

# SE MN Prairie Partners Chapter Newsletter

## September 2024 Volume 13 issue 3

### Some of Minnesota's Milkweeds (*Asclepias species*)



Common Milkweed - *A. syriaca* - Linneaus mistakenly thought it came from Syria and named it *syriaca*



Showy -*A. speciosa* - bigger, 'showier' flowers than the common



Poke -*A. exaltata* - does well in shade, starts flowering in June.



Swamp (Rose)- *A. incarnata* - does well in wetter soils



Butterfly weed- *A. tuberosa* - very common in gardens



Sullivant's (Prairie) -*A. sullivantii* - similar to common, less aggressive, crosses with common



Whorled- *A. verticillata* - slender plants, flowers late July/August, spreads by rhizomes.



Purple- *A. purpurascens* - beautiful but challenging to get to flower and set seed.



Tall Green- *A. hirtella* - tall, slender leaves, many flowers. Photo by Prairie Moon

## SE MNN Prairie Partners officers

President – Barb Bolan  
 Vice President – Nancy Schumacher  
 Secretary – Polly Hendee  
 Treasurer – Jim Sipe  
 Membership Chair – Ann Dybvik  
 Newsletter Chair – Ann Dybvik  
 Webmaster & Social Media Lead- Matt Brueske  
 Grant Manager – Jim Sipe

**Wild Ones Mission:** Native Plants, Natural Landscaping promote environmentally sound landscaping practices to preserve biodiversity through preservation, restoration, and establishment of native plant communities. Wild Ones is a not-for-profit environmental education and advocacy organization.

**Wild Ones National Address:** 2285 Butte des Morts Beach Road, Neenah, WI 54956  
[www.wildones.org](http://www.wildones.org)

**Membership:** Sign up/ renew online at <https://members.wildones.org/> or by mail: <https://members.wildones.org/renew-by-check/>. Cost is \$40 per year for a household (family) membership. Student and other membership types are also available.

**SE MN Prairie Partners Mission Statement:** To preserve, maintain and provide knowledge of native and restored plant communities in a way that fosters friendship.

## SE MN Prairie Partners online:

<https://semnprairiepartners.wildones.org/>

[Wild Ones: SE MN Prairie Partners | Facebook](#)

**Newsletter Committee:** Lead: Ann Dybvik, Chief Photographer: Bruce Dybvik, Committee: Nancy Schumacher, Gary Bullemer, Barb Bolan

**Submitting articles for the newsletter** – We welcome stories about natural areas, a native garden you have visited or designed, a nature-based vacation, a special flower, bird, butterfly, etc. Please contact Ann Dybvik at [anndbvk@gmail.com](mailto:anndbvk@gmail.com).

## Prairie Partners member local Services (Please let us know if you have one to list)

**Minnesota Native Landscapes (MNL): Dwayne Vosejpk** [mnlcorp.com](http://mnlcorp.com)

**Bluff Land Wildlife Products: Matthew Brueske** [sales@blufflandwildlifeproducts.com](mailto:sales@blufflandwildlifeproducts.com) or [The Deer Cage](#)

**Enabling Healthy Habitats: Dawn Littleton**

**Friends of Nerstrand State Park: Katy Gillispie**  
[Friends of Nerstrand Big Woods](#)

**Friends of Whitewater State Park: Joel Dunnette** - [Friends of Whitewater](#)

**Zumbro Valley Audubon: Joel Dunnette** – Board member [zumbrovalleyaudubon.org](http://zumbrovalleyaudubon.org)

**River Bend Nature Center: Packy Mader, Board of Directors** [www.rbnc.org](http://www.rbnc.org)

**Halfpint Hollow Miniature Donkeys: Rod and Sue White** [halfpinthollow.com](http://halfpinthollow.com)

**CRP – Clean River Partnership: Bill Jokela** [Home](#) - [Clean River Partners](#)



Milkweed seeds ready to fly, from seed harvest day. Photo by Kevin Corrigan

## 2024 Chapter Events schedule –Inside, in-person events will typically be held in the Emmaus Church at 712 Linden St. North.

October 10, 7pm, Emmaus Church - **Mn terrestrial invasives: Terrestrial plants** - Breanna Wheeler Chair, Terrestrial Invasive Species Funding Subcommittee DNR

November 14 6pm, Emmaus Church - **Annual meeting, voting for 2025 officers, appetizer potluck, Native seed share, 7PM: Presentation: Native plants and wildlife, restorations...** Shelley MN DNR

December 12 11:00AM – **Luncheon – St Olaf**

### Minnesota Milkweeds, the genus of *Asclepias* by Barb Bolan

Linneas name the milkweed genus ‘*Asclepias*’ after the Greek god of medicine ‘Asklepios’ because of the use of the plant sap as a medicinal aid, for dysentery and warts, by the native people in the Americas. *Milkweed is toxic so please DO NOT test this out.*

Milkweeds are in the Dogbane family. Throughout the western hemisphere, there are over 140 species, and Minnesota has 14 (Minnesota Wildflowers.info) or 15 (USDA). The three best known are the common, swamp and butterfly weed but some of the other species can be great in gardens too, or just fun to see in nature. Unfortunately, some milkweed species are now extremely rare or endangered.

When cut, most milkweeds, other than butterfly weed, exude a milky latex substance containing cardiac glycosides that is toxic to people and most animals. Fortunately, it tastes very bitter. The flowers contain sweet nectar instead of sap.

Milkweeds produce the notable seedpods filled with seeds attached to the ‘fluffy stuff’.

Bees are primarily responsible for pollination by day, while moths pollinate it at night. Monarchs need milkweed as the host plant for caterpillars.

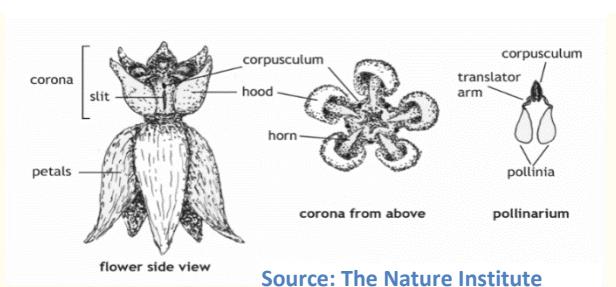
Whether your garden space is sunny or shady, wet or dry, there are good milkweeds for you. Some grow to 5' tall, others only 1-2' tall. Flower come in white, pink, purple, magenta, or green(ish). Some, such as the common and whorled, spread readily by rhizomes that run horizontally underground and send up new shoots to form a colony (a colony is actually only 1 plant). Some species spread mainly by seed.

The first season of growth for some milkweeds is devoted nearly entirely to root development. Most have taproots that are many feet long, so once established, they get ornery if moved. Even transplanting young ones of many species can be a challenge.

A milkweed flower is comprised of the central corona with five surrounding hoods, each with a curved projection called a horn. Below the corona are five petals that point downward. Many of the species have umbels (clusters) of these pretty little flowers.



Common Milkweed flowers – top and side views.



Source: The Nature Institute

Milkweeds are monoecious (male and female in each flower) but are self-incompatible so they need pollen from another plant. This means pollen from outside even a large plant colony.

Like their unique flowers, their pollination story is quite amazing. The flowers make sweet, scented nectar to attract pollinators, but the pollen is locked up in waxy sacks called pollinia. A pair of sacks (a pollinium) are connected by translator arms to the corpusculum. Basically, the bee or other insect, attracted to the nectar, moves around the slippery flower surface searching for the locked-up pollen until suddenly a leg slips into a tiny slit in one of the flowers stigmas. Bristly guide rails only allow upward movement out of the slit and sometimes a pollinium is also pulled out, from



A magnified view of a dissected showy milkweed flower, with the anther pouch walls (AA) removed to show a pollinium (BB), translator arms (CC), and the corpusculum (D) at the top of the stigmatic slit (E) formed by the guide rails (FF).

the anther pouches, intact, on the leg. The insect must move to a different plant, without losing its pollen package, slip the pollinium bearing leg into a stigmatic slit of a flower and, with help from guide rails, strip off their pollen load to accomplish pollination. Very complicated, but it works for them.

For more information on each species, check out: [USDA Plants Database](#) or ['milkweed': Minnesota Wildflowers](#)

## Tour Scott and Kathy Regenscheid gardens by Circle Lake, Faribault



Scott shows us one of his gardens

Scott started his journey with native plants in 2020 and has artistic, beautiful, amazing gardens to show for his work. This year he put in 786 plants, while tending existing gardens and laying the prep work for next year's additions and doing home remodeling projects.



Happy Purple Poppy Mallow!

## Native Plant profile – Hoary Vervain

by Nancy Schumacher



[Hoary Vervain](#)

Hoary Vervain (*Verbena stricta*) is a lovely native forb that is common throughout the Midwest. It occurs in mesic to dry prairies, tolerating rocky and droughty soils. It is also found along roadsides and in waste areas.

As indicated by the botanical name, it is in the genus *verbena* and related to many cultivated garden plants. The species name “*stricta*” means tall and upright. The common name descriptor “hoary” refers to the grayish white color derived from the intense fuzziness of the foliage.

In my years of working toward prairie establishment on different parts of our property, I have come to appreciate Hoary Vervain for its quick establishment. It will usually bloom by the second and sometimes the first year after seeding. It does, however, tend to be short lived and does not always compete well with more aggressive plants. We have seen this in our own plantings where it is readily

abundant in the first few years but then wanes over time.

In recent years, I have added Hoary Vervain to some of my gardens. I especially appreciate its long bloom period and the fact that it tends to stand erect rather than flopping as some natives do in a garden setting. I have a handful of these that are approaching their fifth year which seems to be longer than what I have observed in our prairies. I assume this is because it is not facing the intense competition typical of a prairie setting. It is a prolific self-sower, but seedlings are easy to identify because of their distinctive hairy, grayish foliage.

The flowers, which develop from the bottom upward, are extremely showy and densely packed on 3 to 5 foot thin, pencil-like panicles. Because the flowers develop progressively, the bloom period occurs over an extended period of time lasting for as long as six weeks in July and August. The flowers are pollinator magnets, and the foliage is host to the Buckeye Butterfly. The seeds are a food source for many small mammals and birds.



[Hoary Vervain seedlings](#)

## Member Profile – Dee Menning

I, Diane (Dee) Menning, have enjoyed tending plants for more than half a century, starting with occasional exposure to vegetable gardening with my mother and continuing with more extensive plant engagement as a newly married young adult in our first house. Over the years my interest has expanded to perennial flowers and more recently to pollinator-friendly flora.

When on a garden club outing at the Carleton Arboretum in August 2023, tour leader Arb Director Nancy Braker espoused the benefits of native plantings, especially local varieties. When she reminded us that these native plants' nectar, pollen, and seeds are specifically suited and best as food and habitat for native birds, butterflies, bees, and wildlife, my thought was "Why, of course! I want to plant many more local natives!" That fall, I found, bought, and interspersed a few native plant plugs in an existing flower bed.

In March 2024 I attended the SE MN Prairie Partners "Native Seed Harvesting and Planting" event and learned of their 'member-sponsored native garden program' where a person can get paid to plant natives. I hopped even more enthusiastically on the native bandwagon. While researching, I checked out books from the library and looked online and at sites suggested by Prairie Partners and was especially appreciative of the MN Wildflowers site ([minnesotawildflowers.info](http://minnesotawildflowers.info)). I relished designing a new garden bed along the back of my small-town lot. I delighted in visiting known nurseries such as South Cedar Greenhouse and Paisley Gardens; and going to some I hadn't heard of previously, including Out Back Nursery in Hastings and Blazing Star Gardens (online

order) in Owatonna. It was ridiculously fun buying the plants with grant money. (Aside: my work life before retirement included helping academia get grants for research, so this grant-getting felt quite familiar.)

You won't hear me say that I loved the effort of removing the grass for the garden bed, but it certainly felt satisfying to know that a monoculture would soon be replaced with diverse native vegetation. And I got to put more than 60 native varieties in the ground and watch the plants grow while witnessing the wildlife enjoy it all -- the best part!



One of Dee's gardens

Before native gardening, I enjoyed gathering hostas, separating my collections into themed beds that surround my small backyard labyrinth under the canopy of an aged black walnut tree: beds of diminutive hostas (miniature and small), elemental (highlighting blues, yellows, whites with the greens), royal, memorial, showy, and a plot of the American Hosta Growers Association Hostas of the Year (list here). These beds and others (i.e., areas for cut flowers, sun loving plants, sedums, favorites, pollinators) still give me much joy. All the non-human-person textures and colors and forms and manifold

beauty contribute most abundantly to my and our lives, don't they?!

Besides enjoying the abundance of plants, my husband Gregg and I get to give and receive love with our four adult children and their spouses, and our six grandchildren (age range from 8 to 15 years, all living in the Twin Cities). There is so much for which to be grateful!

## **The Minnesota State Trail System by Gary Bullemer**



[Gary at a scenic rest spot along the Mill Towns Trail in Dundas](#)

Dating back over 50 years now, the idea of converting abandoned railroad lines into trails began in Minnesota. The Casey Jones State Trail near Pipestone MN was the first in our state, authorized by the legislature in 1967.



[Cannon Valley Trail scene near Welch Village](#)

Neighboring Wisconsin was also getting all-aboard this concept around that time too, and the list of trails in both states has grown ever since. In Minnesota we have a network of 23 paved trails that total about 628 miles, which are administered by the Department of Natural Resources. In addition, there are several regional trails run by counties or cities. These regional trails are often connected to a state trail, adding hundreds more miles and allowing trail users such as hikers, bikers and other users many miles to travel on.

The Cannon Valley Trail, a Regional Trail, is 20 miles in length running from Cannon falls to Red Wing on an abandoned rail line. The trail is operated by a combination of cities and counties, and user fees help fund maintenance. The trail connects to the Mill Towns State Trail, which will eventually connect Northfield to Cannon Falls!



[Mill Town State Trail bridge over the Cannon River in Northfield](#)

Since those first trails that followed former railroad routes, connections have been built beside highways, crossing state forest lands, and even passing through state and county park lands. In other instances, private lands are purchased, or easements are granted in order

to lay down a continuous stretch of trail. It often takes many years for critical pieces of property to become available to connect the trail dots! Many times, the costliest parts of a trail are bridges and tunnels that allow for passage under or over roads and rivers. Securing the funds to make all of this happen is ongoing and extremely difficult. Developing a safe and logical route through cities and towns is also very hard and expensive, as we are all seeing with the 6-mile portion of the Mill Towns trail under construction through Northfield. Once this phase is complete, the segments connecting Cannon Falls, Northfield, Dundas and Faribault will be the focus.

Some of the most popular state trails in MN include the Root River Trail at Lanesboro, the Paul Bunyan Trail at Brainerd, the Willard Munger Trail at Duluth, the Glacial Lakes Trail at New London, the Sakatah Singing Hills Trail at Waterville, and perhaps the most scenic of all, the Gitchi Gami Trail that follows the shore of Lake Superior. Building any kind of road or trail in that area has always been difficult, due to the hilly, rocky terrain, and the Gitchi Gami is slowly gaining miles between Two Harbors and Grand Marais.



Lake Sakatah as seen from the Sakatah Singing Hills trail near Waterville

Many of the 23 state trails benefit from groups and organizations that have worked for years to secure funds for development and maintenance. The Parks and Trails Council of MN has been dedicated to this mission since the 1950s, and together with groups such as the Friends of Mill Towns Trail, or the Sibley Park Improvement Association, have been successful in getting trails built all over our great state. A visit to the Parks and Trails website is an awesome source of information about the great system of parks and trails we have, and the work they have done to support all of it! Find it at [www.parksandtrails.org](http://www.parksandtrails.org)

There are many reasons to love our wonderful state, and our scenic, safe, well-built trails are a favorite of mine. I hope you agree, and we meet on a hike or bike ride on our new miles of trail through town!



Participants of the Mayor's Ride on Glacial Lakes Trail at New London



Bikers about to hit the Glacial Lake Trail to New London from Sibley State Park

## Northfield Native Gardens Tour - Pat Johnson, Sage, Cannon Valley Friends Meeting Place, Carl Caskey, and Gerald Hoekstra



Sage's Garden sign. Great to have young gardeners excited about native plants. This was our first Member-Sponsored Native Garden Grant. Pat Johnson, Sage's grandmother is the member sponsoring the garden. Photo by Matt Brueske

Pat Johnson organized the Northfield native garden tour for us. What a fun time, despite the rain delay holding us up for a bit. Some gardens were all native plants, others are incorporating native plants into existing gardens. Large or small, all native plantings are so critical to our native wildlife. And beautiful!



Carl's backyard native garden

## Mud Creek WMA Tour

If you haven't walked the Mud Creek WMA (Wildlife Management Area), you are missing out on a beautiful, restored prairie and wetland. As a WMA, hunting is allowed so it is best not to go during



Marsh Hedge nettle  
aka woundwort

hunting season, or at least wear orange. The DNR mowed trails and set out pallets for us to use to cross wet areas. So many beautiful species that most of us haven't seen before.



Mud Creek in the evening. Photo by Polly Hendee

## Prairie Moon tour, by Matt Brueske

A big THANK YOU to Prairie Moon Nursery for hosting us and sharing their expertise with our group. We walked away with new ideas, a deeper appreciation for the native plants we work so hard to promote, and even more passion for our mission.



Showy Beardtongue. Native to Iowa, sadly, not in MN



Seed production planting of Rudbeckia at Prairie Moon

## Dr Rich Huston's Prairie tour, By Matt Brueske



Dick driving participants through the prairies on his Prairie Wagon.

On September 12th, we had the absolute pleasure of touring the incredible property restored by Dr. Richard Huston. Over the past 25 years, Dick has transformed 100 acres of prairie, 25 acres of woodland, and 25 acres of wetlands into a thriving sanctuary of native plants, trees, and wildlife.

With 12,000 trees planted and meticulous care taken to manage invasive species, this place truly feels like a piece of heaven. Dick even built his own "Prairie Wagon" to take us on an up-close tour of the property's beauty.

A huge thank you to Dick for sharing his passion with us and to his wife for the delicious refreshments that capped off the perfect evening! It was an inspiring, fun, and



A tour group heads out in Dick's Prairie Wagon Photo by George Watson

educational experience that left us in awe of what dedication to native plants can do for the land.

## Insect signs and tracking by Eric Vehe

Eric Vehe, a member of Big Woods, Big River Wild Ones, a Naturalist, and a Certified Wildlife Tracker, shared a bit of his vast knowledge of insect tracks and signs with us.



Eric Vehe captures our attention as he shows insect tracks on leaves.

Co-hosted with the Cannon River Valley Minnesota Master Naturalists, we explored the Carleton Upper Arboretum. Eric focused on fascinating topics like galls and leaf miners. We learned that galls can be caused by insects, mites, or fungi, and some leaf miners leave intricate trails on leaves.



Leaf Miner tracks

## Public spaces Native Garden Grants

Arlene and Nancy Pumper were approved by our chapter board members for a \$300 Public spaces Native Garden Grant for the Annunciation Church reflection garden. The goal was to keep it simple and relaxing, so they chose Prairie Dropseed grass and Prairie Smoke.



Prairie Dropseed



Prairie Smoke will bloom in the spring. Photo by Arlene Kjar

## When It's Okay (or Not) to Feed Birds - Audubon society – condensed by Barb Bolan

Providing food—for photography or simple enjoyment—can be a thorny issue. For guidance, ask yourself these three questions.

### 1. *Is this species at risk?*

If a bird species is classified as threatened, endangered or of special concern, it may be problematic to feed it. Case: Bird lovers realized the Federally threatened Florida Scrub Jays loved to be fed peanuts. Unfortunately, the peanut fed birds reproduced earlier in the season than normal and their nestlings died for lack of caterpillars available to feed on. At risk birds should not be offered food, as per

the 'American Birding Associations Code of ethics'.

### 2. *Is the food appropriate and safely provided?*

- a. Bird feeders in backyards provide food but also increase the risk of parasites, viruses, diseases, predation, and window strikes. Uncleaned feeders or moldy food can be fatal to birds. Cleaning feeders is critical. Offering healthy foods is important. Bread, that many of us have fed to ducks or pigeons, is one of the worst things to feed birds.
- b. The best practice is to supply a full season of food from native plantings.

### 3. *Is feeding this bird likely to change its behavior in harmful ways?*

- a. Feeding birds along roads increases their chances of being road-kill.
- b. Some birds become aggressive (gulls) if they are used to getting 'easy' food from people and become nuisance birds. Feeding some birds, like pheasants, can put them at risk during hunting seasons.

I feed birds and probably always will. It is a huge American pastime, but we can try to do it safely by making sure feeders are clean and safe, we don't feed at-risk species, and we make sure we don't make them vulnerable by doing so. Planting native plants brings in amazing numbers of birds and we get to enjoy the flowers during the summertime.



Pine siskins feasting on seeds of native plants - chose these over bird feeder seeds. Tiny planting, loaded with hungry birds.

Return Address:  
Barb Bolan  
9700 Baldwin Ave  
Ave Northfield, MN 55057

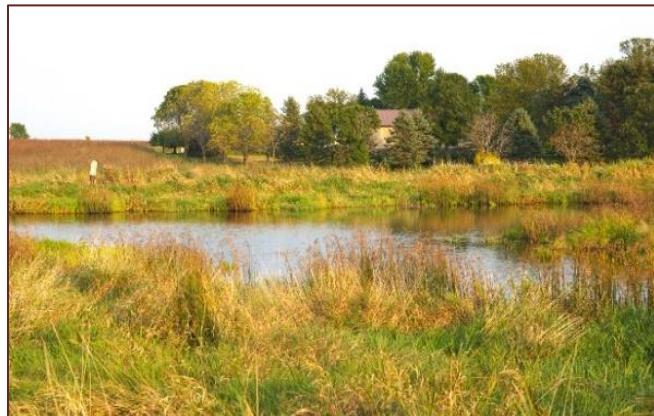


Short Green A. *viridiflora*.  
Photo from Prairie Moon



Oval Milkweed A. *ovalifolia*  
small plant, likes sandier  
soils. photo by David Benda

Address Label



A wetland on Dick's restored wetlands. Photo by George Watson

## Seed harvest at Nancy's

Saturday September 21<sup>st</sup> Nancy organized a native seed harvest session at her place. She explained how to harvest and care for the seed, showed examples of species to look for and helped participants find and collect what they were searching for. Great day!



Drone aerial shot of Nancy and Jim's place day of seed harvest. Look closely and you'll see people out collecting seeds in the prairie. Taken by Kevin Corrigan.



Ironweed and Monarda at Mud Creek