wild Ones members promote do precisely this. Think of the tremendous root systems most of these plants have, and think of all the carbon that is tied up, or sequestered, in those roots.

Another way to assist in the process of carbon sequestration is to not disturb that which is already sequestered. That's what the Royal Horticultural Society is doing (along with saving peat bog habitat), in opting to stop using peat in its gardening practices. The peat is plant matter that, because of the chemistry and

hydrology of peat bogs, is prevented from breaking down and releasing its stored carbon. And assisting carbon sequestration is what the European butterfly habitat conservation organizations are accomplishing by suggesting that a couple of square meters of each garden be left wild and unscrapped.

As Joe points out in this issue, the process of "doing something" can be made easier through cooperative effort, and, I would add, without worrying about the politics of it.

#### **Pollinator Week**

June 24-30, 2007, has been recognized, and will be celebrated as Pollinator Week in Indiana, Iowa, Louisiana, Maine, and Michigan. There will be celebratory events in almost all states. For more information go to [www.pollinator.org/pollinator\\_week.htm](http://www.pollinator.org/pollinator_week.htm).

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