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# BRUSH PILES

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NORTH BRANCH RESTORATION PROJECT

SUMMER 2004

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## *GARDEN IN THE SKY RISES AGAIN!*

### *Notes from May 3, 2004 Meeting*

*Joan Meersman, Jane Balaban, Bill Koenig*

Ever hear of the “Garden in the Sky?” It was an inspired project organized long ago by North Branch volunteer Lindsay McGee. After years of bountiful seed production (the progeny of which are blooming in the North Branch preserves as you read this), the garden was obliterated by progress. Well, actually, it was on land provided by the FPDCC at their Skokie maintenance yard, and it was needed for other purposes. Then this spring FPDCC Volunteer Coordinator Bill Koenig suggested a safe and protected spot for seed production gardens – on the grounds of the new Volunteer Resource Center.

Joan Meersman and Jane Balaban met with Bill Koenig to look at possible locations. They’d be happy to hear responses to any of their suggestions below.

It seems that the priority should be to produce more woodland and savanna seeds as we seem to be able to collect prairie seeds sufficient for our open sites. Thus, large production sites like GIS II should be directed toward woodland seed production.

Smaller plots scattered at suitable locations on the grounds would seem to be more manageable for both weeding and seed collection. Separate plots would be easier to implement over time, too,

rather than trying to do one big seed garden at once. We looked at 3-4 areas that would be suitable, and over time could be expanded as much as is needed.

The seed gardens should be used as an opportunity to educate visitors about native plants. We suggested producing some moveable signs with pictures to place in the gardens at appropriate times during the growing season and hope to attract some funding to help with production costs.

We also looked at some possible sites for native plantings in the front of the building, where signs about native plants and perhaps other educational pieces could be displayed. Bill plans a sign near the entrance that identifies the building as the new Volunteer Resource Center, with an area for announcements, workday schedules, contact information, ways to get involved, etc.

We will probably ask the Chicago Botanic Garden to propagate some species that we wouldn’t ordinarily put into the

Wild Garden Program, such as woodland grasses, perhaps some sedges, forbs like Starry Campion, Columbine, etc. We could develop a list of species that we can use for woodland restoration in large quantities but which would also be attractive.

If you would like to help with Garden in the Sky – Part II, please contact Bill Koenig (773-631-1853), Jane Balaban (847-679-4289), or Joan Meersman (773-763-5055).



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## NEWS AND NOTES



### **COMMISSIONER LARRY SUFFREDIN SPONSORS EVENTS IN THE NORTH BRANCH FOREST PRESERVES**

Once again, the Commissioner has demonstrated his continuing commitment to the forest preserves as Suffredin and his staff helped promote the workdays, and then joined volunteers in cutting brush, removing trash, and pulling garlic mustard at two beautiful preserves along the North Branch. We are truly grateful for his strong support!

Dear North Branchers:

I would like to thank the many members of the North Branch Restoration Project that helped organize and participate in the May 1 work day at Miami Woods and the May 16 work day at Harms Woods. In total, we had almost 200 volunteers working to clear brush and pull garlic mustard.

In addition to the North Branch volunteers, we were joined by students from Senn High School located in Rogers Park, New Trier High School in Winnetka and by members of Glenview Boy Scout Troop #156. You can view pictures from the work days at [www.suffredin.org](http://www.suffredin.org).

The 13<sup>th</sup> District is fortunate to have such a dedicated group of volunteers and advocates who help care for our Preserves and open spaces. On behalf of all the citizens of Cook County, thank you for your ongoing efforts.

Sincerely,  
Larry Suffredin  
Cook County Commissioner, 13<sup>th</sup> District



### **IT'S THAT TIME AGAIN!**

Many of the early spring wildflowers are already forming seed that will soon be ripe, so Joan Meersman and her seed-collecting crews are getting ready. Have some free time in the middle of the week? Join the volunteer seed collectors on Wednesday mornings from 9:00am until noon. Learn to identify native plants in seed and impress your friends! Call Joan Tuesday evening (773-763-5055) to find out which beautiful North Branch site they will visit the next day and where to meet.

### **LINNE PRAIRIE RESTORATION (FORMERLY KNOWN AS THE DEEP TUNNEL SITE)**

Applied Ecological Services (AES) came out to conduct a prescribed burn of the Linne Prairie Restoration site on April 16 under the direction of FPDC Planners Bob Janura and Steve Choe and Joel of Resource Management. AES made an all out effort to burn the interior of the circular stone road. It was patchy due to low fuel, but I was amazed how well some areas did burn. I gave a little push to burn the buffer area adjacent to RR. They were well on their way when I had to leave about 3pm. A nice black line was started between Railroad Prairie and the dense reed canary grass buffer. Crew began weaving in and out of the interior of this buffer zone, which had been removed from management for a time, with drip torches.

I had a chance to speak with Aaron Kubichka of AES. They had definite plans to come back and hit the problem areas with herbicide. Also, Steve Choe is looking for feedback on trees. Many of the trees they planted didn't make it. I related to Steve Larry Hodak's suggestion of encouraging the woodland edges to move in to the prairie for a more natural transition from prairie to savanna and woodland.

Joel recommended that I call Kevin Neary, who supervises the north restoration crew, to arrange to have them remove the tall buckthorn stumps left from a winter work day. Communication was key and even though we have miles to go at this site, it was a great effort.

~ Mary Busch



### **BOOK DISCUSSION**

Are you interested in Bill Jordan's new book *SUNFLOWER FOREST: ECOLOGICAL RESTORATION AND THE NEW COMMUNION WITH NATURE?* Would you like to discuss some of its ideas?

On the evening of July 14, Jean Sellar and Nancy Freehafer will host a group of people to discuss the book. The discussion will focus on passages to be distributed in advance, so if you don't have time to read the entire book, you can still participate. For more information, please call Nancy at 773-342-6665 or Jean at 312-353-6400.

## ***EAGLE SCOUT PROJECT AT HARMS WOODS***

The weekend of April 24-25, Scout Donald Planey organized and led an ambitious project to rid buckthorn from an area in Harms Woods. Donald began planning the project early this year, contacting site stewards John and Jane Balaban to discuss his idea. Donald and his dad, Jim Planey, visited Harms with the Balabans to pick out an appropriate area and plan the logistics of the work.

In preparation, Donald recruited fellow scouts for the work and obtained donations of snacks, gloves and saws from local merchants.

He knew that it was important not only to get the buckthorn cut but also to tell his crew why it's harmful to our woodlands, so while the hard working scouts enjoyed a lunch break of pizza and pop, Donald used a poster he prepared to explain where buckthorn came from and how it affects our native species. By the end of the weekend, 23 scouts and 11 adult leaders had put in 155 hours and cut a huge amount of buckthorn.

Congratulations, Donald!



***Eagle Scout candidate Donald Planey with the poster he used to explain the restoration work to his crew members.***



St Ignatius students from Mr Bellucci's environmental class pose with some of the garbage they picked up during the May 8<sup>th</sup> Friends of the Chicago River's cleanup day at Harms Woods. The river is in the background, and what you can't see is the picnic table they're sitting on that someone carried deep into the woods! It was too heavy to carry all the way out so the crew moved it to the riverbank where it might be removed by boat.



### ***BUFFALO GROVE PRAIRIE***

**Sundays, 9:00 am – Noon**

**June 6, July 4, Aug 1**

Work on Sundays at this piece of virgin prairie located on Hastings Road. It is off Lake-Cook about a mile west of Milwaukee (watch for Hastings on the north after going under the railroad overpass). Turn north on Hastings, then right into the second parking lot. The prairie is under the Com Ed power lines. Call Bev Hansen at 847-272-6211 for more information.

### ***SKOKIE LAGOONS***

**Saturdays, 10:00 am – 1:00 pm**

**June 12, July 10, Aug 14, Sept 11**

Meet at the Tower Road parking lot (east of the lagoon bridge – not the boat launch). For late arrivals, there will be a sign with directions to the work site in the picnic field adjacent to the parking lot. Come dressed for the weather. We will provide waders, gloves and tools when appropriate. For more information contact Jerry Garden at 773-545-4632 or [jerrygarden@sprynet.com](mailto:jerrygarden@sprynet.com).

### ***GLENBROOK PRAIRIE***

**Thursdays, 6:00 pm until dark**

**June 10, July 8, Aug 12, Sept 9**

Remarkable changes have occurred at the preserve. It is located at the now wide open northwest corner of the Glenbrook North HS, west of Shermer and north of Willow Roads. Park in the north parking lot by the tennis courts and walk along the north side of the football field until you see us. Call Rob on his cell phone (847-337-0471) if you're running late or get lost finding the place.

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## ***SEEDS: WE NEED 'EM!!***

We suspect that most North Branchers would probably say that brush cutting is their favorite stewardship activity. There is something deeply satisfying about being part of a team that transforms a dark, tangled mess of buckthorn into a bright clearing with a few hours of sawing, stacking, burning and laughing. And there is nothing more exhilarating than hard physical work for those of us who slave at a desk most days. When we are working in our beloved preserves our muscles ache and our faces glow in a happy way that they don't when we merely sweat in a gym.

But there's another task that some of us find equally fun and rewarding – and it's so important. Think of it this way: our work is to restore the landscape. The bare ground where buckthorn used to be is just the beginning. If we don't want the buckthorn back, planting seeds is as important as all that cutting. When we clear the brush from overgrown areas we bring in a lot of sunlight. That is a good thing, but there are billions of weed seeds and buckthorn seeds lurking everywhere that like nothing better than this kind of opportunity to proliferate.

As you may know, we plant only seeds of native species from natural populations from within 15 miles (for the prairies) or 25 miles (for the savannas) of the North Branch. This guarantees that we are preserving

local biodiversity. A typical gorgeous rich North Branch seed mix consists of many dozens of different species. We make a special mix for each natural community where we work so that we have seed mixes with names such as "Dry Mesic Prairie," and "Wet Woods" and even "Pond."

Why publish this article? With all the massive amounts of brush we're cutting, we need even more seed. We'd love to teach more people to lead seed collecting – and recruit more people who'd love the feel of rare seed in their fingers. We're looking for workday seed collectors and also more folks who can be part of the crews that go out on Wednesday mornings to collect the rarer species.

We also need folks who can take home bags of seed from work days and process and then store them until the fall. We'd love to find more people to help set up the fall seed mixing extravaganza.

Might you be such a person? You could learn the plants and the preserves in a very intimate way. Standing in the midst of beautiful rich areas as you carefully harvest the ripe seed is sheer pleasure. Think about it. What might you like to do? If any of the activities above appeals to you, contact Laurel Ross or Jane Balaban, and we can talk about it.

**Laurel — [lross@tnc.org](mailto:lross@tnc.org) or 773-736-3208**

**Jane — [balx2@comcast.net](mailto:balx2@comcast.net) or 847-679-4289**

North Branch Restoration Project  
P.O. Box 2154  
Northbrook, IL 60062-3707

The North Branch Restoration Project is a cooperative effort involving the Nature Conservancy, the Chicago Audubon Society, and the Sierra Club. We manage the sites as volunteers for the Forest Preserve District of Cook County and other local agencies. The project works to restore and manage the few remaining woodlands and prairies along the North Branch of the Chicago River. Our goal is to restore conditions that will allow these natural wild communities to flourish as a permanent part of the metropolitan area.

**[www.northbranchrestoration.org](http://www.northbranchrestoration.org)**

Brushpiles is available electronically. If you would like to receive it via email, send a message to [publications@northbranchrestoration.org](mailto:publications@northbranchrestoration.org). We will email you a ".pdf" file that can be read or printed by Adobe Acrobat Reader (download free from <http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep2.html>).

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# NBRP Workday Schedule – Summer 2004

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## **JUNE**

5	Saturday	9:00—noon	Linne North
6	Sunday	9:00—noon	Somme Woods
12	Saturday	9:00—noon	Wayside Woods Prairie/Linne RR Prairie
13	Sunday	9:00—noon	Watersmeet Prairie Grove
19	Saturday	9:00—noon	Somme Nature Preserve
20	Sunday	9:00—noon	Somme Prairie Grove (Summer Solstice)
27	Sunday	9:00—noon	Miami Woods Prairie

## **JULY**

3	Saturday	9:00—noon	Watersmeet Prairie Grove
4	Sunday	9:00—noon	Bunker Hill Savanna/Oxbow
10	Saturday	9:00—noon	Watersmeet Prairie Grove
11	Sunday	9:00—noon	Air Station Prairie
18	Sunday	9:00—noon	Somme Prairie Grove
24	Saturday	9:00—noon	Linne North
25	Sunday	9:00—noon	Watersmeet Prairie Grove

## **AUGUST**

1	Sunday	9:00—noon	Watersmeet Prairie Grove
8	Sunday	9:00—noon	Wayside Woods Prairie/Linne RR Prairie
15	Sunday	9:00—noon	Somme Nature Preserve
21	Saturday	9:00—noon	Watersmeet Prairie Grove
22	Sunday	9:00—noon	Miami Woods Prairie
29	Sunday	9:00—noon	Watersmeet Prairie Grove

### ***SUMMER WORKDAYS***

These are devoted mostly to removing weeds that have invaded the preserves. We may pull White Sweet Clover or Wild Parsnip, or cut Buckthorn or other invading brush. As always, necessary equipment and instructions will be provided by the site steward, but be sure to dress for conditions: long pants and long-sleeved shirts (in case there's poison ivy present); hats, sunscreen and insect spray; rainwear as appropriate. You may want to bring your own supply of drinking water to supplement that provided by the stewards.

### ***PLANNING AHEAD DEPARTMENT***

#### **National Public Lands Day - Harms Woods**

Saturday, September 18

9:00 am - noon & 1:00 - 4:00 pm

Would you like to join a multitude of folks and have some fun doing something powerful? National Public Lands Day is an annual event where volunteers gather to care for our public lands. This year the North Branch Restoration Project will observe the day at Harms Woods. Save the date – more in the next Brush Piles!

# NBRP Site Directions & Map

## DIRECTIONS:

**Air Station Prairie, Glenview** – From the Edens expressway; go west on Willow Road, past Waukegan Road and over the RR overpass. Turn south at the new traffic signals for Patriot Blvd. (The new main road through the redeveloped Naval Air Station). Turn east on Compass to the gate at the south end of the prairie. Patriot Blvd. is also accessible from the south via Lake Ave.

**Bunker Hill Savanna/Oxbow, Chicago** – Off Caldwell between Devon and Touhy; entrance located just opposite Tonty Street. For Bunker Hill Meet in first section of parking lot; for Oxbow, follow road until it turns north, then park along the west side.

**Harms Flatwoods, Glenview** – Meet at the Forest Preserve Grove parking lot on the west side of Harms Road, directly west of Old Orchard Road.

**Harms Woods, Glenview** – Meet at the Forest Preserve Grove parking lot on the west side of Harms Road, just south of Glenview Road.

**Indian Road Woods, Chicago** – Enter at the Indian Road Forest Preserve drive, on the east side of Central Ave, just north of Indian Road (approximately ½ mile south of Caldwell). Meet in the parking area at the far east end of the drive.

**Linne North** – Meet at the Wayside Woods Prairie parking lot. (See below for direction.)

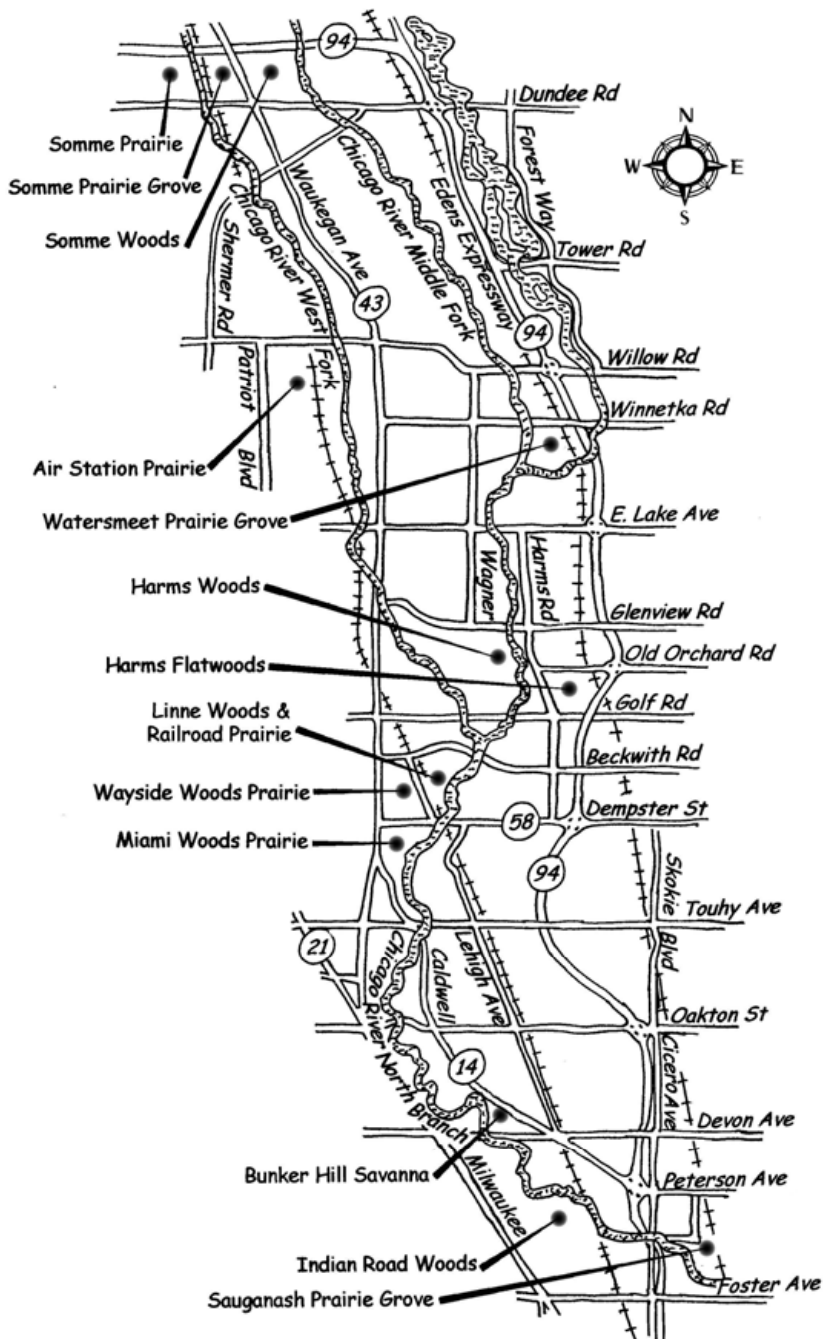
**Miami Woods Prairie, Niles/Morton Grove** – Located on the east side of Caldwell, two blocks north of Oakton. Meet in the parking lot for Miami Woods.

**Sauganash Prairie Grove, Chicago** – Meet at the edge of the Forest Preserve along the south side of Bryn Mawr at Kilbourn, which is south of Peterson and east of Cicero.

**Somme Prairie Grove, Northbrook** – From the Edens Expressway, take Dundee Road two miles west to Waukegan Road. Go north a few hundred feet on Waukegan and turn left into the unpaved parking area by the sign “Somme Woods Prairie.”

**Somme Prairie Nature Preserve, Northbrook** – From the Edens Expressway, take Dundee Road 2½ miles west (past Waukegan) to Western. Turn north and park in the post office parking lot.

**Somme Woods, Northbrook** – From the Edens Expressway, take Dundee Road two miles west and



turn right into Somme Woods parking lot (just before the light at Waukegan Road).

**Watersmeet Prairie Grove, Northfield** – From the Edens Expressway, take Lake Avenue west to Wagner Road. Turn north on Wagner to Winnetka Road. Turn east on Winnetka for ¾ mile. Park on the north side of the street or a side street.

**Wayside Woods Prairie/Linne RR Prairie, Morton Grove** – Meet at Wayside Woods Prairie parking lot on Lehigh Ave, a few blocks east of Waukegan Road and just north of Dempster.