

Brush Piles



NBPP's Refrigerator Door Companion

Winter 1992-1993

PRAIRIE RESTORATION ARTICLE #5017: BRUSH PILE ENGINEERING

By *Brushmeister Brian*

Greetings, Prairie Restorers. As the last of the ripe seed is being harvested, processed, bagged, measured, and mixed, the instinct to begin cutting brush is stirring within. Thus, it is the proper time for this brush-up (sorry) course.

The first step in making a brush pile (BP) is to cut the brush. What brush to cut and where to cut will be determined by the crew leader. S/he will point out the brush preparation area, name the brush cutting engineer, and choose the location for the BP.

When you begin to cut the baby buckthorn and saw those giant invasive species, be sure to lop and saw as low to the ground as possible for safety and aesthetic reasons. Move the brush you have cut to a clear area where no one else's brush will fall on you when s/he is cutting. Stay within 50 feet of the BP so you don't have too far to drag branches.

The "Brush Preparation Area" is the nerve center on brush removal day. Here, cut branches and shrubs must be no longer than the height of the average brush cutter. If uncertain of this measurement, ask the crew leader if the piece is the right height. Stand the piece up and if it is within + or - 5 inches of the height of the crew leader, it's the right height. Say, "Thank you."

Next, inspect the branch to be sure it does not have little branches sticking out which will catch on other branches on the pile. These little branches mean the BP will not be compact enough and therefore, will not permit good burning. Little branches also severely limit the capacity of the BP, creating a need for additional BPs. This is not desirable.

Once you have finished preparing what you have cut, you can transfer it to the BP. As you approach with an armload of brush, it is important to make eye contact

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PADDLING THE NORTH BRANCH

By *Joanne Soficheck*

Kerplunk! Twenty-three people went into the North Branch that day, September 27, 1992; and nineteen managed to keep their canoes right side up all the way from the Willow Road put-in to the Devon take-out. Amy Eisenstein is not sure whether canoe partner Brian Seinfeld thought he was in a kayak or missed trip leader Ralph Frese's starting admonition to "keep the open end up," but when their canoe rolled over following an unexpected collision with a metal pole perched in midstream, Amy and Brian found themselves laughing waist-deep in water.

Dunkings aside, the canoe trip was a delightful grand finale to the successful series of events celebrating the North Branch Prairie Project's 15th Anniversary in September. The weather cooperated beyond all expectations, supplying a glorious fall day with bright sun, blue sky, and just the right hint of fall crispness in the air. The previous day's heavy rains (which did not deter about 60 volunteers from clearing buckthorn at Harms Woods for the REI Service Day Project!) lent a freshness to the woods and helped speed us along on our course.

Along the way, we passed through lovely woodlands, stopping to collect buttonbush seed which will be used in restoring other banks along the North Branch. But we also witnessed the destructive effects on the shoreline of construction projects, such as a sewer outfall.

Sports highlights of the trip included our speedy passage through a golf course (trying to avoid both golf balls and the impatient looks of golfers waiting for us to get past before taking their next swing in our direction) and an impromptu basketball game (using two basketballs found en route). And who will ever forget the thrill, the terror, of running the terrible "shooting star rapids?"

All in all, the canoe trip was a fun and fitting climax to an anniversary month filled with excellent talks, productive workdays, ripsnorting music, and wonderful people. Thanks to everyone who attended or helped out at each of the events!



NORTH BRANCH PRAIRIE PROJECT

WINTER WORKDAYS AND ACTIVITIES SCHEDULE 1992-1993

The NORTH BRANCH PRAIRIE PROJECT is working to restore and manage the few remaining prairie remnants along the North Branch of the Chicago River in the Cook County Forest Preserves. These areas, once part of a vast grassland ecosystem, are under tremendous pressure from urban development and non-native species. We are working to restore conditions that will allow these natural wild communities to flourish as a permanent part of the metropolitan area.

In the winter we cut brush. Always dress for the weather and bring some water. Sun protection is important. When it's cold we may go out for lunch. The workday hotline is 312-878-3877.

Winter 1992-1993

December 6	Sunday	9:00 a.m.	Somme PG/Woods
December 6	Sunday	1:30 p.m.	Glenbrook HS
December 13	Sunday	9:00 a.m.	Harms Woods
December 13	Sunday	Harvest Feast at the Heartland Cafe after the workday.	
December 20	Sunday	9:00 a.m.	Miami-Indigo
December 27	Sunday	**** Christmas Holiday ****	
January 3	Sunday	9:00 a.m.	Wayside-RR Prairie
January 10	Sunday	9:00 a.m.	Somme PG/Woods
January 10	Sunday	1:30 p.m.	Buffalo Grove Prairie
January 17	Sunday	9:00 a.m.	Buffalo Grove Prairie
January 23	Saturday	9:00 a.m.	Bunker (Oxbow Prairie)
January 24	Sunday	9:00 a.m.	Bunker Hill
January 31	Sunday	9:00 a.m.	Miami-Indigo
February 7	Sunday	9:00 a.m.	Sauganash
February 14	Sunday	9:00 a.m.	Somme PG/Woods
February 20	Saturday	9:00 a.m.	Miami-Indigo
February 21	Sunday	9:00 a.m.	Harms Woods
February 27	Saturday	9:00 a.m.	Bunker (Oxbow Prairie)
February 28	Sunday	9:00 a.m.	Watersmeet/Sedge Meadow

Directions

BUFFALO GROVE PRAIRIE (Buffalo Grove)—Turn north on Johnson Drive, which is the first light west of Milwaukee on Lake-Cook Rd. Meet in the Cryovac lot, the first driveway on the west side of Johnson Dr. The prairie is under the Com Ed power lines.

BUNKER HILL (Chicago)—Meet at the Bunker Hill Forest Preserve parking lot on the west side of Caldwell Ave. about 1/4 mile north of Devon Ave.

GLENBROOK HIGH SCHOOL (Northbrook)—North of Willow Rd. on the west side of Shermer Road. Enter the parking lot at the north driveway and park by the tennis courts.

NORTH BRANCH WORKGROUPS

The North Branch workgroups listed below need volunteers. Contact the chairperson for more information or attend a workgroup meeting. *The next Coordinating Committee meeting will be on Wednesday, January 13 at 7:30 p.m. at the home of Jane Balaban, 5143 W. Morse, Skokie.*

Ecological Management:

Jane and John Balaban, 708-679-4289
Next meeting: Thursday, December 3

Education/Volunteer Development:

Joanne Softcheck, 312-878-3877

Publications/Publicity:

Karen Holland, 312-929-7658

Science:

Drew Ullberg, 312-631-0332



WORKSHOPS AND CLASSES

Herbicide Licensing Workshop

Saturday, December 12, 1993. 9:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m.

Location: Chicago Botanic Gardens

Fee: none

The next opportunity for Volunteer Stewardship Network volunteers (that means anyone volunteering with the North Branch) to become licensed to apply herbicides will be Saturday

HARMS WOODS (Glenview)—Meet at Forest Preserve Grove parking lot on the west side of Harms Rd., just south of Glenview Rd.

MIAMI-INDIGO (Morton Grove-Niles)—Meet at Miami Woods Prairie Forest Preserve parking lot on the east side of Caldwell Ave., two blocks north of Oakton Ave.

SAUGANASH PRAIRIE (Chicago)—Meet at the edge of the Forest Preserve along the south side of Bryn Mawr Ave. at Kilbourn Ave. (south of Peterson Ave. and east of Cicero Ave.)

SOMME PRAIRIE GROVE, WOODS, AND SEDGE MEADOW (Northbrook)—Take Dundee Rd. two miles west from the Edens Expwy. to Waukegan Rd. Go north a few hundred feet on Waukegan and meet at the unpaved parking area on the west side of the road.

WATERSMEET SEDGE MEADOWS (Northbrook) —Exit the Edens Expressway at Lake Avenue West. Go west to Wagner Rd., turn north then take Wagner to Winnetka Rd. Go east on Winnetka 3/4 mile. Park on the south side of the street.

WAYSIDE-RR PRAIRIE (Morton Grove)—Meet at Wayside Woods Prairie Forest Preserve parking lot on Lehigh Ave. (a few blocks east of Waukegan Rd. and just north of Dempster Ave.)

THANK YOU!

The North Branch Prairie Project would like to thank the **Butz Foundation**, Herbert K. Butz, Director, the **Field Foundation**, c/o Mr. Handy L. Lindsey, Jr., and the **Winnetka Garden Club** for their support.

Thank you also to the **Marshall Fields** for allowing the North Branch to collect seeds from their savanna restoration.



December 12. An instructor from the University of Illinois Cooperative Extension Service will provide general standards training prior to the test. It is recommended that participants read the General Standards Manual (\$2.50) and the General Standards Workbook (\$1.00) before the workshop.

Training is from 9:00 a.m.-11:30 a.m. Bring a bag lunch. The test will be administered by the Illinois Department of Agriculture after lunch. It should take about an hour.

Registration is required. The deadline is December 9. Call Sandi at the TNC office (312-346-8166) to register.

Please note: A previous announcement listed the location as North Park Village Nature Center. The location has been changed to the Chicago Botanic Garden.

Winter Tree Identification Class

Saturday, January 9, 1993. 10:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.

Location: Harms Woods

Instructor: Steve Thomas

Fee: \$2.00

Register by calling Joanne Softcheck at 312-878-3877.

Landscape Geneology Class

Saturday, January 16, 1993. 9:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m.

Location: Glacial Park

Instructor: Ed Collins

Fee: none

Register by calling Sandra at 312-346-8166

Nature Writing Workshop

Sundays, January 24, 31, February 7, 14, 1993. (4 sessions), 2:00-4:00 p.m.

Location: Wild Onion Alliance, 3432 N. Bosworth, Chicago

Instructor: Carole LaChappelle

Fee: \$90.00

Register by calling Carole at 312-334-1357

Burn Workshop

Saturday, February 13, 1993. 9:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.

Location: Crabtree Nature Center, Route 3, Stover Road, Barrington.

Instructor: Ed Collins

Fee: \$15.00

Register by calling Sandra at 312-346-8166

Butterfly Monitoring

Saturday, March 6, 1993. 9:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.

Location: To be announced.

Instructor: Doug Taron

Fee: none

Register by calling Sandra at 312-346-8166

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Annual North Branch Prairie Project Harvest Feast
Sunday, December 13, 1993, after the workday.
Location: The Heartland Cafe, Chicago.

North Branch Volunteer Winter Birthdays Party
Saturday, January 9, 1993, 6:00 p.m.
RSVP to Brian Seinfeld at 708-679-6996. The Tool Czar is determining the location for this event.

Annual North Branch Prairie Project Potluck Dinner
Saturday, January 30, 1993, 6:00 p.m.
Location: Call Joanne Softcheck at 312-878-3877 for information. The business part of the potluck is to determine the role of the Coordinating Committee. Details will be mailed to all workgroup members prior to the event. Bring your tastiest dish, your favorite North Branch slides or photos, and your best North Branch story to tell.

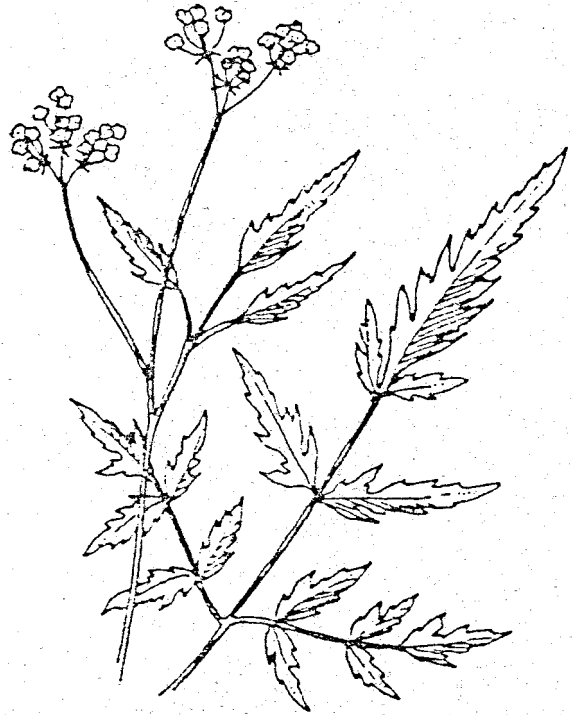
The Ethics of Gardening for Wild Seeds
Saturday, February 6, 1993, 1:00-4:00 p.m.
Location: Chicago Botanic Gardens.
Fee: none
Sponsored by: Chicago Botanic Gardens, Illinois Native Plant Society, The Nature Conservancy. This will be a panel discussion with audience participation.

Global Connections: Ecological Communities, People and the Land
State of the Prairie Lecture Series.
Tuesdays, January 19, 26, February 2, 9, 16, 1993. (5 lectures).
All lectures begin at 7:00 p.m.
Ralph Thornton of the Forest Preserve District of Cook County will speak on February 2. All other speakers to be announced.
Location: Chicago Academy of Sciences.
Fee: \$5.00 per lecture.
Sponsors: Chicago Academy of Sciences, The Nature Conservancy, Open Lands Project, North Branch Prairie Project.

Midwest Oak Savanna Conference
Saturday, February 20, 1993.
Location: Northeastern Illinois University, 5500 N. St. Louis Avenue, Chicago.
Organizing Sponsors: The Nature Conservancy, Northeastern Illinois University, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point.
Fee: \$16.00

The conference will be a participatory exchange among those concerned with fire dependent oak communities. Oak grasslands and woodlands with prairie affinities were a widespread component of the presettlement landscape and are among our rarest and most threatened natural systems today. Teams of specialists, scientists, and decision-makers have been invited to meet in working sessions prior to the conference. They will seek to clarify definitions, review and identify research priorities and work toward ecosystem recovery plans. Summaries and recommendations from the working sessions will be presented at the opening of the conference. This plenary session will establish a context for introductory and technical workshops, papers and posters on the following topics: science/ecology, restoration, laws/policies/ethics, and people.

For more information, call Karen Holland at 312-886-0238.



HEDGE PARSLEY: A NEW SCOURGE?

By Laurel Ross

The relatively obscure European weed, *Torilis japonica*, is showing some signs of becoming another serious pest on the North Branch. Like sweet clover, *Torilis* (accent on the first syllable) is a member of the carrot family (*Umbelliferae*). Its white flowers are arranged in a relatively small umbel (see illustration) and appear in July. Dick Young describes *Torilis* follows, "A European annual of shaded areas. It grows to 3 feet on slender, shiny stems with intricate, glistening, compounded leaves which wither in August. The new plants begin again in the fall and remain green through much of the winter in protected areas."

This plant seems to be on the increase and should be searched out and removed. I helped to pull it at Somme where it is just starting to show up. In September, however, I was looking for Baneberry seeds at Linne Woods (next door to Miami) and I saw a very scary demonstration of how it can quickly get out of hand. There were perhaps 50 mature plants scattered along the edge of the parking lot. I thought I would do a good deed and pull them out. Then I noticed with horror that for every plant I was pulling hundreds of little ones were growing underneath. When these little ones flower next July, they will produce a tremendous amount of seed and the problem will be similar to the one we have with white sweet clover.

We don't know the extent of the *Torilis* invasion yet, but we should all be on the lookout for this plant. Because it stays green in winter, we can start now. If we don't, we may soon be sweating over it on hot summer days!

Ode
(with apologies to Ogden Nash)
Torilis?
Horrisis!

by Laurelis

MESSAGES FROM ELEMENTARY SCHOOL DISTRICT 28, NORTHBROOK

"Justine (Kusner), WOW! What a great field trip we had to Somme Prairie!!! Joan Meersman met us and gave a brief intro to what she does (collects seeds) and then she stayed with a group . . . Thank you so much for your time, expertise, and your spirit—you were with us. I could sense your feeling of how important this field trip was! We have close to 60 children and adults enlightened as to the grandeur of what once covered Illinois."

Trudy Whitacre

"On the field trip I learned that I like to smell flowers and they smelled good. On the field trip I liked the spider. It was cool. It was green and black and white."

Trevor

"On the field trip I learned about the goldenrod that bugs hide in to catch food when it comes by. On the field trip I liked the black and orange soldier beetle."

Matthew

"On the field trip I learned that the turkey foot grass has three spikes on the top of it. On the field trip I liked the walking stick and the sounds of the crickets."

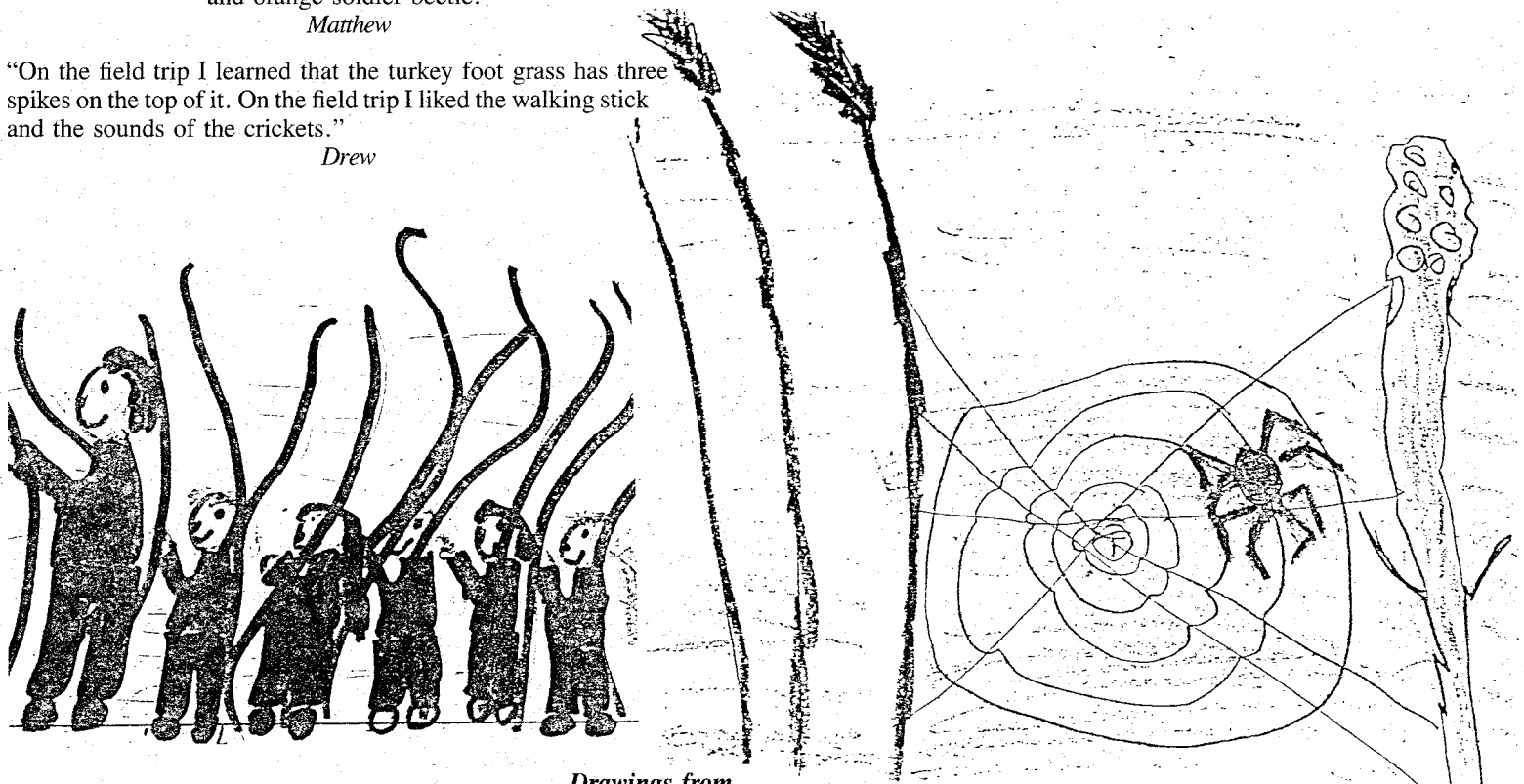
Drew

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED:

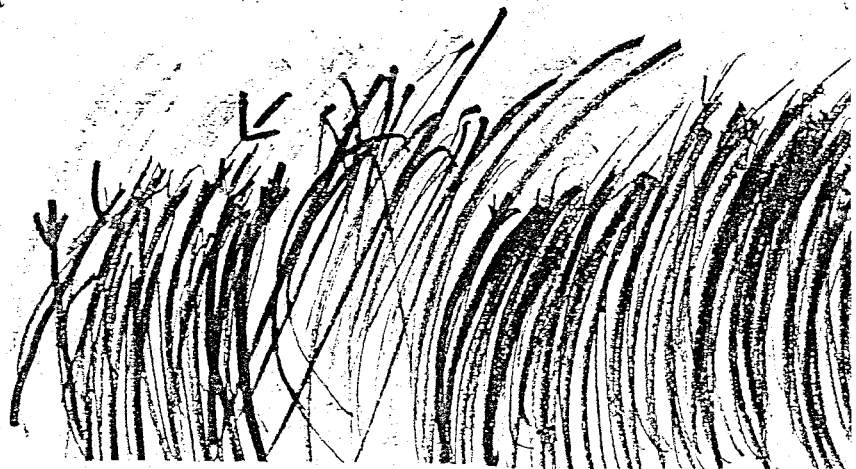
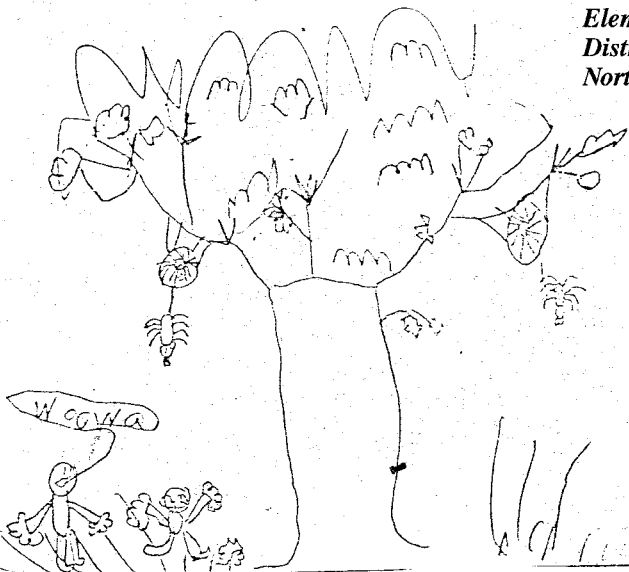
Sharon Gryska, North Branch Treasurer, would like help from someone *well versed in accounting* to assist her with North Branch income tax statements. Call her at 312-871-7331 for more information.

A *planning committee* to organize an Emergency Response Group, which would deal with threats to North Branch sites, and a Proactive Group, which would organize the community to monitor specific sites before an emergency occurs, is being formed. All interested people, please call Chris Urban at 312-871-2827.

The Friends of the Chicago River would like to work with the North Branch Prairie Project and others to *develop a vision for river ecosystem management and usage*. Interested persons please call Jane Balaban at 708-679-4289.



*Drawings from
Elementary School
District #28,
Northbrook*



BRUSH PILE ENGINEERING

Continued from page 1

with the designated brush pile engineer, the one who is on top of a growing pile. Eye contact is important for the health of the brush pile engineer, who may need to dodge your incoming pieces. The engineer will instruct you as to the best placement for your particular bundle. If these guidelines are followed, the BP will be one that is glorious to look at and easy to burn!

Keep in mind the BP engineer is the master of all s/he stands on, so don't be upset if you are told to take a branch back to the "Brush Preparation Area" to be trimmed. That's just part of the job. Any problems should be directed to the crew leader, who is supposed to keep you happy.

For those who aspire to become brush pile engineers, remember, you need to have a complete understanding of BP theory, BP ethics, BP physics, and sturdy leather shoes.

In preparation for the brush cutting season, let us repeat the "Brush Cutting Mantra": Cut Hard! Be Safe! Have Fun!

Thank you for taking my course. You all pass.

Brush Pile Crew

Editing: Barbara Rose

Layout: Kathy and Chuck Lapinsky

North

Branch

Prairie

Project

P.O. Box 74

Northbrook, IL 60065

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

*The North Branch
Prairie Project is
a cooperative effort
involving The Nature
Conservancy, the
Chicago Audubon
Society, and the Sierra
Club, Chicago group.*

*We manage these sites
as volunteers for the
Forest Preserve District
of Cook County.*

VISITORS

Summer and fall brought numerous visitors to our prairies and savannas. Some people took lovely walks to learn about the plants and animals and the restoration work we do as volunteers. Some groups came to help us pick seed. Others lopped and sawed fiercely with those of us who were pleased to have the extra help. Below is a list of some of the visiting groups. Thank you all for participating. You are welcome back anytime.

Steven Walsh's high school freshmen from the Truman College
Adventures in Science program
Cub Scout Pack #28, New Trier District
Cub Scout Pack #7, New Trier District
Boy Scout Troop #3, Wilmette
Elementary School District 28, Northbrook
REI members and employees
American Institute of Architects
Chicago Children's Museum
Junior League of Evanston-North Shore
Japanese Chamber of Commerce

FOR SALE!!!

The North Branch has 15 Year Anniversary T-shirts for sale. Small, medium, large and extra large T-shirts are available for \$12.00 each. Designed by Carolyn Aronson, the serene, aqua T-shirt features a prairie vista. All proceeds from the sale will be used to further restoration efforts on the North Branch. Call Joanne Softcheck for details at 312-878-3877.

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