

Native Plants and County Ordinances

by *Connie Heinrich, Editor*

During the dark days of winter, many of us expectantly wait for the first garden catalogs of the year to be delivered. Seeing all the pictures of flowering plants reminds us that spring is just around the corner. Increasingly, growers are featuring cultivars of native plants in order to feed the demand for naturally resilient perennials. Organizations, such as Thorn Creek Audubon and the Midewin Alliance, have native plant sales in the spring and begin taking orders as early as February. Unfortunately, not all homeowners share our enthusiasm for native plants.

In order to avoid conflicts between neighbors, Will County is drafting a "Natural Plantings Ordinance" that purports to protect the rights of homeowners to have native plants in their yards. Previously, most native vegetation fell victim to outdated municipal "weed" ordinances. Rather than rewrite the weed ordinance, the County decided to make a separate ordinance that would address "natural", i.e. native, plantings. The first paragraphs of the draft ordinance list all the reasons why planting native plants is a good idea. But then, the regulation sections begin and we find that the County isn't going to make it easy for the homeowner to choose native plants as a landscaping option.

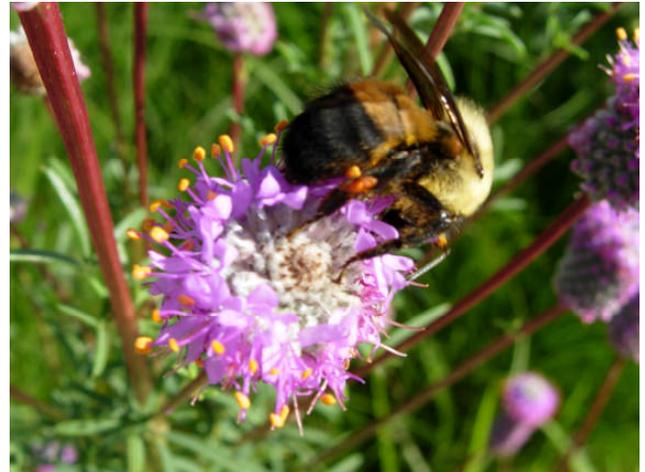


My Prairie Garden

photos by Jerry Heinrich

If the draft ordinance were to be adopted as currently written, homeowners wishing to install native plants in an area 4' x 4' or larger would need to apply to the County for a permit. In the permit request, the homeowner (or developer) would need to provide dimensions for the area to be planted

as well as a layout including the names of the plants. The plants would need to be appropriate for the soil conditions of the area to be planted. Planting areas would have to be a certain distance from property lines and structures. Yards that are greater than 2.5 acres or that are adjacent to natural areas would be exempt from the permit process.



Purple Prairie Clover and Bumblebee

At this point, you may be asking who will determine what is appropriate for your yard. Obviously, the County does not profess to be an expert on native plants, so they would pass permit requests to some other agency or business that the County deems worthy of giving an informed opinion. All this will come at a cost to the homeowner because no one is going to do this type of in-depth evaluation for free. On the positive side, once you have gotten your permit, a cranky neighbor can't insist that your yard is full of "weeds" that must be eradicated.

There is every indication that the Will County Land Use Department is trying to do the right thing. The department has consulted with people who are native plant advocates and it has allowed the public time to comment. They appear to be willing to modify the draft in order to make it fair. Hopefully, by the time you read this, there will be an ordinance that won't discourage homeowners from planting native plants. If done properly, the ordinance can serve as a model for other counties that are becoming urbanized and face the issue of lawns of bluegrass versus native vegetation.

Will County Green

by *Connie Heinrich, Editor*

Now that the holidays are over, we face the task of cleaning up after the festivities. What do we do with the strings of burned out Christmas lights? What about the Christmas tree? If you're asking yourself these questions, www.willcountygreen.com has the answers. This new website launched by the Will County Land Use Department tells you that those Christmas lights can be brought to the County's electronics recycling centers. The Christmas tree may be picked up by your municipality if it collects landscape waste. If not, you can bring your tree to one of four Will County Forest Preserve locations: Isle a la Cache, Plum Creek Nature Center, Monee Reservoir or the Sugar Creek Administration Center. If only there was a way to recycle unwanted calories from too many holiday dinners!

Then there's the problem of used-up alkaline batteries. I was collecting them because I didn't have any idea what to do with them. I suspect I'm not the only one with a pile of used batteries. On the Will County Green website, I learned that the mercury was eliminated from

alkaline batteries some years ago, and now they can be put in landfills without creating a potential ecological disaster. I learned that alkaline batteries are also very difficult to recycle so putting them in the trash is actually the recommended method of disposal. Of course, the same cannot be said of other types of batteries such as NiCad, lead-acid, and Lithium-ion. These batteries must be taken to an authorized collection facility or a business that provides a collection service.

Will County Green isn't just about recycling. The website contains green tips, green news and a list of green events. For teachers and educators, there are lists of relevant books and DVD's, on-line games, and tips on how to make your school more energy efficient. For businesses, there is information on green jobs and on how to retrofit your business to make a greener work environment. Best of all, the site tells you how going green can save you money.

Electronics & Bulb Recycling on the South Side

by *Sharon Rolek, Conservation Liaison - Calumet*

I am excited to have found a site in Chicago closer than the near-north HHW city site to recycle not only electronics, but also bulbs – both round and CFL's. In fact, I brought four long fluorescent bulbs from a remodeling project and they were welcomed at EverLights. As a helpful recycler, EverLights will be added to our Recycling List for the Lake Calumet area. Their sister company, Evergreen Supply Company, is Chicagoland's electrical supplier of choice since 1986. EverLights is truly one of our Good Neighbors in the battle against waste.

As Good Neighbors, they also accept computers, free of charge to individuals (not companies). They will accept ten electronics pieces per household per year. Items that will be accepted for collection include TV's, speakers, printers, CD players, magnetic tape reels, telephones, copiers, fax machines and stereos. Call for drop-off information: 773-375-4750. Hours are from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., weekdays only.

EverLights Lamp Recycling Services, a provider of environmentally safe recycling, is located at 9901 S. Torrence Avenue in Chicago, 60617. They can be contacted by e-mail at info@evergreensupply.com. Lots more information is available on their website at www.EverLights.com. You can also see their green fact sheet at www.evergreensupplyco.com.

Christmas Tree and Holiday Light Recycling in Chicago

by *Sharon Rolek, Conservation Liaison - Calumet*

C3, Chicago Conservation Corps, through the Department of Environment has joined with Elgin Recycling Inc. to provide holiday string-light recycling in addition to the holiday tree recycling program. The drop-off boxes are available from December 13, 2010 through January 18, 2011 during normal office hours. The two sites located on the south side of Chicago are:

RecycleTech Solutions (in Pullman)
11235 S. Cottage Grove

and

City of Chicago Southeast Senior Center
1767 East 79th Street

For more information, see www.cityofchicago.org



Climate Legislation - RIP

excerpted from a Conservation Alert by Donnie R. Dann

Despite growing evidence of climate change, climate legislation appears to be dead for the foreseeable future. Why? Ninety-eight percent of all professional climate scientists recognize global warming is happening and is caused by human activities. Pew Research Center tells us that four years ago close to 50% of Americans believed global warming is real and caused by human activity. In October 2010, it is down to 34 %. What accounts for this drop in the face of these world-wide events? Could the following partially explain it?

- The Center for Responsive Politics reports that during the first six months of 2010 the fossil fuel industry spent \$75 million lobbying Congress and outspent environmental organizations by seven to one.
- Overplaying the East Anglia computer hacking fiasco, where stolen emails from a single research center and concerning only a fraction of available data (hardly enough to overturn the entire body of climate science), portray this as "evidence" that the science of climate change is wrong
- Alleging 'Climategate' to sow further doubt and suggest that the evidence demonstrating global warming is all part of some great hoax
- Ironically, as a recent study from University of California, Berkeley suggests, the more severe the prediction, the greater the likelihood of disbelief!

Kwanzaa Day Hike

Winter scene from the annual Kwanzaa Day hike on Sunday, December 26

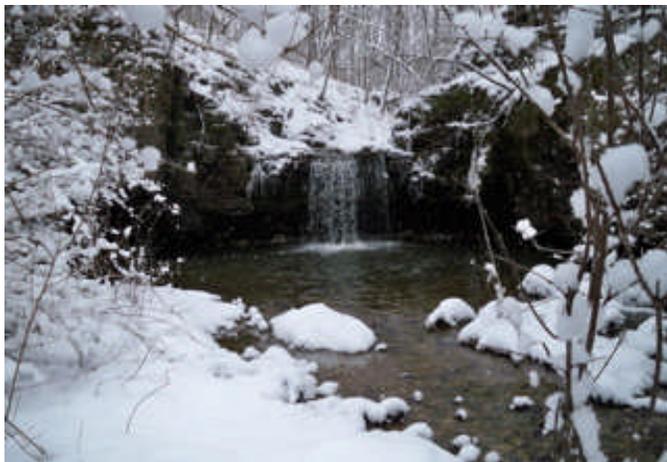


photo by Carol Malnar

Outings

by Steve Baker, Outings Chair

Winter outings are tricky. The weather may cooperate for skiing, or it may just churn up the mud, so advance planning is tough. We do, on the other hand, try to get out a few times. If you want to be on the e-mail list, contact Steve Baker (see address below.)

Outings are generally suitable for participants of all ages and levels of expertise. Non-members are also welcome to attend.

Jan. 30, Sunday:

Are you looking for a way to celebrate the end of January? Join with members of the Midewin Alliance for an invigorating hike and/or cross-country ski outing on Midewin's West Side Trail. We will meet at the Iron Bridge Trail Head at 10:00 a.m. for this 4 mile (round-trip) hike. For those who are interested in lunch, we will meet at Hayden's Crossing in Wilmington afterwards.

To reserve a spot or for more information, contact Jerry Heinrich at g.heinrich@sbcglobal.net or at 815-476-6171.

Mar. 5, Saturday:

Bicycle Tune-up and Maintenance Workshop

Get the bikes ready for spring and learn to do some basic maintenance that will keep your bike running better all year long.

It'll happen in my garage, so space is limited. Contact Steve Baker at trinitysb@msn.com for more information.

Winter Workdays



If you enjoy working outdoors (even in the winter,) please consider volunteering in one or more of your local natural areas. Information and workday schedules can be found at the following websites:

Cook County Forest Preserves www.fpdcc.com
(or contact Alice Brandon at 312-356-9990 or alice@fotfp.org)

Will County Forest Preserves www.fpdwc.com

Midewin Nat'l. Tallgrass Prairie www.fs.fed.us/mntp

Letters to the Editor:

Letters on content within the Sauk-Calumet newsletter should be sent to the editor at: sc-editor@illinois.sierraclub.org

Please include your full name and address, and reference the article on which you are commenting.

Sauk-Calumet Group

People You Should Know

Steve Baker*	815-485-5273
Acting Chair / Outings	
John Field*	630-852-8202
Treasurer / Web Site	
Connie Heinrich*	815-476-6171
Secretary / Newsletter	
Jerry Heinrich*	815-476-6171
Conservation, Co-chair (West), Midewin Liaison	
Georganne Higgins*	815-936-9040
Membership	
Lois Lauer*	708-923-1550
Programs / Publicity	
Mary Lubertozzi	708-747-1359
Political Education	
Carol Strand*	708-333-6474
Paul Strand*	708-333-6474
Conservation Co-chair (East), Programs	
Sharon Rolek	773-646-0990
Conservation Liaison, Calumet Region	
Mike Rzepka	708-532-1419
River Watch Program	
Rich Treptow	708-747-0649
Publications	

*Denotes an elected member of the Executive Committee

Sauk-Calumet Program

Schedule

Meetings are held at 7:15 p.m. on the second Monday of every month at the Frankfort Library with the exception of July and August. All meetings are free and open both to Sierra Club members and to the public.

The Frankfort Library is located on the south side of Lincoln Highway (Rte.30), about three miles south of I-80, between LaGrange Road (Rt. 45) and Harlem Avenue (Rt. 43). The address is 21119 Pfeiffer Road.

Jan. 10 Member's Slide Night

Calling all members! Please bring slides (film or digital images) or prints of your latest outdoor experience, be it a grand adventure on the other side of the globe or the beautiful butterflies of your own backyard. Call Lois Lauer at 708-923-1550 if you have slides to share.

Feb. 14 Jackson Creek Watershed

Joanne Webb will bring us up to date on the efforts to protect the Jackson Creek watershed, part of which includes Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie land.

Mar. 14 Bluebirds!

Kay MacNeil will speak about her work to protect the once-plentiful Eastern Bluebird whose numbers have been declining in the last century because of habitat destruction and competition with non-native starlings and house sparrows.

Apr. 11 Kankakee Sands Ecosystem

Marianne Hahn will speak about the Kankakee Sands Ecosystem and the efforts that are underway to protect this rich habitat.

- **Editor's Note:**

Kay MacNeil is the Chicago Area Co-Coordinator of the Illinois Audubon Society's Stamps for Wildlife Habitat program. The Illinois Audubon Society collects, sort and sells commemorative stamps to raise funds for land acquisition to protect habitat in Illinois. So please collect and bring your cancelled commemorative stamps to the March meeting.

Do not try to remove the stamps from the envelope! Instead cut around the stamp allowing approximately 1/4" to 1/8" of paper around the stamp.