NATIVE NEWS

Gibson Woods Wild Ones

6201 Parrish Ave. Hammond, IN * 219-844-3188

February, 2022 *Volume 23, Issue 1*

Wild Ones promotes environmentally sound landscaping practices to encourage biodiversity through the preservation, restoration, and establishment of native plant communities. Wild Ones is a not-for-profit, environmental, educational, and advocacy organization.

GREETING FROM THE PRESIDENT:

2021 In review… Looking forward to an eventful 2022

We've survived another challenging year. I'm happy to say that through our collective teamwork & ingenuity, we successfully maneuvered through our encountered obstacles once again! Another successful year-long greenhouse experience is behind us - thanks to many diligent members who stuck it out through the Summer. Plus our plant sale, another round of zoom meetings & presentations. I'm proud of us!!

I'm really impressed that we welcomed 26 new members in 2021 - up from 11 in 2020. Many of those new members are already involved in volunteering both physically and administratively. I see us moving little by little into new uncharted directions, and I couldn't be more thrilled!!

We recently decided to conduct our business meetings via Zoom on a weekday instead of on Saturdays. The first meeting of the year was held on Wednesday, January 5th. We had a larger than usual turn-out, so I think we made the right choice. Going forward, please plan on Business Meetings to be held on the first Wednesday of the month at 6:30 p.m.

We sponsored our first presentation of the year - Winter Sowing with our one & only Dolly Foster. More than 240 people registered for the event - our biggest turn out ever!

Greenhouse Orientations for members were held in January. It was exciting to see several new members, as well as most of our veteran Greenhouse volunteers. We've dug right in and are on our way to another successful plant sale! If you are a member and missed the orientation and want to sign up to work in the Greenhouse, it's not too late. Please contact Peggy Foster if you want to join in our fun (contact information is located on page 2). Keep in mind, even if you can't commit to every week, we can still use your help.

Something else important to mention - to everyone who is reading this…

SAVE-THE-DATE

Our 22nd Annual Native Plant Sale will be held on Saturday, May 7th. We will keep you posted as details develop. One thing for certain, it will be as great as ever. Over 100 species of native plants, shrubs, ferns & grasses/sedges are being nurtured as we speak!!

Happy New Year! It looks like we're starting it out with a BANG!!

Kim Moor

Please note: After registering for our meetings & presentations, you will receive a confirmation email directly from Zoom. It will contain a link & password for joining the meeting. Check your Spam folder if you don't immediately see a email containing the link after registering.

Please contact Kim Moor at kckim10@gmail.com if you did not receive the link.

Visit us online at:
http://gw-wildones.org/

New Membership & Renewals:

$40 household - or - $25 student, ltd income

Send check to:

Wild Ones, 2285 Butte des Morts Beach Rd., Neenah, WI 54956

Mark your check 'Chapter 38'

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Monthly Meetings will be held via Zoom on the first Wednesday of the month at 6:30 pm - unless stated otherwise.

Links to register for all online presentations & meeting will be provided prior to the meeting.

Please email kckim10@gmail.com or text/call 219-433-5731 with questions.

February 2, 2022 6:30-8:00 p.m.
Board Meeting - Officers & Chairpersons requested
All members welcome
(via Zoom - Registration required)

March 2, 2022 6:30-8:00 p.m.
Business Meeting—Members Only
(via Zoom - Registration required)

March 12, 2022 10:00-11:30 a.m.
Native Horticulture - functional and aesthetic ways of incorporating natives to your garden plan - with Oakley Molinaro
(via Zoom - Registration required)

Inside this Issue:

Join us on Facebook

https://www.facebook.com/pages/Wild-Ones-Native-Plants-Natural-Landscapes-Gibson-Woods-Chapter-38/528949993858676

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

Welcome New Members

Annette Bartl
Elizabeth Dommer
Sue Grossbauer
Susan Harris
Nancy Johnson
Teresa Lekan
Vinita Mehta

We look forward to getting to know you!

GW-Wild Ones February BOARD MEETING

Zoom Meeting – registration is required

Date: Wednesday Feb 2, 2022 Time: 6:30-8:00 PM

All Officers, Chairs, & Committee Members are encouraged to attend. All Members are Welcome! Main topics will be Key Roles & Goals for 2022.

Register in advance for this meeting: https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZcrc-GppzsoH9OjcQpiF2slvuximscgK6n7

A recording of this meeting will be sent to all current Members.

GW-Wild Ones March Business Meeting

Zoom Meeting – registration is required

Date: Wednesday March 2, 2022 Time: 6:30-8:00 PM

Register in advance for this meeting: https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZIsceCrqzorHdyT12viC543KKES-XkDAxJw.

A recording of this meeting will be sent to all current Members.

Native Horticulture - functional and aesthetic ways of incorporating natives to your garden plan – with Oakley Molinaro

Zoom Presentation – registration is required

Date: Saturday, March 12, 2022 Time: 10:00-11:00 AM

Native plants are hardened, adapted, and feed our ecology. From a windowsill or acreage, Oakley will address common difficulties and introduce new ideas on how to help incorporate your favorite natives to any available space. Some issues to be highlighted include water erosion, dry sandy soils, and areas of heavy clay with poor drainage. Hügelkultur will be highlighted as one practice, along with a variety of plants that may fit your needs - including: Butterfly Milkweed, Cardinal Flower, Stiff Goldenrod and Wild Bergamot.

Oakley Molinaro is a student Arborist and Naturalist. He previously worked a garden program for therapy and environmental education and is currently working in tree healthcare.

Register in advance for this meeting: https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZAodu6hqjksE9ecjISp1xTEo3vWDmlIHdSg

A recording of this meeting will be sent to all who registered.

PLANT STUDY- by Olimpia Gutierrez

Eastern Prickly Pear ***(Opuntia humifusa)*** Also know as: Devil's Tongue, Indian Fig
Cactus family - *Cactaceae*

Opuntia humifusa is a perennial cactus composed of 2-7" long flattened, ovoid segments with small barbed bristles and scattered spines. The succulent pads are actually water-storing stems.

The Eastern Prickly Pear grows from a single pad in the ground which will produce additional pads on its margins which can be erect or sprawl out horizontally. Blooms develop in late spring to early summer along the upper margins of the pads producing waxy flowers that are yellow to gold in color with reddish centers. Edible fruits measuring 1-2 inches, also with bristles, replace the flowers. These start out green and turn red or purple as they mature. The fruit can persist until the next spring and contains several flat, light-colored seeds. Roots are fibrous and shallow. Older stems become woody with age. The Eastern Prickly Pear generally tolerates the moisture, humidity, and winters of the Midwest. Some pads may die off in certain weather conditions but surviving pads will root readily to produce new plants.

Cultivation: Sunny, hot, dry environments - sandy, rocky, coastal habitats. Can form colonies. The bristles readily pierce the skin and can be very irritating and may cause allergic reactions in some. Both the fruits and the pads are edible. Pads may look shriveled during the winter but recover in spring.

Soil type:	Well draining soil, sand, gravel
Moisture:	Dry to medium, will rot in standing water
Sun:	Full
Height:	1 ft
Zones:	4 to 9
Propagation:	Seed, rooting of pads
Disease:	None noted

Fauna: Various species of bees visit the flowers and many insects feed on the juices of the pads and fruits. Vertebrates including White-tailed deer eat the pads and fruits.

Sources: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Opuntia_humifusa
https://www.illinoiswildflowers.info/prairie/plantx/prickly_pearx.htm
http://www.missouribotanicalgarden.org/PlantFinder/PlantFinderDetails.aspx?taxonid=278416&isprofile=1&basic=opuntia

Native Plants in The News - by Kim Moor

I thought I'd share some native plant news that has come my way over the last couple months…

2022 Perennial Plant of the Year: Little Bluestem

The Perennial Plant Association (PPA) has honored Little Bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*) as the 2022 Perennial Plant of the Year!

As a whole, little bluestem is a handsome, colorful and compact North American tall-grass. It has a dense and upright carriage that recommends it to tight spaces. The foliage tends to show bluish tints from spring through summer and turn orange in autumn, concurrent with flowering. The seed heads are fluffy and white, persisting into fall and winter to lend interest and feed ground-foraging birds. Little bluestem is a warm-season grass, meaning it will be slow to start growth in the spring, but it will sail through the heat of summer and contribute great fall interest. Grow in full sun and well-drained, poor to average soil. It tolerates dry sites. It may self-sow, but it is a bunching grass that spreads very slowly by its roots.

Source: https://www.hortmag.com/plants/2022-perennial-plant-of-the-year

Solar Farms

You might have heard about the Solar farms that are popping up all over. Well, Northwest Indiana is set to have the largest one in the country. You might wonder what this has to do with Native plants, or even the environment. Well, read on…

In total, about 60 landowners between two counties will be part of this project — bringing together a total of about 13,000 acres. That said, only about 20% of those acres will actually have panels on them. Much of the land has forests and wetlands on them, which all will stay. There also will be a lot of green space from the edge of property lines and ditches as well as the area in between panels.

While panels will cover about only 2,500 acres, there will be roughly 2.85 million panels across the solar farm — enough to power nearly a quarter-million homes. A large portion of that acreage is farmland. By no longer farming the land, about one billion gallons of irrigation water will be saved each year. Roughly 2,000 tons of carbon emissions from coal will also be avoided annually. There will also be significantly fewer pesticides and fertilizers applied to the land, which often can run off and pollute surrounding waterways. AND… In an effort to bring genetic diversity back to the area, there are plans to plant a lot of native pollinator species around the solar farm to encourage more bees, butterflies and wildlife. Including a lot of milkweed to help the struggling monarch butterfly population. The pollinators attracted will help other farmers in the area. Pretty cool, huh?

In another article, I read about these farms in other parts of the country. There was mention of researchers growing Silflower at some solar installations in the Midwest, testing its potential as an oilseed crop. The article went on to say that this was among native plants that blanketed the vast North American prairie until settlers developed farms and cities. Nowadays the plant is confined largely to roadsides and ditches. They mentioned that this long-stemmed cousin of the sunflower may be poised for a comeback, thanks to solar energy! They also went on to say that the deep-rooted perennial also offers forage for livestock and desperately needed habitat for bees, butterflies and hummingbirds.

While I found all of this very fascinating, I also was perplexed because I've never heard of Silflower before. So of course, I needed to find out what plant they were talking about. Silflower is another name for Rosinweed, aka *Silphium integrifolium.* Rosinweed is in the same subfamily and tribe as sunflower. It matures more quickly than many other members of the genus, such as *Silphium terebinthinaceum* (Prairie Dock) and *Silphium laciniatum* (Compass Plant), and are relatively smaller in stature. Another nice feature of this plant is that it rarely flops over in the flower garden. They are deep rooted and support a wide diversity of pollinators.

Rosinweed has a fragrant resin while in flower, which was chewed as gum by Amerindian children. It is less dramatic in appearance than some of its gigantic cousins but matures more quickly and tolerates drought as well or better. Rosinweed resembles many *Helianthus spp.* (Sunflowers), but its disk florets are sterile and ray florets are fertile. The Sunflowers, on the other hand, have fertile disk florets and sterile ray florets. Rosinweed tends to produce flowers earlier than the Sunflowers, but sometimes their blooming periods overlap. While this plant can form sizable clumps, it doesn't spread as aggressively by means of underground rhizomes as many Sunflower species.

I think it's time to get myself some rosinweed – or maybe a solar farm AND some rosinweed! Ha, ha.

Sources: https://www.msn.com/en-us/travel/news/northwest-indiana-will-be-home-to-largest-solar-farm-in-us-covering-13000-acres/ar-AAQuGla
https://www.agrinews-pubs.com/news/science/2021/11/19/bees-sheep-crops-solar-developers-tout-multiple-benefits/
http://illinoiswildflowers.info/prairie/plantx/rosinweedx.htm

IN THE GREENHOUSE

Greenhouse Orientations were held last month. We welcomed many new members, as well as some 'veterans'. Work is underway!

From left to right:

Orientation day 2022

Plug trays ready to be 'bumped up'

Some of our over wintering plants from last year

First bloom of the year - Spring Beauty

Who says it's not Spring in the Greenhouse?

Word of the Day

Leaf Marcescence

The majority of deciduous tree species drop their leaves in fall, essentially shutting down these photosynthesis factories and detaching them to be re-assimilated into the surrounding landscape. The technical term for shedding leaves is abscission. The tree, and most other woody plants, create an abscission zone at the attachment point where the cells separate, allowing the dead leaf to fall away in autumn. In marcescent trees, this cellular process isn't activated until the following spring.

Some common species that practice marcescence are various species of Oaks, American Beech, and Hornbeams. Some of these species are marcescent only in their younger years, and loose this quality into adulthood. Some retain their leaves only up to a certain height, and loose them higher up. Some retain leaves clear up to their canopy, regardless of height, even on trees measuring over 100 feet tall.

So we have a pretty good understanding of the how, but what about the why? Scientists are still scratching their heads over this mystery, but they have proposed few ideas….

The leading theory is related to protection from large browsing mammals. Tender buds on woody foliage are eagerly sought out by ungulates, especially during the colder months when green food is difficult to come by.

When we think of large browsing mammals, the only species that really comes to mind are deer, and in other areas, elk & moose. The highest reach of any of the largest of these animals is about 14 feet, yet the average height for clinging dead leaves is around 20 feet on a tree, far beyond the reach of any modern browsing mammal... but what about extinct ones? Not so long ago – if you consider 10,000-12,000 years 'not so long ago', North America was home of Mastodons, which stood 10 feet tall at the shoulder, and could reach another 10 thanks to their trunks. Thus, it could reach a maximum of about 20 feet to feed on woody browse. This is a tantalizing theory to explain the typical height of marcescence.

A set of perhaps less romantic hypotheses includes:

- Trees wish to apply a fresh layer of leaf mulch to their bases in the spring, after most other leaf litter has already decomposed.
- The leaves trap moisture which helps prevent desiccation of developing buds
- Retained leaves provide cover for small animals which in turn deposit fertilizer at the base

As is often the case with nature, it is highly possible that there isn't only one benefit to this practice, but many or all of them at once. Whatever the reason for this phenomenon, we can all agree that marcescence provides visual and even auditory interest in the bare, quiet winter woods... and it's also fun to imagine a mastodon munching on a tree as you pass by.

Source: https://tnstateparks.com/blog/the-mystery-of-marcescence

UPCOMING THINGS TO DO:

Annual Winter Sowing Workshop – With Dolly Foster

Friday, Feb. 4, 2022 6:00p.m. - 8:00p.m.
Purdue Cooperative Extension
2291 N. Main St., Crown Point, IN 46307

A short instructional lecture will be followed by hands on instruction on how to make winter sowing containers. Potting soil will be provided, and some native flower seed will be available to share. This class is open to the public and will count as Advanced Master Gardener education for Master Gardeners, so bring a friend!

Please arrive 15 minutes ahead to get checked in and settled.

This is a hands-on workshop that requires you to bring a few items. Please bring the following:

*Utility knife *Gloves * Roll of duct tape
*Seeds - perennial and/or cold hardy annuals (there will be some to share)

To register: https://purdue.ca1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_02LOHtA1K09D3fg

Upcoming Wild Ones National Webinars

Genetic Diversity and Plant Preservation
Speaker: Neil Diboll
Wed., February 16th, 6 pm CT

Register Now!

https://wildones.org/diboll-genetic-diversity-plant-preservation-webinar/

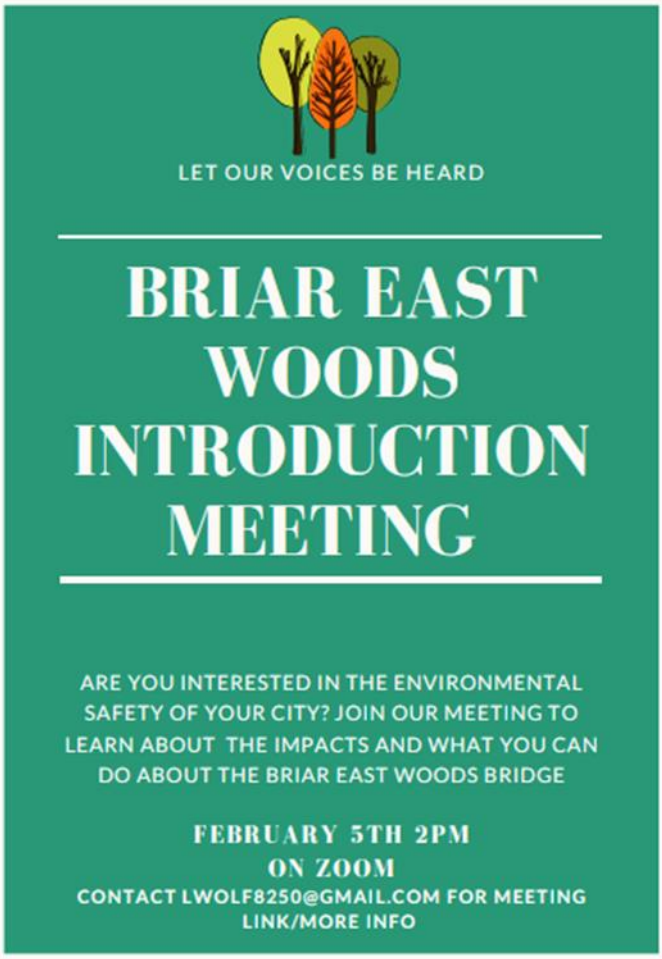
Neil Diboll is a Wild Ones Lifetime Honorary Director and Prairie Ecologist. Neil is a pioneer in the native plant industry and recognized internationally as an expert in native plant ecology. Neil has dedicated his life to the propagation of native plants, promoting their benefits and furthering their use and in restoration projects.

SAVE THE DATE - Weed Ordinances
Speaker: Rosanne Plante
Wed., March 23rd, 6 pm CT

Roseanne Plante is a member of the Wild Ones Lawyers team and is a certified Iowa Master Gardener since 2004, having been awarded 10 year and 500+ community service hours lifetime achievement awards. In the fall of 2019, she received credentials and is an Iowa certified Master Conservationist as well.

Links to past & upcoming lectures:
https://wildones.org/webinars/

Please help save the last remnant of Tolleston Dunes in Hessville – planned by the City of Hammond to be demolished to install a bridge. Contact lwolf8250@gmail.com for more information.



Wild Ones will have a booth at this event.