

Woods of Wisconsin

Newsletter
of the
Forest Preserve
District
of the Kankakee
River Valley

"All ethics so far evolved rest upon a single premise: that the individual is a member of a community of interdependent parts. The land ethic simply enlarges the boundaries of the community to include soils, waters, plants and animals, or collectively, the land ... a land ethic changes the role of Homo Sapien from conqueror of the land community to plain member and citizen of it... it implies respect for his fellow members, and so also respect for the community as such."

— Aldo Leopold, "Sand County Almanac"

Wood Sculptures



If you happen to take the trails at the Aroma Land and Water Preserve on Hieland Road in Aroma Park, you will come across some very fine wood sculptures by Bud Hainzing, an Illinois artist known for his skill in creating beautifully crafted wood sculptures. One of the sculptures that he has created locally is the standing bear at the X-line Sportsman's Club. The sculptures at the Forest Preserve are fairly large works of art that have been donated and commissioned by one of our local community who is a regular visitor of the Forest Preserve Trails.

Over time, trees will come down, either from age or storm events. In a forest, these fallen trees eventually become rich forest soil, broken down by the actions of weather, fungus, lichens and insects. For that reason, generally speaking those fallen trees are not cleared out of the forest, other than those that block access to the trails.

However, one of our frequent Forest Preserve visitors had an inspiration when he noticed some particularly large tree stumps left standing once the tree came down. These standing remnants of the forest were relatively fresh, the standing wood still in good condition. Having heard of Mr. Hainzing,

(continued on page 2)

Nature's peace will flow into you as sunshine flows into trees. The winds will blow their own freshness into you, and the storms their energy, while cares will drop off like autumn leaves.

— John Muir

The most beautiful thing we can experience is the mysterious.

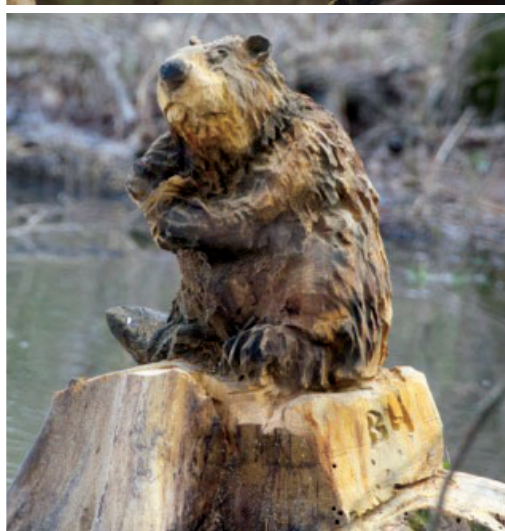
— Albert Einstein

(continued from page 1)

this generous citizen has commissioned the artist to turn those stumps into works of art that can be enjoyed by all who wander down the forest paths at the Preserve. The artist has crafted beautiful sculptures of some of our native forest creatures to stand watch along the trail and overlooking the river.

This warm season, keep an eye out for another work of art that is scheduled to be completed at Gar Creek site, crafted from a large standing stump along the trail.

If anyone wishes to sponsor a sculpture at the Forest Preserve, please call the office at 815-935-5630.





Shepherd's Purse

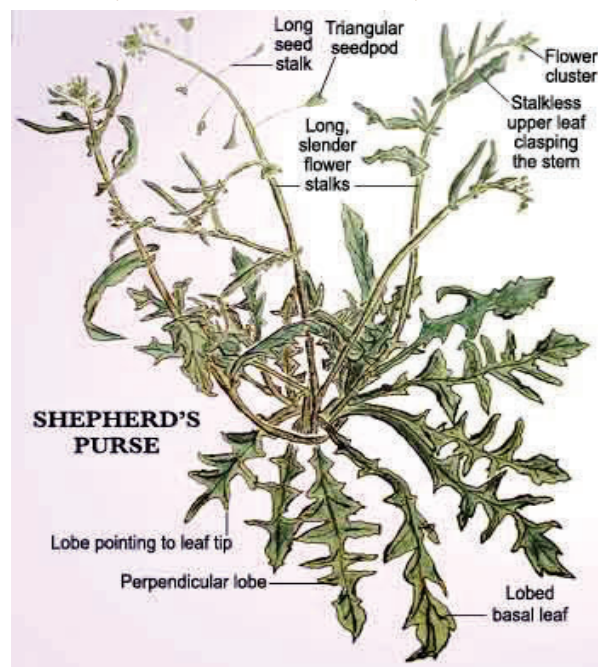
Caspella bursa-pastoris

This common plant of garden and field is named for the shape of its triangular seed pods. In the spring and early summer, the greens can be steamed or lightly boiled and served as is or mixed into a salad. Later in the season the greens become bitter; however they can be prepared by boiling three times, discarding the cooking water each time. After getting used to the flavors of wild edibles, the stronger flavor doesn't seem too bitter after all, and you will come to enjoy the vigorous taste of wild forage.

In late summer and early fall, the seeds can be harvested, dried and kept to grind and use like pepper as a flavoring.

Shepherd's purse is a native of England, and has been introduced wherever the British explorers and settlers migrated. It is a tough and hardy plant that will survive in the poorest soils, although it may only grow to a couple inches in height. In rich soil it can reach to over two feet tall.

Often considered a "weed" (what is a weed after all?), shepherd's purse is a very hardy plant that can be found volunteering in your garden. It grows in undisturbed areas such as un-mowed fields and lawns, along trails, and on roadsides. And of course, your garden. I would suggest that instead of weeding it out, take it to your kitchen and prepare it for a nutritious addition to your meal. It is often one of



the first wild edibles introduced to young girl scouts and boy scouts on their camping trips.

An important warning when harvesting wild edibles is to never harvest along roadsides, or anywhere else where chemicals abound. If the lawn or garden or yard edges you are considering have been treated with insecticides or herbicides, never eat anything from those locations. Roadsides not only have an accumulation of whatever has been used for winter de-icing, but all the components of motor oils, diesel fuels and gasoline. Often un-named materials are dumped along roadside ditches, so you never know what may be infused in the soil along the roads; most likely it isn't good.

Although this plain garden volunteer has suffered much in recent decades from a bad reputation for disturbing the pristine rows of domestic vegetables, it has a long history of medicinal uses. The herbalist Culpepper valued this plant as a way to stop bleeding from wounds, and during the Great War, when medicines became unavailable, the Germans used shepherd's purse to treat bleeding. It has been used as a remedy for diarrhea, and prepared as a poultice or as a wash to control bleeding of mild cuts and skin abrasions.



BAREFOOT AGAIN

– Nighthawk

Ah to be barefoot again, such a wonderful thing,
As chorus frogs and wood toads welcome the new Spring

A fingernail bowl shaped moon floats afar,
A more southern big dipper pointing towards the north star,

The buds on the trees all aching to bust,
The pinecones prepare to release thick yellow dust

And the birds are all posturing for the best mating chance,
As butterflies entwine in a graceful square dance,

The mosquitoes begin sharing their chemical pain,
Penetrating the flesh in a cat and mouse game,

And memories of green smells from seasons long past,
Are now tall golden sedge and fields barren of grass,

The crow's scold more softly with twigs in their mouths,
Preparing the tree tops for the eggs they will house,

The geese dipping their heads in a watery display,
The fish cleaning out circles in which they will lay,

And last year's bounty does rise to the sun,
From the warming soil bursting adolescents each one,

With fevered anticipation the cycle begins,
To replenish the earth with its seed once again.

And the earth rubs its eyes and stretches out its arms wide,
With a warm air it beckons, "won't you all come outside?"

And be barefoot again, such a wonderful thing,
While the katydids and the crickets sing in the new Spring.



Photo by Mike Quigley

Bird Treats

The springtime migration of songbirds is upon us, and you may want to put out some high-energy food sources to sustain our feathered friends as they stop along the way to rest and feed. Some recipes use shortening, however the shortening has no nutritional value. I recommend using rendered suet, to avoid causing nutritional deficiency at a time when birds need high energy for their long journey and preparing to nest and care for their young. The cornmeal is very important to prevent the sticky consistency of peanut butter from choking the birds.

Our backyard birds that stay for the summer will enjoy these treats also. These high-energy treats are especially valuable to our birds that stay here in our north country for the winter. Suet treats are enjoyed year-round by woodpeckers, wrens, warblers, titmice, robins, nuthatches, kinglets, chickadees, blue jays, and bluebirds.



Photo by Mike Quigley

HUMMINGBIRD

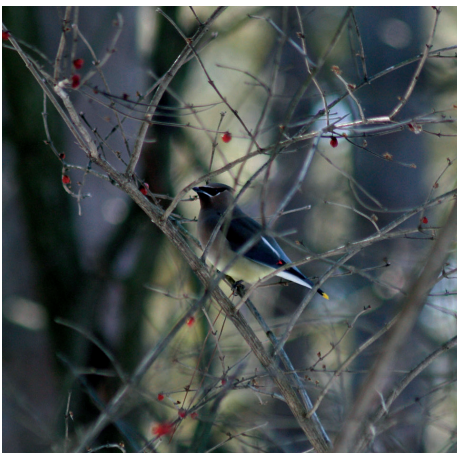


Photo by Mike Quigley

CEDAR WAXWING



CEDAR WAXWING

Photo by Mike Quigley

Suet Treat

The suet in these recipes is especially favored by woodpeckers and nuthatches. Shortening is not a substitute as it lacks the energy-packed nutritional value of suet. Suet can be gotten from your local meat market, rendered from fat trimmed from meat cuts, or simply buy the suet cakes already made up at the wild bird food section in the store. Be aware that some mixes add dyes and flavorings that have no nutritional value; you and the birds are better off just putting out the real stuff, however unsophisticated.

- | | |
|--|-----------------------|
| 1 1/2 cups peanut butter (unsweetened) | 1 1/2 cups cornmeal |
| 3 - 4 cups wild bird seed | 3 cups rendered suet* |

Freeze in a cake or pie pan; cut into pieces to fit suet basket.

Birdie Granola

- | | |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1/2 cup chopped rendered suet* | 1/2 cup peanut butter |
| 2 1/2 cups cornmeal | 1 cup wild birdseed |

Combine, press into a pan. Freeze until firm enough to crumble. Put crumbles in a bowl with peanuts, birdseed, chopped apples, raisins or more chunks of suet. Mix well, divide into single serve containers and freeze. You can also add oatmeal, bran, sunflower seeds or pumpkin seeds.

*Here is advice on rendering suet, or tallow, from the website of "Ask the Meat Man":

http://www.askthemeatman.com/bird_feed__suet.htm

"To render suet, it's best to start with beef suet (ask your butcher to grind it if you don't have a meat grinder, or else chop the raw beef fat as fine as you can). Heat the ground or chopped suet over a medium flame until all the fat leaches out. There should be nothing pink in your pan, only solid gray bits in a clear liquid. Strain out the gray bits by pouring the melted suet through fine cheesecloth. Save the strained liquid fat and let it cool.

Suet at this stage is still somewhat soft, but if you melt it and strain it again, you will produce a very hard suet. You may put out your rendered suet as is, use it to make suet cakes, or store it for later use (it will keep for a year in a covered container in your freezer)."

Notes from the Urban Forest

By Rob Frothingham,
Certified Arborist
and Landscape Architect

Why do trees around our homes and businesses need fertilizing?

The natural forest floor is a fertile reservoir of nutrition. The falling leaves, branches and even whole trees that return to the soil ensure a perfect balance of both the organic and mineral content of soil nutrients. A major component of this natural fertility is the community of organisms that inhabit the soil and process the basic ingredients into chemical forms that can be readily absorbed by the trees. Some of the best-understood organisms are the various species of fungi that colonize the roots and assist in the uptake of certain nutrients, especially phosphorus. Without these symbiotic relationships, trees will be under-nourished and eventually decline.

When we take the tree out of its natural woodland environment, we set up a potentially stressful situation. When our houses and other buildings are constructed, the naturally fertile soil is either removed or destroyed through compaction. Trees and other plants must have a balance of mineral and organic chemical sources along with air and moisture to ensure optimum growth and resistance to insects and disease.

The first step to establishing the consistency of the forest floor in our disturbed urban soils is the use of mulch. The Morton Arboretum conducted tests planting trees of the same size and species. One group was planted without mulch and the grass was allowed to grow back to the trunk. The other group was mulched with 4-5" of composted woodchips

to the drip line. The same amount of watering was done for each tree. In the group without mulch, 5% of the trees died and the rest were still struggling to get established after 7 years. The group that was mulched suffered no mortality and on the average was twice the size and twice as healthy as the unmulched trees after 7 years.

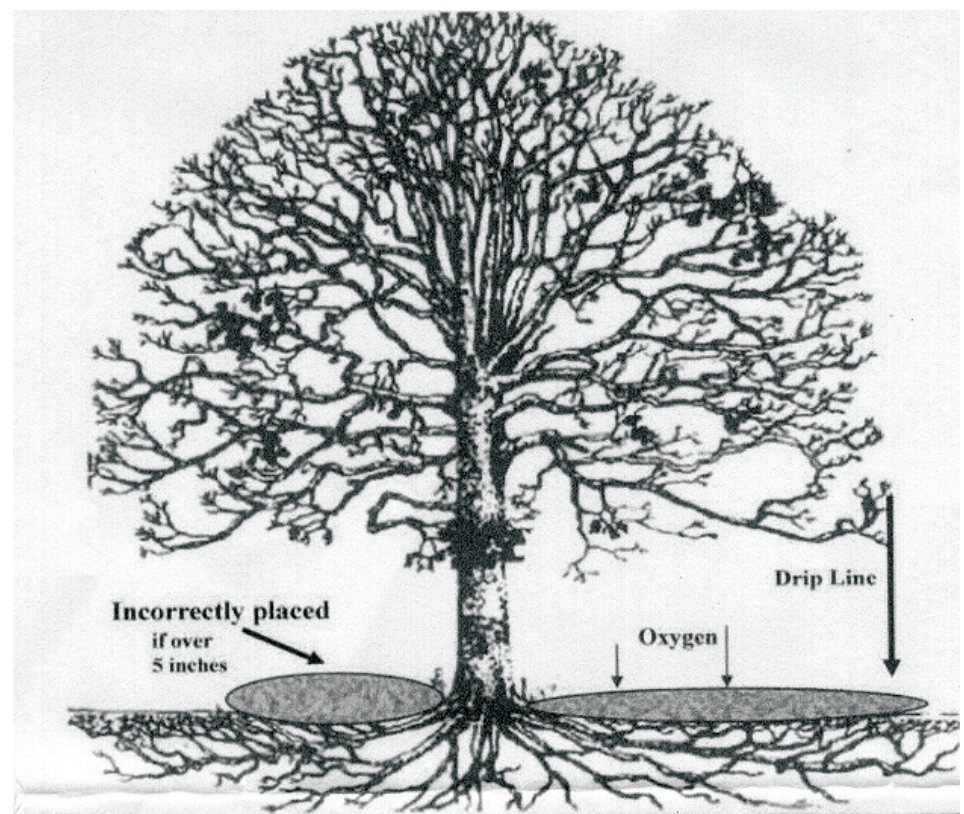
It is, however, very important how you mulch. All too often, mulch is piled high up against the trunk. This is a no-no. The value of mulch is in the width of the bed. Mulch should never actually touch the trunk, but should be pulled back a couple of inches from the bark. (see diagram)

Never roto-till under a mature established tree. You will be destroying tiny absorbing roots, most of which are within the top ten inches of the surface. If you wish to develop a ground cover or perennial bed under a tree, it is best to allow composted mulch to work into the soil over a couple of years first.

In addition to mulching, there is another way to introduce a natural nutrient balance to your trees. You may provide an

organic-based fertilizer that, as much as possible, duplicates the conditions of the forest fertility. Technically, a "fertilizer" must contain nitrogen. The service products I use are carefully referred to as biologicals and require analysis for application specific to problems, for example, heavy clay, sandy loam and so forth. Spring and fall are the best times to fertilize trees, but with non-burning organic products it can be done any time.

The do-it-yourself person can spend a lot of time doing research; you can go the easy mulch route, or contact a consultant service. Correct mulching is the vitamin pill; biologicals and other fertilizers are treatments. For a do-it-yourself project, the product of wood chippers is the best and least costly local source. However, it is important that these chips are at least one year old and at least partially composted. Broken down alfalfa hay is another good source. The most popular mulches, largely because of their attractive appearance, are shredded hardwood bark, cypress and cedar bark. These are fine but cost between two to four times more than chips or hay.



FOREST PRESERVE SITES

Shannon Bayou Environmental Education Center and Administrative Office

This 46-acre preserve is located at 3301 Waldron Road in Aroma Park, along the Kankakee River. The Center provides space for programs about natural history, ecology and preservation of open space in the Kankakee River Valley. The walking trail area features plantings of many native trees and plants, including native tallgrass prairie species, and a butterfly garden of native plants. The site includes $\frac{3}{4}$ mile asphalt and fine gravel walking trail, a picnic shelter, and picnic tables.

Shannon Bayou
3301 Waldron Road
Aroma Park, IL 60910
41°04'47.61"N
87°48'44.31"W

Aroma Land and Water Preserve

One of the best sites in the area for woodland wildflowers, this 133 acre site is located on Hieland Road, 1.4 miles south of Highway 17 East. A 1.2 mile walking trail winds through several different types of natural areas, including high quality forest, prairie, and wetland ecosystems. It also has nearly $\frac{1}{4}$ mile of Kankakee River frontage, and the associated floodplain forest. There is ample parking in the parking lot on Hieland Road, and a playground, maintained by the Kankakee Valley Park District, for children.

In 2008, the District added a 30-acre piece of property adjacent to the Aroma Land and Water Reserve (Aroma LWR). This area has been seeded back to prairie species indicative of the dry sand prairie found within the current preserve. The Forest Preserve mows a loop trail that branches off the existing 1 $\frac{1}{4}$ mile trail that meanders through the main body of the Aroma LWR. In the summer of 2011, 49.5 acres of mixed pine and hardwood forest were added.

Approximately 40 percent of the Aroma Preserve is a wetland and lies within the flood plain of the Kankakee River. In the spring, the wet oak forest gives a spectacular wildflower display while the wetland and sand prairie are the most colorful in the summer.

Aroma Land and Water Preserve
1578 South Hieland Road
St. Anne, IL 60964
41°06'02.90"N
87°45'24.08"W

Gar Creek Trail and Prairie Restoration

Approximately 85 acres, this site is located about one-half mile east of Route 45 on River Road adjacent to Kankakee Community College. The 16-acre restored tall grass prairie was planted in 1992. A 2.5 mile trail, suitable for hiking, bicycling, and cross country skiing, is a cooperative project with the Kankakee Valley Park District. The trail begins at the prairie, winds along Gar Creek, through oak woodland, and down to the banks of the Kankakee River.

At river's edge, the trail connects with the Kankakee Riverfront Trail Project, which will start at the Aqua Illinois property at Hawkins and Water Streets, go through Shapiro Developmental Center, Kankakee River Valley Forest Preserve, Kankakee Community College, and connect with River Road Park and Splash Valley, of the Kankakee Valley Park District.

Gar Creek Trail and Prairie Restoration
501 River Road
Kankakee, IL 60901
41°05'30.84"N
87°51'32.78"W

Waldron Arboretum

Located 1.1 miles south of I-57, this site was once a landscape nursery. On this 90 acre site there is a fine gravel hik-

ing trail suitable for bicycling and cross country skiing. The trail winds through 30 acres of woods, including a small prairie restoration area.

In the winter of 2008, the District acquired an additional 60-acre parcel which had been primarily in agriculture. Future development plans are pending based on the district's needs and funds available through federal and state grants.

Waldron Arboretum
2755 Waldron Road
Aroma Park, IL 60910
41°05'36.28"N
87°49'26.51"W

Strasma Grove

Nestled in a neighborhood in Kankakee, this site is 2 acres of mature native trees.

Strasma Grove
Duane Boulevard
Kankakee, Illinois 60901
41°06'28.33"N
87°50'43.56"W

Limestone Reforestation Site

This site is a 30-acre preserve and reforestation site, with mixed trees and grasses.

Limestone Reforestation Site
County Road 3750 West
Kankakee, Illinois 60901
41°08'38.96"N
87°56'51.08"W

Zeedyk Meadows

This is our newest Forest Preserve site, consisting of four acres of trees and grasses.

Zeedyk Meadows
Warren Street
St. Anne, Illinois 60964
41° 06' 24.92" N
87° 44' 35.77" W

Look at the trees, look at the birds, look at the clouds, look at the stars...

and if you have eyes you will be able to see that the whole existence is joyful. Everything is simply happy.

Trees are happy for no reason; they are not going to become prime ministers or presidents and they are not going to become rich and they will never have any bank balance. Look at the flowers - for no reason.

It is simply unbelievable how happy flowers are.

~Osho



Kankakee River Valley Forest Preserve District

3301 Waldron Road • P.O. Box 13
Aroma Park, Illinois 60910
815-935-5630

web address: www.krvfpd.org
e-mail: forest@krvfpd.org

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ON TRAIL...

Call Jean Hurre at 815-549-9072 for information on times and dates for current programs at your forest preserve. Spring and summer programs include moonlight hikes, wildflower and native prairie walks, and animal tracking. You can also find our programs advertised in the Daily Journal and WVLI radio, or check out "programs" on our website: <http://www.krvfpd.org>

But when I consider that the nobler animals have been exterminated here - the cougar, panther, lynx, wolverine, wolf, bear, moose, deer, the beaver, the turkey, etc., etc. - I cannot but feel as if I lived in a tamed, and as it were, emasculated country... I listen to a concert in which so many parts are wanting... for instance, thinking that I have here the entire poem, and then, to my chagrin, I hear that it is but an imperfect copy that I possess and have read, that my ancestors have torn out many of the first leaves and grandest passages.

- Henry David Thoreau, *Journal*, 1856

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