

The Blazing Star



NEWSLETTER OF THE NORTH AMERICAN NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

Native Plant to Know

Bloodroot

Sanguinaria canadensis

by Irene Fedun

Many years ago a friend and I dug up flats of woodland wildflowers from a huge swath of north Toronto land where Ontario Hydro had leveled all the trees. The sight of this denuded land was heart-wrenching. Spring flowers that may have flourished for centuries under the forest's shelter were suddenly exposed to glaring sunlight. Although we had a sneaking suspicion we should ask someone's permission before we went digging, we wouldn't have known whom to ask, and we were much too intent on our rescue mission. Now, of course, I would turn to my associates at the North American Native Plant Society for help in organizing a full-scale effort, complete with the requisite permission.

But we went on our own, many times, and saved what we could: blue cohosh (*Caulophyllum thalictroides*), trout lilies (*Erythronium americanum*), mayapple (*Podophyllum peltatum*), yellow violets (*Viola pubescens*), white trilliums (*Trillium grandiflorum*)..... and one solitary bloodroot (*Sanguinaria canadensis*). I found this plant on my last visit – a single stalk growing out from under a rock. It was positioned precisely at the opening in the fence where we entered the site..... as if to say, "Don't forget me!"

When I see bloodroot in its habitat, it appears in sporadic clumps – always a joy and a blessing. Mayapples or trilliums may carpet the forest floor or trout lilies polka-dot a woodland, but bloodroot seeks out those special hollows of rich, moist soil and creates its own tiny, brief-flowering but vibrant communities.

Bloodroot is a rhizomatous perennial, only 15-30 centimetres (six-12 inches) high. Each plant has a white, eight- to 12-petaled flower with a bright rosette of yellow stamens and a fat pistil. The flower is enveloped by a large, kidney-shaped, light green leaf which exposes its grey underside as it protectively curves around the delicate bloom. In a few days, the flower petals will drop – sooner if the breezes are too fierce – and the lovely leaf will unfurl.

Although often described this way, bloodroot is not a spring ephemeral. The ephemerals (such as spring beauty, *Claytonia* spp., or Dutchman's breeches, *Dicentra cucullaria*) complete their growing cycle in the spring, blooming and then dying back completely as the woodland trees leaf out and block sunlight to the forest floor. *Sanguinaria*

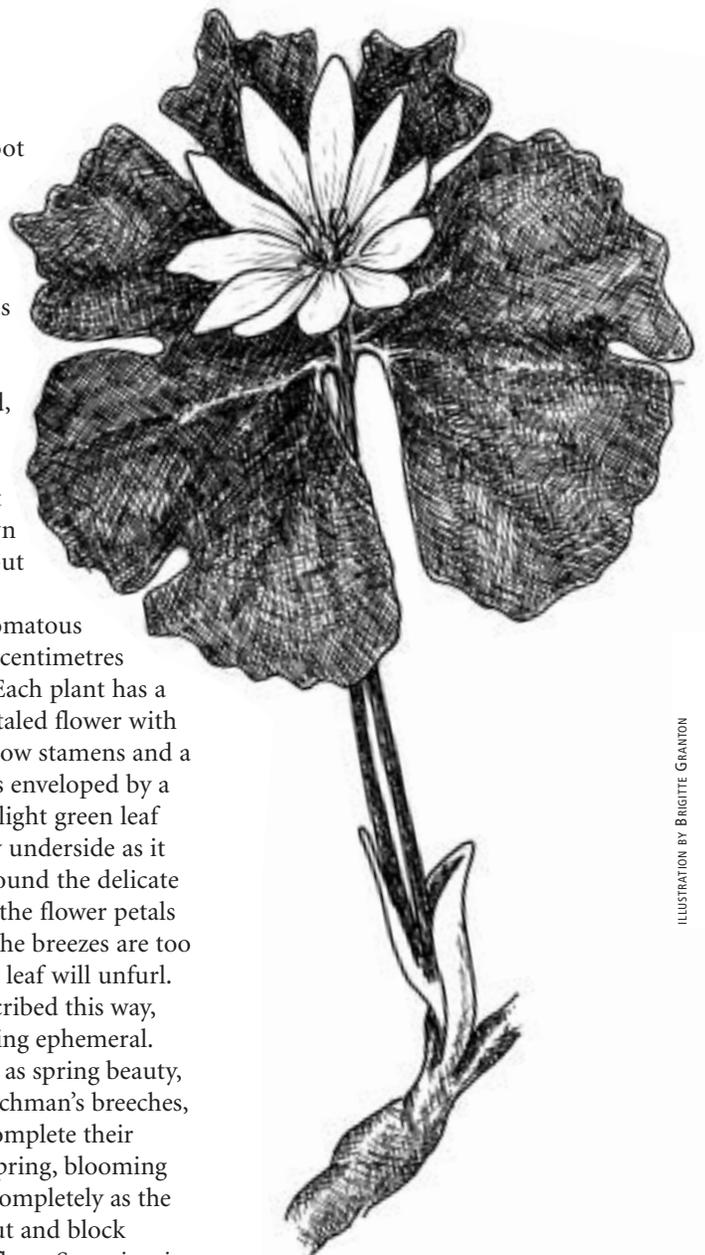


ILLUSTRATION BY BRIGITTE GRANTON

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The *Blazing Star* is . . .

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The North American Native Plant Society is dedicated to the study, conservation, cultivation and restoration of North America's native flora.

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Telephone: (416) 631-4438. E-mail: nanps@nanps.org. Web: www.nanps.org.

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Presidents' Message

Renewals are coming up quickly. Paid-up members are eligible for our annual **free membership draw** taking place January 31st. Also, do consider making NANPS a recipient for your yearly **donation** dollars. As a registered charity, we issue Canadian tax receipts. Please note that your membership expires on December 31st of the year now listed on your address label.

Just a few weeks ago NANPS welcomed members to its **Annual General Meeting**. We had amazing, informative **speakers and award-winners!** Scott Samson accepted the Paul McGaw Memorial Conservation Award on behalf of the Ontario Vernal Pools Society, a non-profit organization dedicated to conserving ephemeral wetland ecosystems. He spoke about the importance of vernal pools to wildlife habitat, water quality and ecological integrity. Emily J. Alfred spoke about the work RiverSides, another environmental non-governmental organization, is doing protecting our waterways. She stressed the importance of rain water harvesting, an activity most native plant gardeners are involved in! (We look forward to their articles in upcoming issues of *The Blazing Star*.)

Doug Counter received our second annual Native Plant Garden Award for his very significant urban garden in Etobicoke, Ontario. It stands as one of the first Suburban Groundbreakers firmly challenging municipal bylaws. Deb Dale revisited Toronto municipal bylaws and the native plant exemption application process that continues to be out of sync with other departments' efforts to promote native plants. She showed some attractive boulevard gardens in Guelph, Ontario, and urged NANPS members to proudly bring their native plants into their front yards in 2009, helping to exchange our urban aesthetic for more environmentally sensitive designs. (See her article on page 6.)

Alice Kong was recognized as our Volunteer of the Year for her work as Volunteer Coordinator. We sadly said goodbye to Board members Stacey Shannon (Plant Sale Chair

extraordinaire) and Charles Iscove, who has worked on website redesign. But we welcomed two new Board members, Alison Warner, a wildflower lover since childhood who has a background in marketing and promotion and currently works as an educator, and Zoe Dalton, a University of Toronto PhD Candidate focusing on First



PHOTOGRAPH BY DEB DALE

Outgoing director Stacey Shannon (on the left) with Alice Kong, Volunteer of the Year.

Nations/non-Aboriginal relations in Environmental Management, and the return of past Director Martin Field who has been maintaining NANPS online events calendar. As Presidents, we reviewed the past year's initiatives and activities. We also emphasized that this coming year's **goals for NANPS are increasing growth and outreach.**

Honourary President Jim French spoke eloquently about the need for members to step forward and volunteer. He also put out a request for contributions in the way of "your memories of NANPS ...past and present" to be included in our special **25th Anniversary publication** being planned. Please forward your stories, photos, illustrations to editor@nanps.org.

Please check out our upcoming **Speakers' Series** starting November 25th – details on page 12 or at www.nanps.org. We have eight renowned speakers lined up that are sure to stimulate thought, discussion and action. Be sure to attend!

Miriam Henriques and Harold Smith

JIM FRENCH: First Encounter

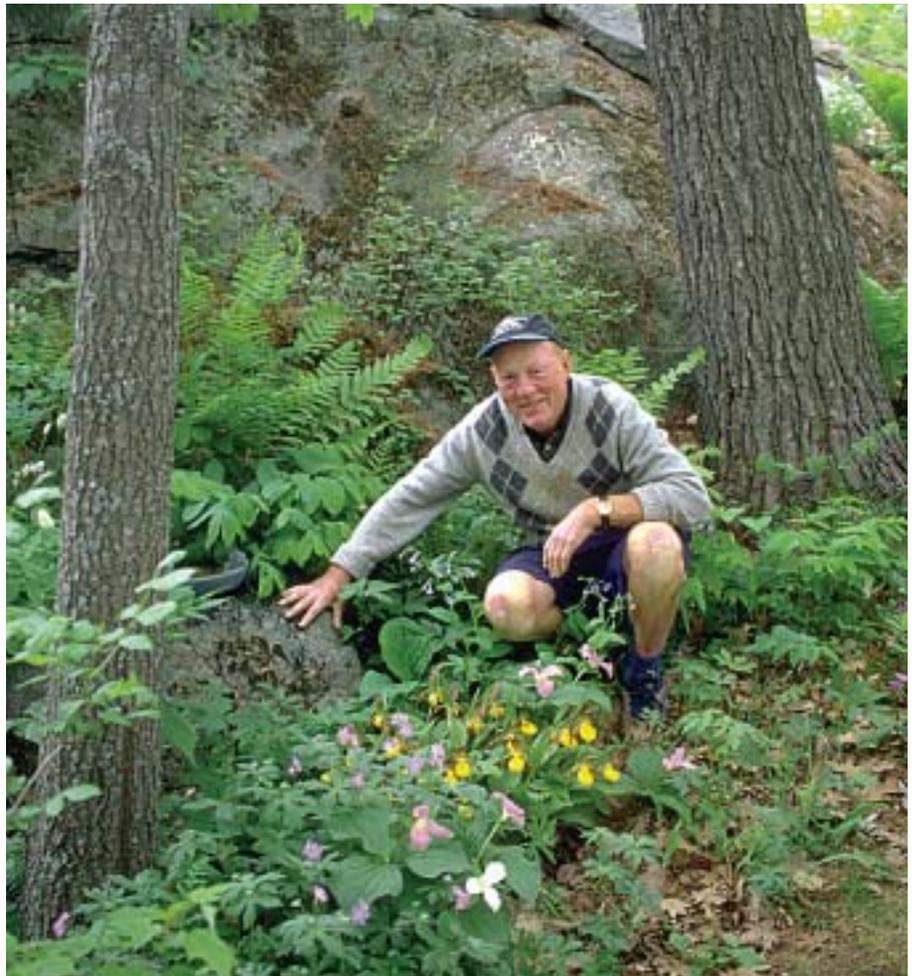
by James Hodgins

It's been about 25 years since I had that telephone call in my office at the U. of Toronto Zoology Department. The caller introduced himself as Jim French and proceeded to explain that he was forming a wildflower gardening society in the Greater Toronto Region. This was in response to a letter he had published in the *Globe and Mail* gardening column offering advice to those interested in this esoteric pursuit. Jim says he was flooded with letters from readers who wanted advice or were offering tips from their own experience.

At this historical moment Jim decided unilaterally to form the CANADIAN WILDFLOWER SOCIETY, which some years later morphed into the NORTH AMERICAN NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY. By word of mouth he tracked down about a dozen persons allegedly versed in this special gardening activity. I was one of them.

Jim invited me to lunch to discuss the formation of such a society. Initially, I confess, I was skeptical. Being born and raised in downtown Toronto, I was and am suspicious of meeting strange telephone callers for lunch. Perhaps Jim French was a member of the Lonely Hearts Club? Or just a plain weirdo? Remember, I was raised in the Sherbourne /Wellesley neighbourhood.

I met him for the first time in his office at Yonge and King. Before getting on the elevator I glanced at the Prudential Directory on the wall. There he was at the top, listed as VP. My brain relaxed. He couldn't be that weird! On the contrary, he was big, bold, full of life, shocking reddish-blond hair and a handshake that left no doubt who was in charge. We scooted around the corner to Hy's restaurant where I may have ordered lobster or ribs hoping that Pru, *alias* Jim, might pick up the tab. Thankfully, he did! Over the gourmet meal we exchanged personal



PHOTOGRAPH BY ZILE ZICHMANIS

Jim French in his Stoney Lake garden

testimonies on our obsession and passion for gardening with native plants. My experiences were in downtown Toronto, Jim's at his cottage on Stoney Lake. We concurred instantly that a national society was needed to share information, ideas and rewards.

Jim suggested a newsletter for the as-yet-unformed society. I reasoned that since Pru might be a silent backer here, we should go for a quarterly magazine. Jim agreed instantly and within a few months our first 48-page issue of *Wildflower* was published with Pru's backing. Several months later our first public meeting was held at the Civic Garden Centre.

Since those early, formative meetings a quarter century ago, the

"gardener's club" has evolved into the North American Native Plant Society. Its mandate is the study, conservation, restoration and cultivation of North America's native flora. Jim was the visionary spark, the driver and the omnipresent inspiration behind, or rather in front of, this very green movement in Canada. What a worthy legacy!

Jim may have a golden right arm, but his left is surely all green.

Jim Hodgins was the editor of Wildflower magazine for the 20 years of its existence. In preparing these notes for Jim French's 75th Birthday Roast on September 28th at Toronto's First Unitarian Church, he acknowledged the support of Gordon's Gin and its essence, the Juniperus virginiana fruit.

Giving Native Plants a Head Start

by Lorraine Brown

On my property north of Owen Sound, Ontario I grow a variety of herbaceous native plants. Some of them go into a constantly evolving and expanding butterfly garden. A few go into a quarter-acre prairie that we planted with an Ontario tall grass prairie seed mix in December 2000. Others are planted around a pond.

The butterfly garden is definitely a tended garden with species massed together at the right heights to give a good floral display. The soil is rather thin and rocky, and we often find interesting sherds when digging as it's close to the foundation of the log cabin built by the first settlers, around 1860. Since many of the plants I'm growing there are hardy, I haven't done a lot to amend the soil. But I do try to keep the butterfly garden free of weeds, and water it in really dry years.

The prairie is mostly left to fend for itself. The soil is fine, clay-rich silt that was piled here when we had the pond re-dredged in 1999. We burn off the dead vegetation in spring most years to give the prairie plants an edge over the alien weeds.

Each year we mow less of the lawn around the prairie. I have been planting some prairie species like wild bergamot (*Monarda fistulosa*) and *Anemone* spp. into the lawn but for the most part I'm hoping that the big bluestem (*Andropogon gerardii*), Indian grass (*Sorghastrum nutans*) and other plants in the original mix will spread by roots and seeds into the new area. After two years, black-eyed Susan (*Rudbeckia hirta*) has spread.

My seed-grown plants are intended mainly for the butterfly garden, with a few also going to the prairie. After a few attempts at starting native plants from seed and then planting the

seedlings where I wanted them, I soon discovered that they were quickly overtaken by the rampant growth in these established plantings. They couldn't compete. So a few years ago I started giving seedlings a better head start. I plant them in the vegetable garden now, in rows. Here I can watch the little plants grow and get to know them while weeding and watering them during their first year. With the extra care, they can grow big enough to fend for themselves when they go out to their final destination.

After a few years of using this technique, I've learned a lot about growing specific native plants. In most cases I collected the seeds from plants in our prairie, or bought them through the NANPS Seed Exchange. Here are some of my triumphs and challenges.

White beardtongue (*Penstemon digitalis*)

The delicate white flowers on tall stems are most welcome in June when few other plants are blooming in the butterfly garden, but this plant is probably better suited to the prairie where its tall flower stems can reach up above the surrounding thick vegetation. In the butterfly garden, its foliage is not dense enough to keep weeds at bay.

Showy tick-trefoil (*Desmodium canadense*)

Seeds germinated and transplanted easily and grew quickly. However, they became so strongly rooted in one season that getting them out of the ground the next year took a lot of effort. Like *Penstemon*, this plant is better suited to the prairie than the butterfly garden. Its flowers are not attractive to butterflies.

Swamp milkweed (*Asclepias incarnata*)

There was still no sign of life a few months after I had planted my wild-collected seeds. But then I put the flat in cooler conditions of the garden shed in April and voila! They



Anemones are slow-growing at first, and need extra care for their first year before going out into a competitive garden or prairie situation.

PHOTOGRAPH BY LORRAINE BROWN

germinated practically overnight. All the milkweeds germinate easily and grow quickly. Some even bloom in their first year, but they still benefit from a year of extra care.

The next spring I planted the swamp milkweed in the rich, waterlogged muck on the edge of the pond. They were beautiful that summer, and attracted hordes of monarch butterflies. Now, after five years, they are spreading around the pond, and choosing situations that aren't as wet as their original location.

Woodland sunflower (*Helianthus divaricata*)

Easy to grow, easy to transplant, spreading throughout the prairie, but also behaving itself in the butterfly garden, this three-metre (10-foot) tall, purple-stemmed sunflower blooms profusely from early August to frost. It only grows to about 25 centimetres (10 inches) in its first year, so greatly benefits from a vegetable-garden head start.

Brown-eyed Susan (*Rudbeckia triloba*)

Beware! I purchased one plant and within a few years it had become a major pest in the butterfly garden. It blooms prolifically and can completely take over. Once I learned to distinguish it from other more desirable Rudbeckias, I managed to completely eradicate it from the butterfly garden. I'm happy to see dense stands of it now thriving in a wild meadow a good distance away (the former compost heap).

Compass plant (*Silphium laciniatum*)

This plant should also be sold with a warning: once in the ground, it's virtually impossible to eliminate. For the first few years when it continued to come up where I thought I had removed it all, I was amused, and moved more and more of it into the butterfly garden and prairie. Now I'm considering dynamite as an eradication method.



PHOTOGRAPH BY LORRAINE BROWN

Oenothera biennis (left) and *Asclepias incarnata* (right) share space in rows in a vegetable garden for their first year.

Long-fruited anemone (*Anemone cylindrica*)

A perfect example of a plant that needs some tender loving care before it goes out into an established garden. The seedlings were tiny. Even after a full spring and summer in the vegetable garden, they are still only five centimetres (two inches) tall.

Dense blazing star (*Liatris spicata*)

Like long-fruited anemone, blazing star stays quite small for its first year, so it greatly benefits from a year of extra care. It is now thriving in the butterfly garden, while blazing stars that I moved into the prairie a few years ago did not survive. Perhaps drought, along with the poor soil and tough competition, were more than the plant could tolerate. I'll try them

again, possibly moving them into the lawn destined to become prairie where the growth isn't rampant.

Evening primrose (*Oenothera biennis*)

I was disappointed when my "New York ironweed" (*Vernonia noveboracensis*) seeds turned out to be evening primrose. But now, in August of their first year, the plants are 60 centimetres (two feet) tall and in full, bright yellow bloom. They will go into the butterfly garden next year, and into the prairie as well.

Lorraine Brown is a biologist and naturalist who moved from Toronto to a farm north of Owen Sound in 1986. She is a partner in Apropos Planning, a company that specializes in developing exhibits for museums.

Seven Sinners

by Deb Dale

Last year I reported on the cutting of my 200+ species native plant garden by the City of Toronto. This followed suits against pre-amalgamated Toronto in 1996 by Sandy Bell and pre-amalgamated Etobicoke in 2002 by Douglas Counter.

In these cases the courts ruled that gardening in an environmentally sound manner was protected under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

"Apart from those rare cases where expression is communicated in a physically violent manner, this Court has held that so long as an activity conveys or attempts to convey a meaning, it has expressive content and prima facie falls within the scope of the guarantee of freedom of expression"

52 There can be no doubt that the appellant's act of growing a naturalistic garden that included tall grass and weeds had expressive content and conveyed meaning. As an environmentalist, Ms. Bell implemented a landscaping form intended to convey her sincerely held beliefs concerning the relationship between man and nature. It also implicitly conveyed a critique of the prevailing values reflected in conventional landscaping practices. She testified that she meant to show her son, and presumably the public at large, that one could co-exist with nature in a peaceful, nurturing way. In Ross v. School District No. 15, supra at p. 865, La Forest J. repeated that "the unpopularity of the views espoused" is not relevant to determining whether their expression falls within the guarantee of freedom of expression. The fact that many people evidently do not share the appellant's environmental beliefs and disapprove of the way she chose to manifest them does not remove her chosen form of expression from the protection of s. 2(b).

60 As between a total restriction of naturalistic gardens and causing some offence to those people who consider them ugly or inconsiderate of others'

sensibilities, some offence must be tolerated. In my view, the by-law cannot be justified under s. 1. (Charter of Rights)

Nonetheless, the amalgamated City of Toronto (including Etobicoke, East York, North York, York and Scarborough) enacted a bylaw limiting "grass & weeds" to under 20 centimetres (a little under eight inches). Although not explicitly stated in the bylaw, the City also began requiring gardens, regardless of the absence of weeds and tall grass, to apply for a "Natural Garden Exemption permit". (Visit http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/municode/1184_489.pdf to read Bylaw 489.)

On September 9, 2008, coincidentally, just over one year after my garden was cut, the East York-Toronto Community Council was asked to rule on seven separate requests for "Natural Garden" exemptions. Several weeks earlier, the East York Council was asked to examine a ravine behind the St Mark's Catholic Church over a similar "infraction". In each case bylaw 489 was cited and in each case in the subsequent report to the area Community Council, the words "weeds and grass over 20 cm" were replaced with "plant growth" or "vegetation over 20 cm" on the subject property – an interpretation of the bylaw that should strike fear into the hearts of all gardeners in Toronto as a new eight-inch height restriction seems to have been enacted against our flowers, shrubs and trees!

Particularly disturbing is that the recent cases primarily involve charges against backyard gardens, areas most people consider their private domains. Pam Skinner, who spent years happily developing her own private oasis until the arrival of new neighbours, said "there's a reason we have fences". Fences define the boundaries of our private realms, a fact lost on intrusive neighbours and bylaw inspectors who have been given the right of free passage through our most sacrosanct areas. It is shocking that City officials

are allowed to trespass without notice or warrant into fenced areas through locked gates based solely on complaints by disgruntled neighbours who have a different sense of garden design.

Of the seven "sinful" gardens, four were granted exemption permits at the September 9, 2008 Community Council meeting, meaning that there was no basis to lay charges or require the residents to appear before community council. Three were asked to return for a second meeting on October 7, 2008. Of these three, two withdrew their applications, and one had the charges against it upheld. It's sad but not surprising that two, after up to a year of fighting for their Charter-protected rights, withdrew. The case of the final garden was surprising. The original report to Community Council read, in part:

The subject property has plant growth in excess of 20 centimetres in the rear yard area for which the owner has applied for relief to be exempted as a natural garden. The property was attended by a City of Toronto Natural Resource Specialist, who did not identify any noxious weeds. The inspection found the rear yard plant growth was acceptable and qualified the rear yard to be exempted as a natural garden.

This was amended at the October 7th meeting to read: *The inspection found the rear yard plant growth was not acceptable and did not qualify the rear yard to be exempted as a natural garden.*

It is unclear what could have changed so drastically in the space of a month. The owner of the property was not available to comment.

On September 12th the *National Post* reported that the Councillors of the Toronto-East York Community Council, one of four serving the amalgamated City of Toronto, "decided that a new policy is needed". Councillor Paula Fletcher was quoted as saying that the City should be getting "people off their addiction to grass." Staff have been requested to

propose a system to give suitably trained bylaw officers stronger powers of recommendation. Councillor Adam Giambrone was of the opinion that the current system made them "judges of aesthetics". He noted, "Even if it met the standards of a natural garden, we could vote not to have it. It's extremely arbitrary how it is now."

As the City has rejected all attempts by NANPS Co-Presidents and Bylaw Committee, following a preliminary meeting in March 2008, to meet to discuss bylaw alterations, it remains unclear what or when any new system would be enacted. As of the October 7th meeting of the Toronto-EY Community Council, staff had not submitted the requested report.

Bylaws relating to private properties are intended to deal with health and safety issues. In presentations given by the City's Natural Resources Specialist, three reasons are cited as justifiable reasons for serving gardens with infraction notices:

1. Threatens a person's health

2. Threatens our native plant communities, ravines, parks (invasive species)

3. Potential safety hazard (i.e., thorns, hazardous tree limbs, blocks sight line of traffic, etc.)

Instead the bylaw is increasingly being used as a weapon to escalate existing disputes between neighbours over other issues. Rather than mediating such disputes, or determining if any of the three reasons actually apply, charges are issued.

From personal experience, and from talking with numerous victims of garden prejudice, I know that it is extremely draining dealing with such charges, in time, money, and the sense of having your personal pride and joy exhibited publically in such a negative manner. It is time to celebrate our gardens and change the public aesthetic.

In 2009, please bring your native plant gardens up front! There is no Toronto bylaw preventing full front yard or boulevard gardens. In many

cities around North America, such efforts are encouraged as a means of increasing social interaction within neighbourhoods and as a traffic calming measure. The environmental benefits are enormous.

If you have not yet done so, please visit www.nanps.org to sign the petition to have such antiquated bylaws repealed. Although the City of Toronto is NANPS first target, this petition can apply to other areas – you do not need to be a Toronto resident to sign! We encourage you to download and circulate a hard copy of the petition.

City staff continue to deny saying anything untoward about my own garden to individuals or to the press. If you called anyone at the City of Toronto about my garden...particularly if you were told things that may have made you waver in supporting it...please let me know at nanps@nanps.org or call 416-291-7029. Thank you.

Deb Dale is NANPS Treasurer.

Calendar of Events

November 25, 2008

INVASIVE SPECIES OF THE TORONTO AREA
Toronto Botanical Gardens,
Toronto, Ontario
NANPS Speakers' Series event
featuring Paul Heydon and
Gavin Miller. Visit www.nanps.org
for details.

December 9, 2008

THE SECRET LIFE OF PLANTS
Toronto Botanical Gardens,
Toronto, Ontario
NANPS Speakers' Series talk
featuring Martin Galloway.
Visit www.nanps.org.

January 13, 2009

THE IMPORTANCE OF BEES
Toronto Botanical Gardens
Toronto, Ontario
NANPS Speakers' Series talk
featuring Dr. Laurence Packer.
Visit www.nanps.org.

February 11-12, 2009

24TH ANNUAL IDAHO
RARE PLANT CONFERENCE
Boise, Idaho
Visit [www.idahonativeplants.org/rpc/
Conference.aspx](http://www.idahonativeplants.org/rpc/Conference.aspx)

February 17, 2009

GARDENING TRENDS
Toronto Botanical Gardens
Toronto, Ontario
NANPS Speakers' Series presentation
featuring Dennis Flannigan and
Charles Kinsley. Visit www.nanps.org.

February 26 – 27, 2009

14TH INTERNATIONAL WATER
CONSERVATION AND XERISCAPE
CONFERENCE
Albuquerque, New Mexico
Focus of this conference will be:
Watershed – Foodshed. Visit
WaterConservationConference.org
for more details.

March 17, 2009

GREEN GARDENING:
A JOINT VENTURE WITH NATURE
Toronto, Ontario
NANPS presentation with Ken Parker.
Visit www.nanps.org

June 13 - 14, 2009

WILD ORCHIDS OF THE BRUCE
PENINSULA EXCURSION
Bruce Peninsula, Ontario
This two-day excursion put on by
the Southern Ontario Orchid Society,
which encompasses a visit to
Flowerpot Island, costs \$269 per
person twin including taxes. That
covers accommodation, breakfast,
motorcoach transportation, and
guided wild orchid sightings.
Contact Margaret Hewings at
mhewings@tpi.ca or call
905-634-7084.

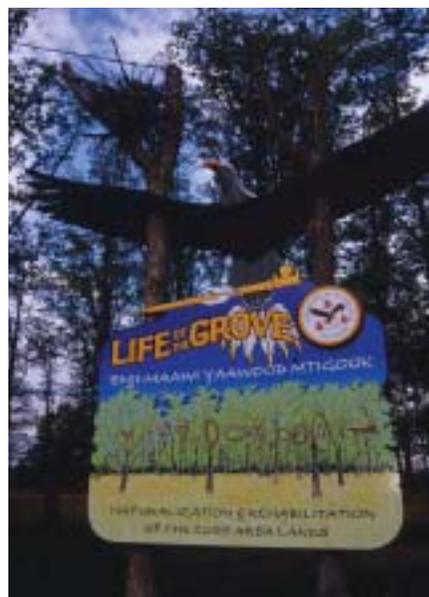
Life of the Grove

by Paul O'Hara

I have been honored over the past few years to have worked with the Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation. They are a small band, about 1,400 strong, whose Indian Reserve is located near Hagersville, Ontario adjacent to the Six Nations of the Grand River.

The Mississaugas are Ojibway (Anishnabeg), originally from the north shore of Lake Huron. They migrated down to the north shore of Lake Ontario in the 17th century driving out the Iroquois during the Beaver Wars (1640-1701). In 1701, their territory included the present-day City of Mississauga, and in the following years they spread throughout much of Southern Ontario. Like other Aborigines at the time, the Mississaugas were hunter-gatherers, in the summer fishing with spears in river mouths (like the Credit River), in the fall gathering their crops (beans, squash and corn), and in winter moving north into their hunting grounds.

With the increasing influx of settlers in the early 1800's the life of the Mississaugas was changed forever:



Life of the Grove Project sign designed and built by Peter Ramsey.



The new Old Council House garden beds (before shrubs and perennial plantings) and gathering area with the Three Fires in the foreground. The grove is in the background.

logging increased, waters became over-fished and game over-hunted. Furthermore, the notion of private property rights prevented their historical patterns of travel. Consequently, the Mississaugas adopted a less nomadic lifestyle eventually settling in 1847 at the present-day Reserve at Hagersville.

My involvement with the Mississaugas began with a meeting with Carolyn King, a Mississauga community leader, former chief, and rabble-rouser extraordinaire. She described the decline of a grove of trees at the New Credit Reserve where they held their Three Fires Homecoming Powwow and Traditional Gathering. The soils around the trees had become compacted and the exposed roots damaged by vendor and patron vehicles at the annual event. She said the whole community was concerned about the future of 'the Grove' and agreed that something had to be done to preserve their powwow grounds.

In the fall of 2005, Carolyn secured funding through the Canada Ontario Resource Development Agreement and the New Credit Cultural

Committee was formed. I was engaged as the lead consultant and the Life of the Grove Project began. Through our meetings the project expanded beyond concern over the health of trees in the Grove into addressing the grounds of the entire New Credit Core where their public buildings (Old Council House, Library, Gym, Public Works, Administration) and the Grove are located.

In the summer of 2006, we built a pilot native plant garden on the side of the Old Council House and held open houses on the wonder of Carolinian Canada and the Mississaugas' place in it. In the winter of 2006-2007, I completed landscape concept plans for the Core Area buildings to create formal native plant gardens, tree plantings, pedestrian-friendly hardscapes, and naturalization areas.

In July 2007 the first phase of the concept plans began as my company (me, my business partner Dale C. Hall and crew) created gardens and walking paths around the Old Council House. That same year local artist Peter Ramsey was commissioned to build a sign to highlight the project. This past year we completed a Veteran's

PHOTOGRAPH BY PAUL O'HARA

Memorial to honour the Mississaugas that fought in the wars of the last century as Canadian soldiers. The memorial consists of a burial mound in the Powwow Grove with granite monuments and stone benches. On the burial mound I planted native plants: wild ginger (*Asarum canadense*), foamflower (*Tiarella cordifolia*), woodland strawberry (*Fragaria vesca*), plantain-leaved sedge (*Carex plantaginea*), broad-leaved sedge (*Carex platyphylla*), stellate sedge (*Carex rosea*), and Christmas fern (*Polystichum acrostichoides*). The meetings of the New Credit Cultural Committee are ongoing as we look toward implementing future phases next year.

Oh!, and as for the Grove – my suggestion was to ban vehicle traffic and just let it be. I asked them to stop mowing entirely except for the powwow dance area and widely mown ‘doors’ into the dance area. The mowing stopped last year and the Grove took on a savannah-like look as the suppressed grasses and forbs grew up under the bur oaks (*Quercus macrocarpa*), white oaks (*Quercus alba*), shagbark hickory (*Carya ovata*) and maples (*Acer* spp.). Strangely enough, the dominant grass that grew up in the grove wasn’t the usual weedy suspects – Kentucky bluegrass (*Poa pratensis*), orchard grass (*Dactylis glomerata*), smooth brome (*Bromus inermis*) or quack grass (*Elymus repens*) – but tufted hair grass (*Deschampsia caespitosa* ssp. *parviflora*). Although, tufted hair grass is a native perennial grass the subspecies *parviflora* is not of North American origin, but an interesting waif nonetheless.

The first powwow in the newly naturalized grove occurred this past August. It was a beautiful sight to see: the colourful powwow dancers underneath the large trees in the centre of the grove and the grasses waving to the beat of the drum. The trees seem happier since the vehicle traffic has stopped and the grasses



PHOTOGRAPH BY PAUL O'HARA

have grown up as their fruits now have a place to germinate.

The Mississaugas are a smiling, peaceful people and I have been so blessed by their friendship. I would suggest to anyone living in the area that they attend the Annual Three Fires Homecoming Powwow and Traditional Gathering to experience the spirit of these first citizens of Carolinian Canada.

Paul O'Hara is a botanist, landscape designer and native plant gardening expert. He is the owner/operator of Blue Oak Native Landscapes (www.blueoak.ca). Paul lives in Hamilton, Ontario.

*The Grove after the mowing stopped. The dominant grass is tufted hair grass (*Deschampsia caespitosa* ssp. *parviflora*).*

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Management at Toronto's Leslie Street Spit: Restoration or a Distant Relative?

by Zoe Dalton

I recently had the chance to visit two sites in Toronto where ecological restoration work was being carried out - High Park's Black Oak Savannahs and the Leslie Street Spit. The environmental management approaches at these sites are quite different, and provide an interesting opportunity for exploring a central question in the field of restoration ecology, namely: what activities warrant the title of ecological restoration? A variety of motivations currently form the basis for carrying out restoration efforts, from attempting

urbanized setting in which the site exists (pretty much downtown Toronto). The basis for this restoration effort, then, is history: attempts are being made to re-establish plants and plant communities that historically existed at the site, and to reinstate natural (aka historical) disturbance regimes such as fire, which are crucial in maintaining appropriate plant community dynamics. Management at High Park can be thought of as an example of classic restoration, in which the site itself provides the historical basis upon which management plans are based.

Management activities at the Leslie

ecosystems that did not previously exist at a particular site truly be called restoration? Secondly, does geography, and scale in particular, matter in the definition of restoration, and does it help to qualify the first question?

Definitions may help to answer these questions. According to the Society for Ecological Restoration, "ecological restoration is the process of assisting the recovery of an ecosystem that has been degraded, damaged or destroyed". In the case of the Spit, the actual medium on which restoration is based (a mass of construction waste and imported subsoil) has no history of having been degraded, damaged or destroyed. As

PHOTOGRAPH BY TORONTO AND REGION CONSERVATION AUTHORITY



The Cell 1 Wetland and Terrestrial Creation Project on the Leslie St. Spit shows the greening and growth of the site which underwent a large range of restoration techniques including Wetland Creation, Island Creation, Nodal planting, Structural Woody Habitat Creation, Substrate Manipulations and Improvement, Seeding (hand seeding, and hydro seeding), Planting (terrestrial woody and herbaceous, and aquatic), Succession Enhancement, Herbivory Protection, Essential Habitat Enhancement, and Invasive Species Control.

to restore a site to an approximation of its original, historical condition to centering restoration on specific conservation priorities (e.g. recovery of species of concern).

The management strategies in High Park and the Leslie Street Spit provide good examples of these two quite different bases for restoration. In High Park, the primary goals of restoration centre on protecting the existing at-risk Black Oak Savannah ecosystem and restoring it to its historical condition as much as possible in the highly-

Street Spit (a man-made landform extending out about five kilometers or three miles from Toronto's Lake Ontario shoreline) are based on a different approach. Restoration at this site is centered on the recovery of target species, especially wildlife species of concern. Without any long-term natural history to call its own, the Leslie Street Spit itself provides no historical basis upon which to develop restoration plans and targets; as such, its management raises two interesting questions: First, can the creation of

Natural Area Enhancement And Creation At Tommy Thompson Park

Habitat creation and enhancement on the Leslie St. Spit at Tommy Thompson Park has been guided by the principles of Conservation by Design, defined as the purposeful act of designing for a diversity of natural habitats which in time will develop into functional ecological systems. Natural succession is the key concept behind the philosophy of conservation design. The natural area restoration projects will be designed to facilitate the growth and natural development of indigenous plant and animal communities. By diversifying the landscape through the creation of varied slopes and soil conditions and the addition of native vegetation, a range of moisture regimes and microclimates will be created.

Planting and seeding will be done to inoculate areas with vegetation that is adapted to the specific environments. These areas will then be left to grow, reproduce and spread naturally and unhindered as much as possible. Minimal human intervention will be required to maintain these areas, and to assist in the restoration of rare, endangered or significant plant and animal communities.

such, it could be said that management programs here are not technically assisting in the site's recovery: one cannot recover what did not exist. In this sense, it may be more appropriate to term current management activities at the Spit as ecosystem 'creation' or ecological engineering rather than ecological restoration.

Addressing the second question raised above – that of the importance of geography and scale in restoration – may help resolve the issue of whether or not activities at the Leslie Street Spit can fairly be termed restoration. While the precise geographical location of the landform that is now the Spit was historically an aquatic ecosystem (part of Lake Ontario), nearby sites likely hosted (and still host) plant and animal communities very similar to what is being created in the management

units on the Spit. In quibbling over the appropriate use of the term restoration, the question here becomes: what is meant geographically by the terms 'site' and 'ecosystem'? To make a case that management activities at the Spit should be considered 'restoration', it could be said that current efforts at this particular site are based on restoring characteristics of the broader ecosystem in which the Spit is found. The Spit therefore offers an interesting case in which determining whether or not the term restoration is appropriate is influenced by the geographic scale at which one chooses to define site and ecosystem, and thereby, restoration and recovery.

The above discussion highlights some of the complexities involved in the language of a field as necessarily diverse and adaptive as ecological

restoration. High Park and the Leslie Street Spit provide interesting cases for exploring the terminology and communication bases of ecological restoration. The remaining question, given the exciting – and in the case of the Spit, dramatic – conservation gains achieved by both projects within an otherwise rapidly-degrading regional ecosystem, is the following: what has greater merit, spending one's time critiquing the linguistic basis of restoration, or getting one's hands dirty putting together appropriate habitat at any site where the opportunity arises, regardless of the name given to the activity?

Zoe Dalton is a UofT PhD student and NANPS Board Member. This article was originally published in The Voice Magazine, by the Athabasca University Student Union.

Fall 2008 Seed Exchange

Enclosed with this issue is the list of seeds currently available. Please ensure that you have your order in for this batch of seeds by **January 9th, 2009**. Our intent is to mail out seeds by the end of January so that members can stratify those that need a cold winter to inspire germination.

A list of seeds left over from the January mailout will be published in the winter issue of the *Blazing Star* for distribution by early April.

Note: there are limited quantities of some species. First come, first served. Where seed quantities are limited, all donors will be served first in the order that their requests are received. You can choose up to 30 packets of seeds.

NANPS 25TH Anniversary Publication

The North American Native Plant Society is planning to publish a quality booklet to celebrate our 25th anniversary in 2010. Please send your suggestions for content, textual or visual, your memories of the organization in years gone by or challenges you've encountered native plant gardening over the years to editor@nanps.org or leave a voicemail message at (416) 631-4438.

To help defray the cost of publication we will need to raise money. We welcome your donations – of funds or ideas. Help us make this an anniversary – and publication – to treasure!

Holiday Gift Ideas

A NANPS membership makes a terrific holiday gift for the plant lover on your list! Or give a charitable gift to your friend by donating \$20 to plant a tree in Shining Tree Woods and receive a lovely NANPS logo pin made of pewter. Or purchase a NANPS pin as a stocking stuffer for \$5. Or help a native plant enthusiast round out their collection of *Wildflower* (e-mail publications@nanps.org to find out which issues are still available). All purchases and donations go towards the study, conservation, cultivation and restoration of North America's native flora. Please send your cheque to NANPS, Box 84, Stn. D, Etobicoke, ON M9A 4X1.



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NANPS Speakers' Series

Continued from page 1

canadensis remains alive aboveground, its leaves continuing to do the work of photosynthesis throughout the summer.

Emony Nichols explains how she propagates bloodroot: "Like most woodland species bloodroot seeds are hydrophyllic and will lose their viability if they dry out. So, after collecting them in the spring, I plant them in open trays and keep them shaded and moist for the year. In spring I get quite good germination rates. I usually let them sit another year before potting them up and then yet another year before I sell them."

Breaking bloodroot's root produces a sap that looks and even coagulates like blood. Native Americans made red dyes from the plant, body paint for war dances and ceremonies, and decoration for their clothes. Bloodroot is a strong herb containing alkaloids that have antibacterial, antimicrobial, expectorant and antiseptic properties, effective in treating a wide range of conditions from digestive complaints to fungal growths. Sanguinarine, the primary alkaloid, destroys bacteria that can cause gum disease; it is often an ingredient in oral hygiene products. The whole plant and root are used in homeopathic preparations, pharmaceuticals and cough formulas as well. Natives used bloodroot for everything from skin cancers to sore throats. Research into its constituents has shown great promise for a variety of conditions. Note, however, that bloodroot is not edible and in large doses can prove fatal.

The bloodroot I transplanted from the hydro corridor thrived in my urban backyard despite my sandy – albeit carefully amended – soil. The diminutive plant produced more flowers with each year until I felt compelled to divide it and create two new clumps. Now that I no longer live in the house and enjoy the garden, I walk woodlands early in the spring, eagerly seeking just a glimpse of this charming flower.

Irene Fedun is the editor of The Blazing Star.

INVASIVE SPECIES OF THE TORONTO AREA

November 25, 2008

Paul Heydon, biologist and owner of Grow Wild! Native Plant Nursery, and Gavin Miller, Toronto Region Conservation Authority head botanist, will discuss invasive species and how to prevent their spread.

THE SECRET LIFE OF PLANTS

December 9, 2008

Martin Galloway, owner of Chalk Lake Greenhouses and host of The Secret World of Gardens, examines what goes on in a garden beyond the naked eye.

THE IMPORTANCE OF BEES

January 13, 2009

Dr. Laurence Packer, Professor of

Biology and Environmental Studies at York University, will explain why bees are crucial to the health of our environment and to our food supply.

GARDENING TRENDS

February 17, 2009

Landscape designer and teacher Dennis Flannigan and Charles Kinsley, biologist, teacher and owner of Ontario Native Plants and Ontario Nativeland, examine gardening trends over the past 200 years and how they are in the midst of changing today.

All talks will be held at Toronto Botanical Gardens, 777 Lawrence Avenue (at Leslie), Toronto, starting at 7:30pm. Members \$5, non-members \$10 per talk. Visit www.nanps.org or leave us a voicemail message at 416-631-4438.

Sweet Offer

Sweet Grass Gardens Native Plant Nursery is offering a 10% discount to NANPS members. Check out their website at

www.sweetgrassgardens.com. And visit them on the Six Nations Reserve next spring!

JOIN NANPS

Your donations and membership dollars help NANPS to study, conserve, cultivate and restore North America's native flora. Members receive our quarterly newsletter, the *Blazing Star*, and are eligible for NANPS-sponsored excursions and the Seed Exchange. NANPS is a registered charitable organization (no. 130720824 RR0001) founded in 1984. **Donations to the Society are tax-creditable in Canada. Tax receipts will be issued for donations of \$20 or more.**

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