a voice
for the natural
landscaping
movement

Wild Ones®

NATIVE PLANTS, NATURAL LANDSCAPES

Reprinted from the
Wild Ones Journal,
Sept/Oct 2003 issue.

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
plant and natural
landscapes
since 1979.

The Grapevine

By Maryann Whitman

Turf or Concrete?

"I was stunned when I read this [below]," writes Kim Lowman Vollmer, member of (Rock River, IL Valley Chapter), who teaches fourth grade. "Every year we use a free booklet, "This Business called Agriculture." On page 23 of the 2002-2003 issue, it says:

Turf not only looks nice, but provides many healthy benefits to us and our environment… Turf also catches rainfall. This is good for two reasons. First, the turf holds the water in place so it doesn't run off to cause erosion. Secondly, as water flows through the grass and its roots, it is cleaned before it reaches the underground aquifer… Lawns act like air conditioners and filters, cooling us down in the summertime and catching dust and dirt in the air.

Kim says, "I have been taught that turf is similar to concrete when it comes to rainwater runoff. Prairie plants stop the runoff much better. I can't believe the four-inch roots on turf can do as much of the filtering as can prairie plants with their wonderful root systems."

Journal readers, please write to and correct these people regarding their turf-grass claims at: WI Agribusiness Foundation, 211 Canal Road, Waterloo, WI 53594. Their website is: www.wisagri.com

A Weed is in the Purse of the Beholder: a lesson in bureaucratic logic.

Kim also sends in a problematic clipping from the Janesville (WI) Gazette. A hillside along a busy street in town has been planted in wild bergamot, purple prairie clover, purple and yellow coneflowers, black-eyed Susans, big bluestem, switch grass and Indian grass. Boy Scouts participated in the planting and city staff will burn the prairie about every third year. It sounds like a wonderful project. But… the planting also includes dame's rocket (Hesperis matronialis). When the dame's rocket came into bloom, the Park Director received a flurry of calls, some wanting to know more about the purple and white flowers, others to say that dame's rocket is a noxious weed.

Dame's rocket
(Hesperis matronialis)

The director stands his ground, maintaining that dame's rocket is attractive and low-maintenance. Furthermore, he figures "the plantings will save a couple thousand dollars a year in maintenance costs, keeping noxious weeds under control."

Huh??

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Martha discovers Natural Landscaping with Natives!!

The July 2003 issue of Martha Stewart Living, had a very complementary article on Lorrie Otto and her native garden in Milwaukee with excellent photographs. It included the contact information for all the Wild Ones chapters (except South Carolina's Foothills Chapter; did they run out of space?). I wonder how many calls came in for information following this nod from Martha Stewart about "how roadsides used to look."

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Maryann Whitman is a member of the Oakland (MI) Chapter and the Journal's feature editor. To submit items, please contact Maryann at Wild Ones Journal, PO Box 1274, Appleton, WI 54912 or featuresedit@wildones.org.