

February 2013

NATIVE NEWS



UPCOMING CONFERENCE IN BLOOMINGTON ON MAINTENANCE OF NATIVE PLANT COMMUNITIES ON MARCH 6TH

As discussed in our January Newsletter, maintenance of native plant communities is critical to their success. An excellent opportunity to learn more about maintenance of native plant communities will be held on March 6th in Bloomington, Indiana. This conference for restoration and landscape professionals will be a daylong event highlighting all aspects of maintaining native plant communities in restorations and the landscape. The conference is sponsored by Eco Logic, Spence Restoration Nursery, Empower Results, Bloomington Parks and Recreation, the Monroe County SWCD, and Monroe County's Identify and Reduce Invasive Species (MC IRIS). Topics for native landscapes will include designing with maintenance in mind, strategies for drought, maintenance of rain gardens and swales, and common weeds of the landscape. Topics for restorations will include developing a plan for monitoring and controlling invasive species and prescribed fire.

Please join us for this opportunity to learn more about successful maintenance of native plant communities. A registration brochure is attached to this message.

THE BURNING ISSUE

Fire is a vital element of many native plant communities, including all types of prairies, sedge meadows, and oak woodlands. In large scale ecological restoration, fire is regarded as an indispensable tool for managing these communities. Among the benefits of fire, are removal of thatch, reduction of woody plant invasion, stimulation of the seed bank, and lengthening the growing season for warm season species. When native plant communities are utilized in landscaping, however, the logistical challenges of burning may outweigh the benefits. In order to decide whether burning the best route for your project, it is important to understand the steps required for burn maintenance along with the alternatives.

Burn maintenance must be conducted by trained and certified burn crews under a specific set of weather conditions customized for the site known as the burn prescription. Wind directions, wind speed, and relative humidity are the most important factors in this burn prescription. The appropriate air quality variance permits must be obtained in advance. Once all the preparations are complete, the crews must monitor the weather for a date with forecast weather conditions that match their burn prescription for the site. Once the date is selected, all of the required notification calls must be completed. Most important of these notifications will be the local fire department. Others that may require notification include the local air quality regulators and adjacent property owners.

Obviously, burning requires considerable planning and attention to detail. As a result, in many landscaping applications, burning will be impractical or not even possible. Fortunately, maintenance alternatives exist. Mowing and raking off the thatch is an alternative with many of the same benefits. Like burning, it does not have to occur every year, but should be done frequently enough to prevent buildup of thatch and organic debris that can result in declining diversity over time. Manual removal and herbicide treatment of invading woody plants may also be necessary in the absence of burning. While burning is an invaluable tool for managing large restorations, the available alternatives mean the inability to burn should not preclude the use of native plant communities in smaller scale landscapes.

Maintenance of Native Plant Communities in Restorations, Landscaping and Storm Water BMPs
A Seminar for Restoration & Landscape Professionals
Registration Form



Wednesday, March 6th
9:00 AM - 3:30 PM

St Mark's United Methodist Church
100 North State Rd 46 Bypass
Bloomington, IN 47408