



Minnesota Plant Press

The Minnesota Native Plant Society Newsletter

Volume 22 Number 2

Winter 2003

Monthly meetings

Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge
Visitor Center, 3815 East 80th St.
Bloomington, MN 55425-1600
952-854-5900

6:30 p.m. — Building east door opens
6:30 p.m. — Refreshments,
information, Room A
7 – 9 p.m. — Program, society business
7:30 p.m. — Building door is locked
9:30 p.m. — Building closes

Programs

The MNPS meets the first Thursday in October, November, December, February, March, April, May and June. Check the Web page for more program information.

Feb. 6: “Harvesting impacts on understory plant composition in aspen forests,” by Alaina Berger; **Plant of the month:** Cardinal flower, by Steve Eggers.

March 6: “Invasive species in Minnesota,” **Plant of the month:** Poison sumac, both by Peter Djuik; **Board member election.**

April 3: McKnight Foundation’s “Embracing Open Space” program, by Whitney Clark; **Plant of the month:** Dwarf bilberry, by Robert Dana.

May 1: “Native Rain Gardens,” by Fred Rozumalski; **Plant of the Month:** Bloodroot, by Shirley Mah Kooyman.

June 5: Plant sale; speaker to be announced.

April 26: Symposium, Plymouth Creek Center, Plymouth

MNPS Web site

<http://www.stolaf.edu/depts/biology/mnps>

e-mail: MNPS@HotPOP.com

Prairies provide a new stimulus in rural areas

After a hundred years of being destroyed or ignored, Minnesota’s prairies are becoming known for a new reason — for economic development. A new 32-page booklet by the state Department of Natural Resources, *A Guide to Minnesota’s Prairie Passage Route and Sites*, is one of the tools being used to increase awareness of these areas by tourists and businesses. Its excellent photos and maps show the diverse plants and other attractions in 39 important prairie remnants.

Prairie Passage began in 1993. That year the Federal Highway Administration gave funding to the departments of transportation in Minnesota, Iowa, Missouri, Kansas, Oklahoma and Texas to form a partnership to protect and plant native grasses and wildflowers along roadside rights-of-way and to promote awareness of prairie-related natural and cultural resources.

A Prairie Passage route was created to pass through prairie remnants from Minnesota to Texas. In Minnesota, Prairie Passage goes from the Wallace C. Dayton Conservation and Wildlife Area in the northwest corner, south to Blue Mounds State Park, and east along I-90 to the Shooting Star Wildflower Route and Scenic Byway. From there it turns south into Iowa and generally follows I-35 to the Gulf of Mexico.

“One goal of Prairie Passage is to development awareness of our prairie heritage. It can be a community builder — ecologically and socially,” said Kathy Bolin, who has had the primary responsibility for developing Minnesota’s Prairie Passage for MnDOT. “We hope communities will respond.” She would like to see Prairie Passage integrated into schools and other organizations. Prairie Passage fits with the recent trend for vacationers to visit areas close to home, she said. As prairies grow in popularity, small businesses will start to sponsor prairie tours and other activities. There are many other prairie remnants near the route that could be included in planned tours.

MnDOT has installed Prairie Passage signs along the roads and at sites. The next step is up to the communities, Kathy said. “There is a lot of interest in prairies. Communities along Hwy. 32, including Fertile, Gary, Twin Valley, and Hitterdal, are planning to promote

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From the president

Welcome to all new and old members of MNPS! To introduce myself, I am a botanist by trade, as is my husband, and we are both charter members of the society. I teach biology at Augsburg College in Minneapolis, and we have a garden mainly (but not exclusively) consisting of native trees, shrubs, and perennials.

Many of you already volunteer in many different ways for MNPS (everything from helping with refreshments at meetings to serving on committees and speaking at our programs). We are always very happy to have this kind of support. I hope this year many more of you will find a way to volunteer some modest amount of time or effort for the society in our common goals of supporting, preserving, and educating about native plants. Besides being fun, it's a great way to get to know like-minded people!

As part of our mission, we are always interested in the never-ending battle against invasive alien species (European buckthorn, etc.). With this interest, the society is represented on a statewide taskforce, the Minnesota Invasive Species Advisory Council

(MISAC), which also has representatives from The Nature Conservancy, Department of Natural Resources, Minnesota Department of Agriculture, University of Minnesota and quite a few other organizations. I have attended some meetings as our representative; other MNPS members have also attended some meetings. Anyone interested in seeing minutes or information about MISAC, can send an e-mail to me: mclaugh@augsborg.edu.

I urge all members to keep an eye out for information about our spring symposium this year. It's on native shrubs in our landscapes. Janet Larson, our MNPS buckthorn vigilante and expert on shrubs, is organizing the event.

Esther McLaughlin
2003 President of MNPS

Plant list is on the Web

The Minnesota vascular plant list is now on the DNR's Web site. It identifies each plant as native or non-native. The posting was prompted by Wetland Conservation Act rules about use of native species. The Web site address is: www.dnr.state.mn.us/ecological_services/index.html

Minnesota Native Plant Society's purpose

(Abbreviated from the bylaws)

This organization is exclusively organized and operated for educational and scientific purposes, including the following:

1. Conservation of all native plants.
2. Continuing education of all members in the plant sciences.
3. Education of the public regarding environmental protection of plant life.
4. Encouragement of research and publications on plants native to Minnesota.
5. Study of legislation on Minnesota flora, vegetation and ecosystems.
6. Preservation of special plants, plant communities and scientific and natural areas.
7. Cooperation in programs concerned with the ecology of natural resources and scenic features.
8. Fellowship with all persons interested in native plants through meetings, lectures, workshops and field trips.

MNPS Board of Directors

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Environmentalists win two metro-area election victories

Dakota and Hennepin county environmentalists were victorious in the Nov. 5 election.

Dakota County

In Dakota County, 57 percent of voters approved a bond issue to preserve natural areas and farmland. This is the first Minnesota county-wide program of this type. The Dakota county board has started the process of implementing the new program. A citizen committee will be appointed to advise them.

The county will sell \$20 million in bonds that will be repaid over a 10-year period. A typical homeowner will pay about \$17 per year for 10 years. Half of the funds are to be used to preserve natural areas, and half for agricultural land. Much of the money will be used to purchase development rights, but some natural areas may be purchased outright.

Participation in the program is voluntary, and land offered must meet criteria that have been set by the county board. Natural areas must have one of the following: biologic significance, wildlife habitat, adjacency to a river/lake/stream, or provide environmental benefit such as water quality protection or flood control.

Requirements for farmland to be accepted into the program include high fertility, already enrolled in the ag preserves, and located outside of the 2040 Metropolitan Urban Service Area (MUSA). In addition, the first parcels of farmland that are accepted must be within 1/2 mile of a river or lake and adjacent to a natural area. After that land has been accepted, adjacent qualified farmland may be included. The program is the result of a four-year project that involved

Symposium to be April 26

“Native Shrubs in your Landscape” is the topic for this year’s MNPS symposium. It will be held Saturday, April 26, in conjunction with the City of Plymouth’s Yard and Garden Expo at the Plymouth Creek Center, 14800 34th Ave. N., Plymouth.

Janet Larson, the society’s buckthorn expert, is organizing the symposium, which will include a variety of information on native shrubs. One of the sessions will include landscaping after buckthorn has been removed. Information on speakers and registration will be posted on the MNPS Web site, and members will receive a brochure in the mail.

nine organizations and about 1,200 county residents.

Hennepin County

A proposal to terminate the Hennepin Conservation District was defeated with 74 percent voting “no.” When the district was founded in 1949, it had an agricultural focus. Now it serves an urban community. Its areas of expertise include conducting natural resource inventories for use as planning tools, advising and implementing restoration projects, and conducting studies on water resources.

Spring wildflower walk will be in Louisville Swamp

Saturday, May 31, enthusiastic botanists and MNPS board members Jason Husveth and Douglas Mensing will lead a spring wildflower walk from 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. in the Louisville Swamp portion of the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge.

They will explore varied habitats, including a floodplain forest, maple-basswood forest, wet meadows and dry prairies. Participants will see some of the lesser-known flora of the valley as well as more common spring wildflowers, shrubs and trees.

Attendees are encouraged to bring their own wildflower guides, hand lenses, magnifying glasses, a sack lunch and water. The walk is co-sponsored by the society and the refuge. There is no charge.

The tour will start promptly at 9 a.m. at the main Louisville Swamp trailhead, which is about 4.5 miles south of Shakopee. Take Hwy. 169 and exit onto 145th St. W. Follow the road past the main entrance to the Renaissance Festival and over the next set of railroad tracks. The Louisville parking lot is located on the left.

To register or for more information, contact Jason Husveth at jason.husveth@ttemi.com or Doug Mensing, doug@appliedeco.com

Think Native administrator is needed

The Think Native Program is solely sponsored by the MNPS. It assists homeowners with starting native gardens via information packets and grants of plants. The Think Native Program is starting its third year, and it is time to solicit individuals to apply for the program administrator position.

The program administrator assists grant applicants with starting a native plant garden at their residences. Contact Deborah Strohmeier for more details: destrohmeier@yahoo.com or call 952-943-9743.

Dennis Hageman — a prairie champion is lost

by Nancy Sather

October 14, 2002. A cold autumn day on Devils Lake. A strong wind. A boat of duck hunters capsizes.

In this accident, prairie conservation lost an ardent champion, Dennis Hageman of Estherville, Iowa. This gentle, soft spoken prairie advocate is responsible for introducing dozens of local landowners to the prairie jewels in their native pastures. In spring he was out there leading them to pasque flowers; in midsummer he was showing off the differences between the species of sunflowers; in late fall; when the landscape looked like an impressionist painting in buff and maroon; he led farm families to the secret homes of blue gentians.

Dennis was not a trained botanist. But he had the essential eye—the eye that notices the difference between this plant and that plant. Nor was he an ecologist; but this Dean of Social Sciences at Iowa Lakes Community College had a knack for walking right to the gentle concavity on a hill where a rare plant might grow, or spotting a fen at a distance of a quarter mile. His friends and neighbors in Estherville may know him for his famous ability to spot morels in the forests; but the Minnesota conservation community knows him by another measure.

I first met Dennis Hageman in 1986 on Red Rock Ridge near Jeffers Petroglyphs in Cottonwood County, Minnesota. I was studying the life history of prairie bush clover, a federally threatened plant. Dennis was exploring a little prairie across the road. As I watched that lanky, black haired stranger bend down over plants in the middle of a hayfield,

nearly crawling through the long grasses, I realized he wasn't a typical farmer out checking the hay. "What are you looking for?" I asked, and was astounded at his reply. He was searching for prairie bush clover. Trained as a botanist and working for a state agency, I thought prairie bush clover was a little-known plant—but here was a citizen looking for it!

As it developed, I was the one who was a stranger in those parts, and Dennis was on home ground. His love of prairie was as native as the prairie itself. It's a short way from Comfrey, Minnesota, where he was raised, to the prairies he studied in his latest years. Many of those prairies were the same ones where he'd helped his father bale hay in his youth. Every place I asked about on the road between Springfield and Estherville, he already knew. He knew where the dry prairies were and had a hunch where mesic prairies might be.

In 1986, when I met him, he didn't know the scientific names of the plants he sought, and there were many of those plants he couldn't yet recognize; but his insatiable curiosity drove him ever deeper into botanical knowledge and prairie ecology. When the Minnesota County Biological Survey was hunting for a person to conduct surveys in the southwestern part of the state, Dennis was one of the region's leading amateur botanists.

During the past two decades, Dennis Hageman was responsible for the documentation of 58 dry prairies, 65 mesic prairies, 63 locations of rare plants, and 29 populations of the federally threatened prairie bush clover (45 percent of known locations in the state). He logged

thousands of miles on foot through pastures, roadsides and railroad rights-of-way. Ever since the first day that he and Florence Roefer and I walked what is now Prairie Sky Scientific and Natural area near Sanborn, Minn., Dennis has been a volunteer interpreter of prairies. He had a special fondness for the Jeffers Petroglyphs Historical Site and led trips there as a volunteer naturalist.

Dennis is the one who first sat around scores of kitchen tables explaining conservation easements to owners of retired pastures; who spent years bringing to a landowner in a nursing home wild flowers from her prairie, always urging her to think about conservation as the best and highest use for her land. He's the one who called The Nature Conservancy, the USFWS, or the DNR whenever prairie land was up for sale. He's the one who bought 14 acres of his own to do a personal prairie restoration. He encouraged young people interested in prairie and networked with every regional group involved in prairie management and interpretation.

Dennis retired about a year ago and looked forward with zest to spending many years in prairie biology and advocacy. His untimely death leaves a huge vacuum in prairie energy in southwest Minnesota, but he was not alone. The region is alive with local prairie enthusiasts who understand and appreciate this natural heritage, not only for its historical value but as an opportunity for a new ecotourism industry of the future.

Our greatest tribute to this modest man will be to carry forth his vision of a functioning prairie landscape that extends unbroken from the Iowa border to Windom and beyond.

Memorial checks may be made out to the Minnesota Historical Society and sent to Jeffers Petroglyphs, 27160 Co. Rd. 2, Comfrey, MN 56019.

Wildlife Interpretive Training Offered

by Judie Miller

Public Affairs Officer, Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge

Have you ever noticed that some people just seem to be natural storytellers? Others seem to have ways of handling people that make them comfortable. Still others are able to explain just about anything to anybody in ways that make sense. All of these abilities and much more are involved in the art of interpretation. Some people are just natural interpreters. The rest of us can learn enough about interpretive techniques to improve the way we communicate with others.

Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge (Refuge) and the National Association for Interpretation (NAI) are sponsoring a 32-hour Certified Interpretive Guide Course March 20-23. We'll introduce you to the basic principles of interpretation and coach you in the application of those principles. By the end of the course, you'll have a good understanding of what makes interpretation different from delivering a memorized speech and why an interpretive approach may be more effective for communicating with your audiences.

You'll have opportunities to demonstrate what you've learned as the session progresses. If those demonstrations meet certain criteria, your efforts will be recognized and you'll become a NAI Certified Interpretive Guide (CIG). Certification, course materials, and a one-year membership in NAI cost \$145.00. This training opportunity is limited to 15 participants.

Financial assistance is available for students who demonstrate a one-year commitment to the Refuge. Call Ed Moyer at 952-858-0710 for registration materials or more information.

Cedar Lake Park — restoration of an urban native landscape

By Dr. Keith Prussing

(abstract of Nov. 7, 2002 talk)

Located less than two miles west of downtown Minneapolis, with a stunning view of the city skyline, Cedar Lake Park has experienced native landscape restoration since the '70s, with a major acceleration in the mid-'90s to the present. The park contains a variety of ecosystems, including lake, emergent lakeshore, wet forest, oak woodland, oak savannah, prairie, maple-basswood, cattail marsh, lawn, hardscrabble, streets and backyards. There are foxes, minks, badgers, bobcats, muskrats, and a myriad of birds.

The curious thing is that most of this landscape was under water prior to the coming of the railroads in the 1870s. James J. Hill pushed a rail causeway across the northern part of the lake on his way to the great Northwest, and rail operations, including machine shops and switching yards, continued into the mid-1980s.

The lake level is down 8 -11 feet from pre-settlement times, due to the opening of the canal to Lake of the Isles in the early 1900s. In addition, enormous volumes of fill material were deposited around the lake. This included a public works dump near the east shore from 1905 into the '60s, which created 60-foot elevations.

Cedar Lake Park is the result of the work of a partnership among the City of Minneapolis, Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, Hennepin County, state and federal governments, and the community as represented by the Cedar Lake Park Association. These efforts have resulted in the rescue of 47 acres of land from development; the creation of the national-award-winning Cedar Lake Trail with prairie restoration;

two Conservation Partners matching grants with the state for native plant restoration; the planting of thousands of native trees, shrubs, forbs, ferns and fungi; and the removal of exotics such as buckthorn, honeysuckle, wormwood, garlic mustard, and leafy spurge.

Cedar Lake Park is a work in progress. It is largely a volunteer effort. We welcome your help. Donations of time, monies, and native plant materials are appreciated. For more information about the park, visit on the Internet at www.cedarlakepark.org, or call CLPA at 612-377-9522.

Board members to be elected in March

The Minnesota Native Plant Society Nominations Committee has been identifying potential board members. Outgoing members are Meredith Cornett, Ethan Perry, and Esther McLaughlin. The board meets quarterly, and its members serve three-year terms. Linda Huhn is chair of the nominations committee, and interested members should contact her. The election will be held at the March 6 meeting.

Prairie Passage guide

Continued from page 1

economic development and sustainability as a result of this program. A Prairie Passage prairie gives communities something to brag about — being part of a national effort.”

For additional information, call Kathy Bolin, Prairie Passage coordinator, at 651-284-3765, or send an e-mail to her at: kathy.bolin@dot.state.mn.us. Single or multiple copies of the booklet may be obtained at no cost from the DNR.

American bladdernut is a useful plant in shade and sun

by Mike Zins

Abstract from Dec. 5, 2002, *Plant of the Month* talk

Is it any wonder that the common name of *Staphylea trifolia*, American bladdernut, challenges the gardening public's perception of a very useful plant for our landscape? In today's sanitized world, bladdernut conjures up thoughts of medical problems and anatomical features we would rather not discuss, let alone be planting out in the yard. But beyond the shadow of a common name that has as little marketing appeal as plugged freeways to rush-hour commuters, is a native plant with many desirable features. It just needs some good press and promotion.

American bladdernut is as American as apple pie. It occurs naturally from western Quebec to Ontario, western New England to Minnesota, and south to South Carolina and Missouri. It usually frequents moist, wooded areas and ravines in the southern part of Minnesota, as far north as Ramsey County and westward to the New Ulm area. The genus *Staphylea* has about eight species found growing in north temperate areas, two of which are native to North America, the American bladdernut, *Staphylea trifolia*, being the most prominent.

Usually thought of as a shrub to 10 feet tall, American bladdernut can be grown as a small tree attaining heights of over 15 feet. The national champion is a Goliath standing 36 feet tall, with an equal crown spread. Perhaps more surprising is the fact that this champ is growing in Macomb County, Maine.

The Arboretum had a nice tree specimen growing in the small tree collection. It was moved to this collection in 1965 and persisted until 1990, cause of death unknown. It

reached a height of about 12 feet and flowered and fruited heavily for many years.

American bladdernut has several nice qualities that make it an attractive plant for our landscapes. In spring the oppositely arranged, nearly round buds open, giving rise to pinnately compound leaves, each consisting of three leaflets. The dark green leaflets, with their trifoliolate arrangement, account for the species name *trifolia*. After the leaves have expanded in early May, the plant produces an abundance of perfect, greenish white, half-inch-long, bell-shaped flowers borne on two-inch-long panicles.

Heavy flowering provides a nice contrast of white on green. Soon after, the flowers develop into the inflated capsules, or bladders, from which the name is derived. The three-lobed, greenish white capsules are 1 – 1.5 inches long and remind people of Chinese lanterns in midsummer. By August the maturing capsules start turning brown as the small, brown seeds also mature. The capsules often persist through the winter, if squirrels and deer leave them alone. At this point, they make effective rattles. The bark on the older stems is attractive with its linear white fissures against a greenish gray background.

Culturally, *Staphylea* can be grown as a small tree — single or multiple stem — or as a large shrub. The plants are capable of colonizing by producing suckers, and one plant on the University of Minnesota St. Paul campus has made a very nice mass planting to fill in a corner area. Like most plants, *Staphylea* does well in full sunlight, but it is surprisingly tolerant of shade as well. I have seen it growing in very dense shade in the Vermillion River bottom in Hastings, where it was too dark to take a

picture. With too much shade a concern of many gardeners, *Staphylea* could be used more.

It prefers moist, well-drained soils but seems to get along fine on most sites. A poorly drained, wet, clay-based soil would not bode well, and I suspect that is what eventually laid low our specimen in the Arboretum's small tree collection, where heavy clay soils abound. Soil pH does not seem to be a factor unless high pH is encountered.

American bladdernut will never become a standard household word in the horticulture world of woody landscape design, but it is an interesting plant that can certainly help enhance many landscapes. The outstanding visual aspects are the dark green foliage and interesting bark patterns. The curious aspect certainly would be the fruiting capsules, or bladdernut fruit structures. The shade tolerance is a definite asset to shady gardens. Perhaps best of all to some people is the fact that it is native. So be patriotic, plant American — bladdernut that is!

Searchers are needed

Volunteers are needed to help look for Minnesota dwarf trout lilies the last week of April and the first week of May, and for Western prairie fringed orchids in mid-July. Contact Nancy Sather at 651-297-4963, or nancy.sather@dnr.state.mn.us Leave your e-mail address, phone number and mailing address, and you will receive more information.

Native seed quality workshop

The third annual Native Seed Quality Workshop will be held Feb. 25 and 26 in Omaha, Neb. Topics include native seed testing, conditioning, production and research. Participants will tour Stock Seed Farms, a producer of prairie grass seed. Contact Mid-West Seed Services, Inc. at 605-692-7611; or go to www.mwseed.com

Plant Lore

by Thor Kommedahl

What is red-osier dogwood?

Dogwood is the name for species of *Cornus*, and red-osier dogwood is the name for *C. stolonifera*, but recent taxonomic works call it *C. sericea*.

What do these names mean?

Cornus is the Latin name for “horn,” alluding to the hardness of the wood. Dogwood refers to “dogs,” which is the name for skewers made from the hardwood stems. And *stolonifera*, of course, means bearing stolons as a means of reproduction. But *sericea* means silky-hairy (sometimes implying Chinese) in reference to sparse, appressed hairs on lower leaf surfaces and stems.

Where does this dogwood grow?

Red-osier dogwood is one of six species native to Minnesota and is found in nearly every county in the state, frequently along stream banks, bogs, and in moist woods. It often forms thickets.

What does the plant look like?

It is a shrub from 1 to 3 meters tall with red stems, white flowers, opposite leaves, and is the only dogwood in our area with white berries and white pith.

What is the reference to Chinese?

Cornus is one of about 120 genera that occur in eastern Asia and eastern North America. Linnaeus noted this similarity, and Asa Gray discussed this similarity with Charles Darwin in correspondence during the 1850s. Current explanations refer to plate tectonics and continental drift. Gray demonstrated statistically that there was greater similarity in flora of New England with Asia than with Europe or even western USA.

Winter botany walk combines fun with tree, plant information

by Doug Mensing

On Nov. 9, MNPS sponsored a winter botany walk at the Refuge headquarters. Approximately 12 people showed for the outing. Janet Larson, a professional arborist/native landscape designer and MNPS board member, provided an overview of the society and gave some general information on winter plant identification. She then led the group outside to observe and discuss the native and introduced vegetation as we went.

First stop was the restoration project behind the Refuge building. Janet has been working with the MNPS and the Refuge for many months on restoring and enhancing the native vegetation found in this “bird feeding” area. We learned how to identify common buckthorn (*Rhamnus cathartica*) in the winter and discussed the ecological impacts of this invasive European shrub. Some of this area and other forested areas within the Refuge had recently been cleared of buckthorn, so it will be exciting to follow the restoration efforts in the coming years.

Our walk through the woods and along the paths led us to many native and non-native trees, shrubs, wildflowers, and grasses. Janet, with input from Doug Mensing, another

Does red-osier dogwood have any economic value?

American Indians prepared “kinnikinnik” from wood scrapings and smoked it, with or without tobacco. They also used the bark infusions as an emetic. Sometimes this species was used instead of flowering dogwood, the roots of which were once used as substitute for quinine. Cultivars are used in landscape plantings and can be propagated by cuttings and grafting.

MNPS board member, and others in the group, helped to point out diagnostic tools useful in winter identification of vegetation, such as bark, branching patterns, fungal infections, buds, seed heads, etc. We identified bur oak (*Quercus macrocarpa*), northern pin oak (*Quercus ellipsoidalis*), basswood (*Tilia americana*), hackberry (*Celtis occidentalis*), cottonwood (*Populus deltoides*), silver maple (*Acer saccharinum*), black ash (*Fraxinus nigra*), red-osier dogwood (*Cornus sericea*), cherries (*Prunus spp.*), the invasive exotic shrub Tartarian honeysuckle (*Lonicera tatarica*), and numerous wildflowers, grasses, and weeds. In the more degraded areas there was a conspicuous lack of native understory trees, shrubs, and groundcover vegetation.

We walked through the prairie restoration just outside the Refuge building and were able to identify about half a dozen common prairie species. Along the trailside bluff prairie we encountered several butternut trees (*Juglans cinerea*), a Minnesota species of “Special Concern.” Most of these trees were dead or dying due to butternut canker, an exotic but now common fungal infection of these trees. We poked down into the wetter lowlands and identified several wetland-edge species, as well as discussed the phenomenon of invasive/aggressive strains of otherwise native species, such as giant reed grass (*Phragmites australis*). Many questions were answered regarding the vegetation communities of the river valley.

Overall the walk was informative and fun, with many questions and much enthusiasm from the group. The MNPS plans to host a spring botany walk at the Louisville Swamp unit of the Refuge on May 3. We hope to see you there!

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