

a voice
for the natural
landscaping
movement



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Celebrating natives
plant and natural
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Grapevine

By Maryann Whitman

The onslaught does not abate

The April 2, 2011, issue of The New York Times ran an op-ed piece by an anthropologist, likening the "native species movement...led by environmentalists, conservationists and gardeners," to "the antiimmigrant sentiment sweeping the country," from the recent antiimmigration laws passed in Arizona to the "anti-immigrant crusade" furthered by "the Minutemen and the Tea Party." He says that "despite cultural and political differences, both are motivated...by the fear of being swamped by aliens."

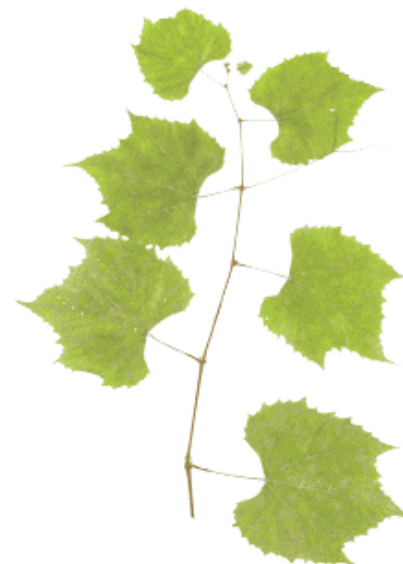
On the other hand, the April issue of BioScience has a paper by Ricciardi titled "Should Biological Invasions Be Managed as Natural Disasters?"

In a way, these two separate publishing events typify the state of affairs between the naysayers and the scientific researchers. They function side by side. Problems arise when public media, often looking for a controversial news bite, picks up an insulting comment about invasion biology, usually an emotional appeal masquerading as argument. Parallels have even, in the past, been drawn between ecological nativism and the nativism invoked in political genocides. There is no parallel, but the ideas have been commingled in the minds of the public. The same public whose acceptance we work so hard to garner.

Periodically, ecologists and invasion biologists rally to respond, but the terrorist's bomb has been dropped. Further, scientists are constrained by the very nature of their profession to couch rebuttals in careful terms, terms that cannot be absolute, but rather involve probabilities and likelihoods. The public does not care for "probabilities and likelihoods," nor does our culture foster this reasoning.

For those who might wish to explore further this recurring debate please consult these papers and their respective bibliographies: (A diligent web search of the first author's (on most papers) personal web site will usually produce a copy of the entire paper.)

- **Gould, Stephen Jay**, 1997. An evolutionary perspective on strengths, fallacies, and confusions in the concept of native plants. In Joachim Wolschke-Bulmahn, *Nature and Ideology*, Dumbarton Oaks Colloquium on the History of Landscape Architecture, no. 18, pp. 11-19.
- **Sagoff, M.**, "Do Non-native Species Threaten the Natural Environment?" *Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics* 18 (2005), 215-236
- **Simberloff, D.**, "Non-native Species DO Threaten the Natural Environment!" *Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics* 18 (2005) 597-607.





But life goes on

Garlic mustard season is upon us, and Don Geiger, a Wild Ones member from Dayton, Ohio, uses a novel method to deal with dense stands.

He writes, "Garlic mustard establishes and thrives on disturbed soil. If the plants are growing densely, pulling creates a lot of disturbed soil. We wait to the first week in May, and use a string weedcutter method. A severed or pulled stalk with flowers on it contains enough nutrients from the stem cells and taproot to force seed formation by the flowers on the stalk.

"We wait until the last flowers on the stalk are ready to bloom, and on the first pass with the string cutter, cut off 6 to 12 inches, then a second pass cuts at the bottom of the flowers growing on the stem, and a final pass cuts the plant off at the ground.

"Cutting the flower stalk into sections severely limits available nutrients for producing viable seed. By the time flowering is nearly complete, the plant has already consumed much of the nutrient supply from the taproot and stem. Cutting the stalk at ground level lessens re-sprouting and flower production after the cutting. You don't even need to gather the pieces and bag them. Further, you're dealing with an area, and not one plant at a time.

"As the density of the stand lessens over time, you may want to revert to pulling with minimal soil disturbance." To refresh your familiarity with garlic mustard look up the June/July, 2006, issue of the Wild Ones Journal, at wildones.org/download.

Build a Nest for Mason Bees

A friend recently showed me a habitat for native bees she had created of short lengths of bamboo (each about 6-inches long), with hollow openings about 3/8ths inch in diameter, open at one end, and plugged a natural node at the other. With a couple strands of wire, she had neatly tied together a cluster of about 15 or 20 of these short lengths, and hung the bundle at chest height on the east wall of her garage, where it will get some warming by the sun, and be sheltered from rain. She had wrapped the bundle in a loose shroud of chicken wire, which will not stop the bees, but will keep some woodpecker from making a feast.

In late November she plans to move the habitat into her unheated tool shed where it will remain, sheltered until next spring, when daytime temperatures are consistently in the 50s. By that time, the young bees will be ready to fight their way out of their mud nesting chambers. The previous summer they had hatched as larvae, fed on nectar and pollen that had been stored by their mother, and had undergone metamorphosis while cocooned during the winter. They will be ready to mate and repeat the cycle.

A similar mason bee nest may be purchased from Gardener's Supply for \$16.95 plus shipping.

Getting control over another invader

Just as we gained control of the invasive pink flamingo, another noxious invasive looms on the horizon – the garden gnome. The University of Utah Extension Service has produced this informative video: youtube.com/watch?v=D0foMKAxCww.4