

WildfloraRI

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Saving Native Phragmites

Native versus introduced *Phragmites australis*—What are the differences and why should we care? by Laura A. Meyerson

It's really quite simple. *Phragmites australis* (Common Reed) is a noxious invasive that should be eradicated in order to benefit our native plants and animals and to restore ecosystems to a prior undisturbed state, right? After all, a majority of Rhode Island wetlands have been found to need at least some ecological restoration, often because of *Phragmites* invasions. Millions of dollars are spent in Rhode Island to get rid of this invasive weed, and it is still spreading in some areas.

Introduced *Phragmites* is indeed a problematic species—a tall (up to 16'), densely growing reed grass that invades fresh, brackish, and salt marsh systems. It degrades habitat and significantly reduces native plant and animal biodiversity throughout North America. It bedevils homeowners by blocking views of marshes, river ways and the coast, and it poses a fire hazard to those living adjacent to its dense stands.

But things are not always as they seem. In 2002 genetic testing revealed that there were actually two major lineages of *Phragmites* in North America: a native strain and an introduced haplotype. Native *Phragmites australis* (ssp. *americanus*) has existed in at least 13 genetic variations in North America. It turns out that the native *Phragmites* has been found in samples of fossilized sloth dung from the southwestern United States and in peat core samples from marshes dating back thousands of years. It still exists today, although in New England, native *Phragmites* is now rare due to degradation of marsh systems and to direct competition with the more aggressive introduced strain of *Phragmites*.

In Rhode Island the existence of native *Phragmites* has been verified genetically in only one location—on Block Island. On the east side of the island, three stands of native *Phragmites* grow alongside invasive *Phragmites* and other marsh plants. Two of the remaining stands are on private property, and one is on Block Island Conservancy property. Even more intriguing is that these particular stands of native *Phragmites* have been shown to be genetically distinct—and therefore unique—from all other native *Phragmites* known in North America. None of the native stands on Block Island are currently being managed for conservation.

While the discovery of native *Phragmites* in North America is exciting, it also presents us with a conundrum. Natural resource managers and biologists have been trying to eradicate *Phragmites* for more than a decade. However, the discovery of native *Phragmites* has many conservation biologists, botanists and native plant lovers concerned about the demise of a native plant. But other than genetics, are there differences between the native and introduced types of *Phragmites*?

The answer of course is yes. In the northeastern U.S. native *Phragmites* is relatively rare, although new native stands have recently been identified in Massachusetts, Connecticut and Rhode Island. Diagnostic characteristics have been identified to distinguish between the native and introduced strains. Some examples:

- Stems tend to grow more densely in native stands of *Phragmites* than in introduced stands.
- The stems of native *Phragmites* tend to redden with sun exposure while the introduced stems typically remain green
- The leaf sheaths on the native stems often fall off or are very loose as the plants die back in the fall (the leaf sheath is wrapped around the culm above the node) whereas the leaf sheaths on introduced *Phragmites* usually persist.

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Phragmites australis (Common Reed)



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A Message from the President

Dear RIWPS members,

Our Society is evolving every day. We have quietly been working on improving and updating our website these past few months. Now it's ready for public viewing. We invite you to visit at <http://www.riwps.org>. We hope you will find it more attractive, more complete and easier to navigate. It is still a work in progress, and we will continue to update and improve it. If you have any comments or suggestions, please e-mail us at office@riwps.org, or give us a call.

RIWPS is on the move, literally. One of our members, Linda Steere, kindly invited us to return to our old office in Peace Dale. The physical address is 42 North Road, Peace Dale, RI 02883. We were at that location for many years and so have a sense of connection to the place and are delighted to be back. Do not send mail to that address, however, as we have a post office box in Exeter. Our mailing address is RI Wild Plant Society, P.O. Box 414, Exeter, RI 02822. Our new phone number really makes me smile. It is 789-RIWP. (789-7497.) That should be easy for everyone to remember. Please make note of it in your address book.

Please welcome our new Board member, Rick Harrison. Rick is a Master Gardener and served as both Secretary and Treasurer of the Master Gardener Association. He is retired and lives in Warwick. He has a beautiful garden that he maintains with his wife, Rosemary. He is helping out with updating and maintaining our database and our financial records. If you have any questions for him he can be reached at melonseed@cox.net or by phone at 737-1459.

We know that regular communication with our members is essential. We apologize for not communicating as frequently as we'd like these past few months. We'd like to send out more frequent mailings, but with the rising cost of printing and postage we simply can't afford it. We need your e-mail address. In the future we will be relying more and more on electronic communication. If we don't have your current e-mail address, you could miss out on important infor-

mation, special offers, and news about the Society. Please check your e-mail regularly for RIWPS updates. Thanks.

RIWPS is a volunteer organization. To continue to succeed in its mission it needs its members to pitch in and help. Please don't assume that someone else will do it and your participation isn't necessary. The opposite is true—your assistance is essential. Please look over the list of volunteers needed on page 00 and contact us to donate a few hours of your time. You'll have fun and be glad you did. Thanks.

RIWPS recently joined the Environmental Council of Rhode Island (ECRI.) They are an umbrella organization made up of many environmental organizations working together to keep the RI environment healthy. They are involved in legislation dealing with such matters as reducing energy consumption, eliminating cesspools, reducing diesel pollution, requiring recycling by manufacturers, etc. We are looking for a volunteer to be our representative at their meetings, which are held once a month. If this interests you please give us a call at 789-RIWPS.

Don't forget to sign up for some of our walks. They are the best way to get to know the wild plants. After all, that's what we're all about. Hope to see you out there.

Karen Asher, President



Phragmites (continued from page 1)

- The height of the ligules (a membrane at the juncture of the leaf sheath and the blade) of native *Phragmites* is greater than the introduced type of *Phragmites* but requires measurements at the millimeter scale. However, note that ligule width and the adherence of leaf sheaths are the most reliable characteristics, and therefore these measurements are well worth the effort for the intrepid botanist.

None of these are 100 percent diagnostic on their own—you must look at all of these features to get a reasonably reliable ID! A complete description of diagnostic characters can be found at <http://www.nps.gov/plants/alien/fact/phau1.htm>.

Because relatively easily detectable characteristics exist to distinguish between native and

introduced *Phragmites*, it might seem that managing *Phragmites* would be fairly straightforward—simply eradicate the invasive introduced *Phragmites* where possible and conserve the native populations of *Phragmites* where they are identified. This approach would appear to achieve two important objectives—removing a noxious invader and conserving a fairly rare native species.

Unfortunately, it may not be that simple. Recent research in my laboratory at the University of Rhode Island is revealing that the native and introduced strains may in fact be hybridizing. In many locations, native and introduced *Phragmites* stands grow adjacent to one another, and are so closely related that they are in fact subspecies of one another, making hybridization even more likely. Flowering times

and pollen shedding and receptivity to fertilization between the native and introduced strains overlap, and our preliminary genetic data show that viable hybrid seed can be produced, at least in controlled greenhouse studies.

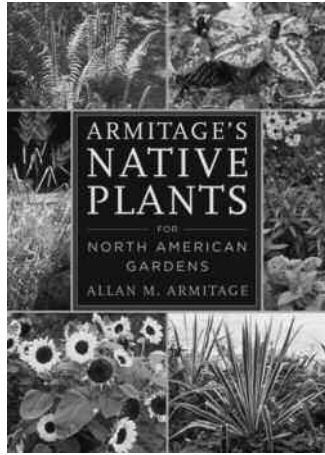
The hybrid plants produced in our greenhouse are still in their first growing season, but the implications of hybridization of *Phragmites* include:

The potential for plants that are more vigorous than either parent, resulting in new strains of *Phragmites* that are even more invasive.

Conversely, decreased vigor of hybrid offspring, making them unable to compete with the invasive *Phragmites*.

Genetic “pollution” of the native strain with pollen from the introduced plants, which could result in the eventual loss of the native

One of the well-known authors in horticulture, Allen Armitage, has written a book on native plants, *Armitage's Native Plants of North America*, (Timber Press, 2006, 451pp, \$49.95). Armitage has written numerous other books, including a well-known one on annuals and one on perennials, and he has extensive experience with plants as a



professor of horticulture at the University of Georgia. It is his own personal observations and experiences that make this book a treat and differentiate it from others that seem more like compilations of library research. He had me hooked when I opened it to read the profile for *Jeffersonia diphylla*, or Twinleaf, when he said the seed pods looked like little garbage cans. (I had always thought that myself).

Armitage praises the growing popularity of native plants and the increasing availability of commercially propagated plants. It is fortunate that recent advances in plant propagation allow the inclusion of the native lady slippers (*Cypripedium* species). He also points out the

reality that the cost of many species is going to prevent installing, for example, the patch or swath of *Trillium*, *Sanguinaria* (bloodroot), or *Arisaema* (jack-in-the-pulpit) that one is inclined to desire, after having seen a stand in the wild. He tries to include plants that are available commercially, or might be available somewhere, from even a slightly exotic

source. He includes *Anemone canadensis*, which is somewhat available commercially, and praises *Anemone quinquefolium* for regions with a cool climate and moist soil, but notes that there is poor availability for the latter. (*A. quinquefolium* is the small ephemeral white anemone that you might see growing locally in areas of moist soil that are home to other plants such as *Kalmia latifolia* and Rattlesnake Plantain). He also includes natives that can be invasive, and he warns that horsetail is "troublesome with a capital T!"

The book lists plants in alphabetical order, so it is easy to browse for your favorites. I'm pleased that Armitage finds *Lilium canadense*

strain altogether through hybridization.

Potential decreases in the production of viable native seed since a significant portion of seed produced could be hybrids. This loss could result in declining native stands as clones age and fewer native seedlings survive.

Although my work on hybridization is ongoing, it has important implications for conserving native *Phragmites* and may make eradication of introduced *Phragmites* an even higher priority in wetlands where it grows adjacent to the native strain. The native and introduced strains have different morphological (form and structural) traits and growth patterns, so with a little effort they can be distinguished. We do not yet know if there will be corresponding morphological differences found for the hybrid *Phragmites*—this will be

one of the next steps in my research.

The answer to the question posed in the title, *Why should we care?* is perhaps best summed up by Aldo Leopold's famous line in *A Sand County Almanac*:

"To keep every cog and wheel is the first precaution of intelligent tinkering."

Acknowledgements

The author thanks Kristin Saltonstall for providing the diagnostic photos and explanations for this manuscript.

Dr. Meyerson is 000000 00000000 0000000 0000 000 0000000, Department of Natural Resources Science, URI.

a favorite lily; unfortunately, he lives too far south to permit this graceful lily to thrive. In fact, his experiences are from a much warmer climate, so Bill Cullina's book would be the one to check if Armitage has difficulty with a particular plant. But Armitage is able to convey his knowledge from years of gardening and plant observation, and you will certainly find this a favorite reference on wildflowers.

RI Wild Plant Society

The Rhode Island Wild Plant Society Inc. is a non-profit conservation organization dedicated to the preservation and protection of Rhode Island's native plants and their habitats.

Our Goals are:

- To aid in land preservation so that native plants are protected in their natural habitats;
- To encourage and offer guidance in the cultivation and propagation of wild plants;
- To educate the public on the scientific and aesthetic values of wild plants;
- To provide opportunities for Rhode Islanders to study and enjoy native plants in their natural habitats; and
- To offer our knowledge and skills to governmental, civic, and corporate organizations.

Officers

- President Karen Asher
- First Vice President Russ Bragg
- Second Vice President Cheryl Cadwell
- Secretary Suzanne Lussier
- Treasurer Tina Coutu

Trustees-at-large

- Paul Dolan, Dick Donnelly, Richard Harrison, Sindy Hempstead, Jean MacCormick, Susan Trembly Shuster, Dorothy Swift, Deborah van Dam

Newsletter Editorial Committee

- Russ Bragg, Doug McGrady, Sindy Hempstead, Joan Pilson, Gary Plunkett, Walter Thayer, Deborah van Dam
- Editor** Pat Cahalan
- Design and layout** Joyce Hempstead

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The RIWPS Report: News, Issues, and Items of

Plant Sale Report

The annual Spring Plant Sale held on June 2 was a great success. Beautiful weather, expanded publicity, and our enthusiastic corps of volunteers combined to produce an estimated profit of \$12,000. **Shirley Anderson** did a super job as volunteer coordinator. **Bob Anderson** expertly coordinated the layout and setup of all the tents and tables. We couldn't have run the sale without this dynamic duo. **Bonnie Baker** coordinated the silent auction, and **Mike Elmer** served as Plant Sale Chairman.

Dick Donnelly, sporting a dayglo pink cap, welcomed everyone and conducted interviews to help us determine the effectiveness of various types of publicity. This year our beautiful poster was designed by **Frances Topping**, and our small promotional flyer by **Pat Cahalan**. We thank them for their professional design services.

The sale's success is the result of the many hours put in by hard-working volunteers, plant donors and our Seed Starters East, West and Central groups. Thanks to **Chase Farm** in Portsmouth for donating all the annuals for the sale, to **Barney Webster** for donating 20 percent of his water plant sales back to RIWPS, and to all those who donated Silent Auction items.

In addition, this year RIWPS wishes to thank Channel 10's "Plant Pro," **Marion Gold**, for featuring our sale on her TV program; the South County Independent for becoming our first media sponsor and providing complementary advertising; and **Belmont Market** in South County for having their cashiers place our flyers in every order the weekend before the sale. We also thank the South Kingstown Chamber of Commerce and the Rhode Island Natural History Survey for distributing announcements to their membership. Finally, thanks to **Rick Harrison** for processing all our credit card receipts.

New & seasoned members:
Please let the RIWPS office know your e-mail address for timely and valuable communications!



Seed Starters West Co-Chair Isabel Pollack inspects a plant for the perennial section.



Plant Sale Chair Mike Elmer and Judy Keller prepare the inventory.



Seed Starters East prepare for the 2007 Spring Plant Sale. Left to right: Jean Vaas, Deb Van Dam, Sandra Thompson, Jan Wallace, Dorothy Swift, Kay Kosinski, Margo Waite, Joy Oosterbaan, and Sylvia Hampton.



Frances Topping and Shirley Anderson staff the publications table.

In Memoriam

Nancy Magendant was a RIWPS member from our first year (1987) to her death on April 1, 2007. In the early years she served as Secretary and Membership Chair.



Volunteers Needed

GreenShare Field Day: Saturday, September 29

We need four volunteers to staff the RIWPS educational display—two from 9 a.m. to noon, (includes set-up) and two from noon to 2:30 p.m. (includes breakdown).

Archivist / Scrapbooker: Organize old newspaper clippings about RIWPS activities into a RIWPS Scrapbook. Work at the new RIWPS office or at home.

Website Coordinator: Help determine website content and organize information and photos to be posted. Some computer knowledge is required, but no technical expertise is needed. We have a Webmaster who will post items on the site.

Program Committee Members: Help plan and coordinate RIWPS walks and lectures.

Education Committee Members: Help develop an educational program for elementary school students called "Exploring the Native Plant World." We have sample curriculum guides filled with great ideas that need to be adapted to New England.

Newsletter Editor: Experienced or willing to learn. Some computer skills are needed.

If any of these positions interest you or if you would like to learn more, call the office (789-7497), leave your name and phone number, and someone will get back to you. Or e-mail us at office@riwps.org.

RIWPS / Gleaner Gardens Joint Event A Great Success

The Memorial Day weekend opening of Gleaner Gardens in North Scituate by owners and RIWPS members Cindy Gianfrancesco and Chuck Horbert was a big success! Gleaner Gardens is a fifty-year-old rhododendron garden that Cindy and Chuck have nurtured back to life and that they have opened to the public on each Memorial Day Weekend for the past seven years.

This year RIWPS was invited to participate. In exchange for providing docents to help with meeting and greeting their guests, Chuck and Cindy asked visitors to the gardens to make a small donation to benefit the Rhode Island Wild Plant Society. And what fun everyone had! The rhododendron gardens were magnificent, the weather was fantastic, and with the help of some great advance publicity the gardens were busy all weekend long. And those "small donations" added up to a nice amount for RIWPS, more than any of us expected. We raised about \$1,100 in entry donations and another \$65 from coloring book sales. It was a terrific event and everyone is looking forward to doing it again next year.

HELP WANTED

Harvest Dinner and Silent Auction

As we celebrate RIWPS' 20th Birthday, we'd like to invite all our members to join in and help us make this a fun-filled and successful celebration.

You can help!

Volunteers needed: On September 26, the day of the Dinner, we need six to ten volunteers to help set up and run the event.

Silent and Live Auction Donations needed: We're looking for donations of plant-related items, vacation getaways, gift certificates, gift baskets, garden art—anything that would entice our members and guests. Value is flexible; but please consider donating items in reasonable state of repair.

If you would like to help, contact Mary Lou at MLUpham@aol.com, 295-2289, or Bonnie Baker at bakerbug@aol.com, 294-5553, for more information.

A Warm Welcome to Our New Members

March - June 2007

- | | | | |
|---------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|------------------|
| John Ball | Nancy Gabrielson | Mary E. Natale | Michael P. Smith |
| Susan Berger | Anne Garnett | Lawrence Newcomb | Cathy Taylor |
| Jane Case | Paige Gibbs | Ray Payson | Maureen Toohy |
| Jeffrey Champlin | Nancy Gries | John Phillip Jr. | Claudia Townend |
| Eileen DaRosa | Cornelia M. Hurd | Erika & John Poggio | Cynthia Trainer |
| Pat Davis | Bruce MacDonald | Kate Rakosky | Sara Woodruff |
| Joanne Devine | Ellen S. Mara | Constance R. Risica | Lesley Wooler |
| Pamela M. Fernandes | G. Russell Miller & | Damaris J. Rohsenow & | |
| Shirley A. Fisher | Thompson | Dudziak, Jr. | |

THE NEWPORT FLOWER SHOW WINNER

RIWPS members Dorothy Swift and Sylvia Hampton were judges at the Newport Flower Show on June 22 of this year. They looked at entries in all of the Horticulture Divisions to select the recipient of the Rhode Island Wild Plant Society Trophy for the best native plant. The prize this year went to a cut stem of *Cimicifuga racemosa* (Black Cohosh). It had beautiful leaves with tones of green and black. This is a native plant that few of us grow. It is available commercially, although not terribly common, and is somewhat expensive (\$15 and up). It is worth seeking out and adding to your garden. The foliage is tall and spectacular, and in late summer it sends up a spike of white flowers. —Dorothy Swift

Advance registration is required for all walks. Register for an event by contacting the person noted, who will provide you with directions. Payment is made at the event with exact change. Please do not register any earlier than two weeks prior to the event.

Late summer at Nettie Jones Preserve

URI Alton Jones Campus, West Greenwich, R.I.
Sunday, September 23, 2007, 2:00 p.m.-4:00 p.m.

Explore the mixed hardwood forest, streams and old fields of the Nettie Jones Preserve, West Greenwich. We'll look to see what late summer flowers are in bloom and identify some of the trees and shrubs at this URI campus property set aside for research and study.

Talks at Roger Williams Park Botanical Center

**Sunday, October 21, 2007
1:00-2:00 p.m.**

"Gardening with Wildflowers"

Karen Asher | *Rhode Island Wild Plant Society*

Learn how to include native plants, including Rhode Island wildflowers, in your garden to create a succession of bloom from spring to late fall. Fee: \$15.00

**Saturday, November 3, 2007
from 10:00-11:00 a.m.**

"How to Create a Native Plant Garden in an Urban Area"

Cheryl Cadwell | *Rhode Island Wild Plant Society*

Even a small, urban yard can be turned into a lush, sustainable garden using native plants! Fee: \$15.00

**Tuesday, November 13, 2007
time???**

"Cool Plants for Shady Gardens"

Russ Bragg | *Rhode Island Wild Plant Society*

Get the scoop on the best shade-tolerant perennials to create an exciting display in your low-light garden. Fee: \$15.00

Anyone interested in attending a program should register by calling the Cooperative Extension Education Center at 401-874-2900 after September 1st.

Walk leader: Frances Topping. Register with Frances at 401-364-8002 or fmtopping@cox.net. Cost \$3 RIWPS members/\$5 non-members.

Fall Coastal Habitats Walk

Conanicut Island, R.I.
Saturday, September 29, 2007, 2:00 p.m.-6:00 p.m.
(low tide)

Crisp fall air, a moon low tide... what better time to explore Rhode Island's coastal habitats? The Jamestown Saltmarsh is one of the largest in the state, bisected by a tidal river that meanders out to the bay. We'll explore the various habitats within and along the edge of the marsh, and discuss plant adaptations to the saltwater environment. We'll travel to the southern tip of Conanicut Island and walk along the coastal bluff of Beavertail State Park, looking at plants living at the juxtaposition of freshwater seeps and raging surf. You may want to bring an evening picnic and stay to watch the sun set and the moon rise. Participants should be prepared to walk on a combination of wet mud and sloping rock surfaces.

Walk leader: Hope Leeson. Register with Hope at 401-783-5609 or hleeson@rinhs.org. Cost \$3 RIWPS members/\$5 non-members.

Oakland Forest and Meadow

Portsmouth, RI
Sunday, October 14, 1:00 p.m.-3:00 p.m.

Once hailed as the only "old growth" forest in Rhode Island, this magnificent stand of trees was saved because a local arborist was hired by a developer to mark trees for cutting but couldn't bear to see it happen. His subsequent public outcry over the potential development eventually led to its preservation by the Aquidneck Land Trust. We will take a walk through this rare twenty-acre estate woodland, and discuss the ecology of old growth forest systems en route. We will also take a lap through an adjacent meadow to check out the land trust's efforts in managing an early successional habitat.

Leader: Garry Plunkett, Co-chair of the Tiverton Open Space Commission and long-time student of old growth forests. Register with Garry at 401-624-2549 after October 1. Free

GreenShare Field Day

Kingston Campus, URI, Kingston, R.I.
URI Botanical Garden,
September 29, 10:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m.

GreenShare is presented by the URI Cooperative Extension Center with support from the Master Gardeners and the URI College of the Environment and Life Sciences. It is held at the URI Botanical Garden (formerly known as the Learning Landscape) on the Kingston and includes outdoor tours, workshops, demonstrations and displays. RIWPS has an educational display. RIWPS will be selling native plants and books, answering questions about native plants and promote membership in the Society. Free

Thanksgiving Adventure

West Greenwich, RI
Saturday, November 24, 2007, 1:00 p.m.-sunset,
approximately 5:00 pm.

Join Matt Largess on a full-moon walk. It gets dark early in late November, so starting the walk around 1 p.m. assures that it will end as the sun sets and the moon rises. The walk will be in the wilds in West Greenwich, on the Borderlands. Hikers should wear good hiking boots and bring a snack. A lot of the walk will be off-trail in search of rare trees and plant communities. End your Thanksgiving weekend with an adventure!

Leader: Matt Largess. Register with Matt at Largestree@aol.com, or 401-533-2722 (cell) or 401-423-0508 (home). Free

Christmas Tree Farm Tour

Scituate, RI
December 2, 2007, 10 a.m.-???? (12 noon)

Please come join us as we tour Shire Christmas Tree Farm in Hope, R.I. Learn what it takes to grow and manage Christmas trees, and how this business enhances our environment and helps conserve open space by active management. Shire Tree Farm is located in the Hope Section of Scituate.

Leader: Paul Dolan, Assistant State Forester. Register at pcdolan@cox.net. (Free)

November General Meeting

Soul of the Plant

A slide lecture by Dave Schwartz, Arborist and Photographer

Saturday, November 10, 2007

Free and open to the public

10:00-11:30 a.m.—Meeting and Fellowship

11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.—Lecture

North Kingstown Free Library

100 Boone Street, North Kingstown, R.I.

For the past 30 years, David has found great pleasure in working with plants. He sees a system that is a perfect continual flow of beauty, with life processes that defy imagination and contain no wasted motion. His photographs are a breath-taking result of this fascination. You will see the excitement in the unfolding of a leaf from a bud, the beautiful simplicity of a daisy, and the amazing complexity of plants.

Dave Schwartz is a well-known arborist and landscaper. He is much sought after as an expert in the field for forensic plant cases and as a lecturer on plant material and cultural practices.

Members with last names ending in A-M are asked to bring snacks to share at the fellowship hour.

January General Meeting

Why Study Native Plants?

An illustrated talk by Greg Lowenberg, Education Director of the New England Wild Flower Society

Saturday, January 12, 2008

10:00-11:30 a.m.—Business Meeting and Fellowship

11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.—Lecture

Free and open to the public

North Kingstown Free Library

100 Boone Street, North Kingstown, R.I.

Learning about native plants is regaining the popularity it enjoyed over 100 years ago. At the

turn of the last century, amateur naturalists found enjoyment in identifying organisms and observing their beauty under microscopes and also in the social pleasures of venturing into the natural world with others. Today we are seeing a resurgence of interest in native plants, for some of the same reasons but also due to the desire for better ecological understanding as we plan for a more sustainable future.

Join Greg Lowenberg for an illustrated talk that will include some fascinating stories told by native plants, the New England Wild Flower Society's efforts to conserve our native flora, and why it is important to "learn the wildflowers."

Greg will also discuss botanical and horticultural courses, workshops, and field trips, the Society's Certificate in Native Plant Studies program, and collaborations with organizations across New England, including RIWPS.

Members with last names ending in N-Z are asked to bring snacks to share at the fellowship hour.

Wildflower Watch: Fall's Harvest by Frances Topping, Interpretive naturalist and nature artist

Ode to Autumn by John Keats starts thus...

"SEASON of mists and mellow fruitfulness,"

Fall brings both sadness at summer's passing and cold thoughts of coming winter but also the joy of changing leaves, of ripening seeds and fruits and the knowledge that all is being set for spring's return.

Plants are storing food in roots, tubers, corms, bulbs or rhizomes. They are leaving legacies in acorns, nuts and a myriad of amazing seeds engineered to fly, swim, hitchhike or pass through an animal's gut before breaking into new life in a new space.

As you walk, perhaps with me or with another R.I. Wild Plant Society member, a friend or by yourself, ponder on the miracles of nature. We so often take our environment for granted, but perhaps we should find one piece and look at it closely. We would find a wondrous world.

Plants of the legume family have pods (like peas) that split open to violently release the seed. The vetches twist, others split as they dry. Violets explode their seeds, as does Jewelweed (*Impatiens capensis*) which, when touched, has segments that curl back and eject their contents. The

Asteraceae family has windblown seed. Most of us have seen fields of Goldenrod (*Solidago*) with nodding fluffy clusters of seeds. Look also for the asters and eupatoriums like Joe Pye Weed. Of course, the milkweeds and cattails also have wind-blown seed, as anyone who has brought these indoors can attest.



Go for a walk in a field and you will inevitably pick up some hitchhikers on your clothes. These sneaky seedheads have hooks that attach to fur or clothes and are inadvertently carried to a new home. Picking out the seeds of Tickseed (*Coreopsis*), or Beggar-ticks (*Bidens*) is a frustrating exercise. Water carries the Iris, Pickerelweed (*Pontederia cordata*) and Water Lily seeds.

Berries of course are loved by most animals who willingly eat the flesh, often after carrying it away, and either drop it or eat it along with the flesh and in doing so prepare it for germination after it is ejected later. Highbush Viburnum (*Viburnum americanum*) has berries

that linger on, providing winter food. Jack-in-the-pulpit's (*Arisaema triphyllum*) cluster of red berries are evident now that the leaves have died back.

Nature has so many interesting ways of continuing life that compete favorably with the more noticeable and colorful attractants of the flow-

ers. These are necessary to inveigle insects and animals to pollinate and so set the seed, but let us not overlook the next stage. Even after the seeds have been dispersed the containers remain and are good to look at. These seed containers can live on and be interesting after the seeds are gone—the "birds nests" of Queen Anne's lace (*Daucus carota*), and the pods of Milkweed (*Asclepias*), Dogbane (*Apocynum*) and Evening-primrose (*Oenothera*) are a few that stand out. STOP, LOOK and BE INTRIGUED. Go for some fall walks and look for these.



RIWPS *Harvest Dinner* *20th Anniversary* *Celebration*

Saturday, September 29, 2007
starting at 4:30 p.m.

Yawgoo Bakes & Barbecue, Inc.
555 Slocum Road, Slocum, R.I.



Join us for a good old fashioned Traditional Hot Rock Clambake and Open Pit Barbecue, with steamers, lobster, corn on the cob and more.

Silent and Live Auctions, with more than 100 enticing plant- and garden-related auction items. All the money raised supports RIWPS programs So whether you want to bid modestly or grandly, our auctions will have something special for everyone.

Tickets are \$65 per person. Invitations will be mailed out in early August. Call us at 000-000-0000 if you don't get yours or if you would like more information. We'll also provide an electronic form that you can share with friends via email and that will be posted on www.riwps.org.

This event is open to the public.
Bring your friends!



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