

# Brush Piles



*The NBPP Refrigerator Door Companion*

*Spring 1992*

## **A Seed Gathering Experience**

by Richard Carter

Last October, gathering at the split rail fence with plastic bags and samples of the plants from which the seeds were to be gathered, a small group of volunteers received instructions on how to pick different kinds of seeds and how much to gather from any one area.

It was intriguing to me, as a new volunteer, how the mind could eventually be programmed and the eye calibrated to distinguish just these distinctive forms from all others when, at first, there seemed to be just an undifferentiated mass of plant material. I came to admire the individual plant forms and greet them as familiar friends.

At first, the noise from Waukegan Road was extremely distracting and we had to move away from the parking lot to hear when instructions were being given. During the gathering of seeds, I became aware of how fragile and insular this little piece of precious land was. It was tightly bound by all the forces that had destroyed the rest of its kind. There, in the middle of the Grove, listening to the constant sound of automobile traffic at its fringes, hearing the heavy laboring of a freight train just to the west, the scream of jets overhead and the ominous clank of a bulldozer nearby, I was confronted by a sense of the self-destructive lunacy our way of life is creating for us. In that moment, only this sanctuary made any sense, a breathing place, a time-out, a shift in perspective, a chance to ask questions about the destiny towards which we are unknowingly hurling ourselves.

In time, the clamor seemed to fade and a realm of peacefulness pervaded. There was something very ancient and eternal evoked by the simple act of gathering seed for the future, something deeply satisfying and right. I could begin to understand why so many volunteers had come for so many years to take part in all the rituals of seed gathering, brush cutting, burning and planting, wanting to set their hand on making things right in this landscape. Signs

of their labor were all around, especially the brush clearing, but what I couldn't see were the changes created in over 10 years of work. That was their special privilege. It must be one of the reasons they keep returning.

## **Yes, We Use Garlon**

By Bob Schmutge

The primary herbicide used on the North Branch is Garlon. Garlon is used to control the growth of invasive, alien species such as European buckthorn. Without herbicides, all of that brush cutting volunteers do on Sunday mornings would be for naught because the brush would grow back quickly and more thickly. Herbicides keep the brush from growing back and allow the rare prairie and savanna seeds to germinate and grow without being shaded out or overtaken by more aggressive plants. In the words of Ron Panzer, "We will never succeed (in restoring prairies or savannas) without herbicide."

On February 1, The Illinois Nature Conservancy sponsored a special day for volunteers to take the Department of Agriculture's Public Operator's exam on the use of pesticides. Several North Branch volunteers are now qualified to handle and apply herbicides, which are one kind of pesticide. With proper and safe use, herbicides like Garlon can be effective allies in the restoration of prairies and savannas in northeastern Illinois.

## **Get Ready! 1992 Seed Collecting Core Group Forming**

Believe it or not, the new seed collecting year is almost upon us. Several North Branchers have volunteered for the 1992 Seed Collecting Committee, but more people are needed to organize the effort. The first meeting to plan a winning strategy is set for March 4. Call Laurel Ross at 312-281-4676 or Joanne Softcheck at 312-878-3877 for more information.

# NORTH BRANCH PRAIRIE PROJECT

## Spring Workdays and Activities Schedule 1992

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 spring we rake in seed, plant flora grown in volunteer gardens, cut brush, and conduct controlled burns. Always dress for the weather and bring some water. Bring some food if you can stay for lunch. The workday hotline is 312 878-3877.

### *Spring Workdays and Tours 1992*

(Workdays other than Sundays are italicized.)

Sunday	March 15	9am	Sauganash
Sunday	March 22	9am	Somme Woods
Sunday	March 29	9am	Miami Woods
Sunday	April 5	9am	Somme Woods
<i>Saturday</i>	<i>April 11</i>	<i>9am</i>	<i>Miami Woods</i>
Sunday	April 12	9am	Bunker Hill
Sunday	April 19	9am	Somme Woods (Easter)
<b>Saturday</b>	<b>April 25</b>	<b>9am</b>	<b>Ecology Tour of Harms Woods</b>
Sunday	April 26	9am	Somme Woods
<i>Saturday</i>	<i>May 2</i>	<i>9am</i>	<i>Miami Woods</i>
Sunday	May 3	9am	Wayside
Sunday	May 10	9am	Somme Woods (Mother's Day)
<i>Saturday</i>	<i>May 16</i>	<i>9am</i>	<i>Harms Woods</i>
Sunday	May 17	9am	Miami Woods
Sunday	May 24	9am	Somme Woods
Sunday	May 31	9am	Somme Woods

### *Directions*

**BUNKER HILL (Chicago)** - Meet at Bunker Hill Forest Preserve parking lot on west side of Caldwell Ave. about 3/4 mile north of Devon Ave.

**HARMS WOODS (Glenview)** - Meet at Forest Preserve Grove parking lot on west side of Harms Road, just south of Glenview Road.

### NORTH BRANCH WORKGROUPS

The six North Branch workgroups listed below need volunteers. Contact the chairperson for more information or attend a workgroup meeting. The next Coordinating Committee meeting has yet to be announced. Call 312 878-3877 for more information.

#### **Ecological Management:**

Jane and John Balaban, 708-679-4289  
Next meeting: March 26th at the Balaban's,  
5143 W. Morse, Skokie.

#### **Education:**

Cora Sue Nicholas, 312-262-8643  
Next meeting: Call for information

#### **Publications:**

Karen Holland, 312-929-7658  
Next meeting: Call for information

#### **Publicity:**

Gail Schmolter, 312-935-0654  
Next meeting: Call for information

#### **Science:**

Susanne Masi, 312-973-2608  
Next meeting: Call for information

#### **Volunteer Development:**

Joanne Softcheck, 312-878-3877  
Next meeting: Call for information

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

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

SOMME WOODS PRAIRIE (Northbrook) - Take Dundee Road 2 miles west from Edens Expwy. to Waukegan Road. Go north a few hundred feet on Waukegan and meet at the unpaved parking area on the west side of the road.

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



#### THE YEAR AROUND

North Branch Prairie Project is our name;  
Restoring prairies is our claim to fame,  
And cutting brush begins our year.  
Those heaps of brush our loppers shear  
Will at a later date be put to flame.

The fruitful soil awaits the seeds we bring  
When greening plants announce the longed for spring.  
We spread our seed hoard on the earth  
In trust that Nature will give birth  
In time to many a thriving growing thing.

The summer sun will bless the seeds we sow;  
The summer rains will do their part to grow  
New plants that will in time give us  
Fresh seeds for harvesting and thus  
Contribute to the work we try to do.

We'll gather up those seeds and add them to  
Our precious store to mix and sow anew.  
So every sort of seed we find  
In time will reproduce its kind  
To help in what we've set ourselves to do.

Jim Cutler

From the children of Chiaravelle Montessori School in Evanston,  
who watched a burn last fall.

Dear Steve and others,  
Thank you for the marvelous time  
at the prairie. All of our memories are great.  
You gave us one of our favorite days.  
We thought what you did was very  
interesting to us.

Signatures

Adam D.      David      Evan  
Rebecca  
Joey Geni  
Barbara      MARENIE      amma  
A.J.  
ALLISON  
Ben  
STEPH  
Adam Bagnall      Annelise  
Michelle  
Siana  
Karen  
Mira

Brush Piles Crew:

Barbara Rose: Editrix Macintoshia

Joel Spears: Imagitor waxissimus



## Volunteer Announcements

### NBPP SCIENCE FILE HAS A HOME AT THE CHICAGO BOTANIC GARDEN

NBPP's science library, compiled and organized by Susanne Masi and Joanne Softcheck, is a comprehensive collection of all the science-related studies done on North Branch sites over the past 15 years. It includes plant and insect inventories, vegetation transects, historical management records, site maps, articles, studies and North Branch publications. The Chicago Botanic Garden's library has generously agreed to house the file which is available for use during the library hours, 10am to 4pm, Monday through Saturday. Materials may not be checked out, but a copy machine is available in the library. (The Botanic Garden is located in Glencoe on Lake Cook Road, one half-mile east of Eden's Expy. There is a \$3 parking fee to enter the Garden by car; you may walk or bike in free of charge.)

A second copy of the science file is kept by Joanne Softcheck. If you wish copies of file materials, Joanne will provide them at cost within a reasonable time of the request. Call Joanne at 312 878-3877.

### VOLUNTEERS SOUGHT TO PARTICIPATE IN INSECT, PLANT, HERP AND BIRD STUDIES

NBPP has received funding from the Forest Preserve District of Cook County this year to conduct entomological and herpetological studies as well as plant inventories and transects. Ron Panzer, noted for his research on native insects, will coordinate the entomological program and Tom Anton of the Chicago Herpetological Society will do the herp studies. Jerry Sullivan and Jeff Rovner are looking for more volunteers to expand their bird-nesting surveys. Interns will be hired for the plant studies. Volunteers interested in any of these areas are needed to monitor traps, search out herps, assist with transects and help listen and look for nesting birds. For insect work, call Susanne Masi (312-973-2608), for herps, call Laurel Ross (312-346-8166), for plants call Jane Balaban (708-679-4289). For birds, call Jeff Rovner (708-764-1504) and also see the Education classes in this issue of *Brush Piles* for training sessions in bird nesting surveys this spring.

### STEWARD NEEDED FOR WILD GARDENS

North Park Village Nature Center Wild Gardens needs a steward. The North Branch Prairie Project has invested many hundreds of rare plants in the three gardens at the Nature Center. Lack of weeding and regular watering has limited their seed production. Will you help? Call Laurel Ross at 312 281-4676.

### GARDENING TIME

The Savanna and prairie gardens at North Park Village Nature Center need tender loving care. Spring Garden Work Nights at North Park Village Nature Center, 5801 N. Pulaski Road, will be held Monday evenings, May 4, 11 and 18 from 6-8pm. This is an opportunity for Wild Gardeners to meet with Garden Coordinator Lindsay McGee, who will be on hand to answer questions, give advice and distribute any remaining spring plants. The spring Garden Workshops will be held at North Park Village on Sunday, April 26 and Saturday, May 9 at 2pm. Pre-register by calling Lindsay at 312-871-1293.

### SEED ETHICS DISCUSSION

The Illinois Native Plant Society will host a panel discussion on "The Ethics of Seed Collecting" Friday, April 10 at 7:30pm at the Campbell House in Geneva, Illinois. The panel will include representatives from the scientific community, public agencies, commercial seed producers, and volunteer ecological restoration groups. Discussion will be focused on questions raised at the 1991 Prairie Conference held in DeKalb. For example, how much seed should be collected from sites which may differ in many ways? How important is it to use local ecotypes? How can we encourage responsible, ethical seed collecting behavior? Questions and comments from the audience will be invited. For more information call the Illinois Native Plant Society at 708-719-2419.

### EARTH DAY "GEAR UP" FAIR

On Saturday, March 28 from 12-4pm, the REI (Recreational Equipment Inc.) store will sponsor a "Gear Up" Earth Day fair. The North Branch, Friends of the Park, Sierra Club, Earth Day Chicago, and other environmental groups will be on hand to pass out information about their groups in order to recruit volunteers for Earth Day (April 22) activities. There will also be a general information booth on recycling. REI is located in the Four Flags Center at 8225 Golf Road in Niles.

### TREE TREK ANYONE?

Would you like to be part of a group outing to the Morton Arboretum on March 21? This will be a self guided nature walk to get to know our native trees better in their winter aspect. A hike along the Arboretum's Illinois collection offers an opportunity to see many of the trees native to this area. If you're interested, call Joanne Softcheck at 312-878-3877. The Arboretum is located in Lisle on Route 53 just north of the East-West Tollway (I88).

