

# Natural Area Preservation News

Protecting and restoring Ann Arbor's natural areas and fostering an environmental ethic among its citizens

Volume 15, Number 4

Winter 2010

## Hannah Nature Area: A Neighborhood Undertaking

by Christine Chessler

Hannah Nature Area is a one-acre, wooded site that is situated between residential homes at the west end of Bath Street, just west of Seventh Street. It's a quaint park that allows nature to exist in an otherwise suburban setting. Although it may be small, it's one of the local parks that has a big story to tell and a dedicated group of neighbors to make sure it gets told!

Historically, the park was used as a dumping ground by individuals who had no regard for the area. Concerned neighbors and citizens brought this issue to the attention of the city and NAP, and soon began a clean-up of the debris. Today, one of the first things you notice by the park sign is a posted warning of "No Dumping—\$100 fine," which seems to have kept dumping problems in check. For the last ten years, neighbors have worked together to transform this modest piece of land into a beloved neighborhood park.

As I walked the small trail leading down to the heart of Hannah, I noticed a nice open area that was dotted with jewelweed (*Impatiens capensis*), a few Jack-in-the-pulpits (*Arisaema triphyllum*), as well as some young hickories and old oaks making their way toward the sunlight streaming down. If you came to this park five years ago you would have experienced a much different sight. The park was crowded with buckthorn (*Rhamnus spp.*), greater celandine (*Chelidonium majus L.*), Norway maple (*Acer*

*platanoides*), garlic mustard (*Alliaria petiolata*), and other invasive plants that made it difficult for natives to grow. Through the efforts at NAP workdays, significant numbers of the invasives have been cleared out. Today, the sight of jewelweed growing in place of garlic mustard excites Shannan Gibb-Randall, volunteer Park Steward of Hannah Nature Area and a local landscape architect. She explained that the plant is a great addition to Hannah since it will be able to out-compete many of the invasives still in the area.



Volunteer Park Stewards Shannan Gibb-Randall (left) and Kay Werthan (right).

Kay Werthan, who has a strong interest in the environment, is also a dedicated Park Steward of Hannah Nature Area. Shannan and Kay work with a small group of dedicated neighbors who regularly make it out to the NAP workdays to lend a hand. In the past, Shannan went door-to-door to recruit volunteers, but today Kay typically keeps the neighbors informed of workdays through an email group. Both women hope to get more of the community children involved in the ecological work of the area through nature education and hands-on experience. Most of the neighborhood children already like to spend their time in Hannah playing in "forts" they construct under tree branches in the summer, and using the area as a "wintery natural playground" after the first snowfall.

Hannah is a unique park in that you can easily observe the process of ecological restoration taking place through the years due to its compact size. Sara Jackson, NAP

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# Coordinator's Corner

## NAP and BSAs/CDTs in the SLP

Ann Arbor's network of natural areas includes approximately 1,200 acres of undeveloped parkland, plus thousands of other acres owned by the City, the County, various townships, UM, and private landowners. For the past 17 years, NAP has been leading the effort to assess the quality of these areas and prioritize the stewardship of them.

Recently, NAP was invited by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and Environment (DNRE) to share this expertise at a state-wide level. The DNRE has undertaken a multi-year effort to identify, prioritize, and officially designate Biodiversity Stewardship Areas (BSAs) across the entire state. A BSA designation identifies a geographic area on the landscape where there is an emphasis on biodiversity conservation achieved through restoring and/or maintaining native natural communities with a long-term goal of ensuring that these natural communities are conserved as examples of our state's biodiversity. That sounds a lot like what NAP's been doing here in Ann Arbor for the past couple decades! BSAs include both public *and* private lands, but the inclusion of land within a BSA boundary does not impose any obligations on non-DNRE landowners.

To assist with this process, the DNRE has identified four Conservation Design Teams (CDTs), one for each of the major geographic divisions of the state. I was invited to fill one of the 20 or so seats for the Southern Lower Peninsula (SLP) Team. We meet one or two times per month until June, 2011, by which time we need to be done. It's been an interesting experience for me so far, seeing how this process works on a larger scale. It's also interesting to see how our relatively small natural areas stack up against thousands of other areas across the SLP. The initial SLP mapping effort done by the DNRE includes many of our larger city parks, and plenty of other natural areas in and around Ann Arbor. Most of these will not make it into the BSA designation, but there will certainly be several in the county that do.

After years of making our mark preserving local natural areas, it is gratifying to have a hand assuring the long-term protection and stewardship of other significant natural areas across the state. If you'd like to learn more about this process, check out this website: [www.michigan.gov/livinglegacies](http://www.michigan.gov/livinglegacies) or just call me at the office.

Dave Borneman, Manager



A unit of the City of Ann Arbor  
Public Services, Field Operations

*The mission of Natural Area  
Preservation is to protect and restore  
Ann Arbor's natural areas and to foster  
an environmental ethic among its citizens.*

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**Technician:**

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**Conservation Workers:**

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Billy Kirst  
Laura Mueller  
Steven Parrish

**NAP Interns:**

Jillian Sweetman  
Naoko Matsudaira

# Special Wildlife Sightings



by Dea Armstrong, City Ornithologist

Twice each spring we offer Gallup/Furstenberg walks to look for birds, and I have to say that it is always the attendees who find the best birds. On our June walk they found two very special treats. First was a well-hidden Green Heron nest in an alder just north of one of the foot bridges between Furstenberg and Gallup. That day we didn't see any chicks. We barely saw the well-hidden adult on the nest. But many folks were able to come back over the next few weeks to have great looks at the young as they walked like alien space creatures all over the branches of the alder.

The other exciting find was an Osprey that was flying upriver. This fish-eating raptor's populations were decimated as a result of DDT use from 1950 to 1970. Although Ospreys have not nested in southeastern Michigan for many years, a reintroduction program started in 1998 has managed to help this species establish almost 20 active nest sites where none existed prior to that. Birds seen in June are usually thought to be breeding in the area. Maybe somewhere along the Huron River in Ann Arbor will be the next new Osprey nest site. See [www.owsem.org/index.html](http://www.owsem.org/index.html) for more information about the reintroduction program.

by George Hammond, NAP Volunteer

For the Frog and Toad Survey, we go out on warm nights in the spring and early summer, and listen for the different frogs calling from the wetlands around the city. Each species (there are at least nine) has its own call, and they are pretty easy to tell apart. A couple of years ago my route took me to several parks along the Huron River. It was a breezy night, clouds were moving fast overhead, and I didn't hear too many frogs. What I did find were lightning beetles. Thousand and thousands of them were flickering in grassy openings and yards along Huron River Drive. It was a spectacular display. They were flashing quickly, and their lights were much whiter than the yellow-green lights of the beetles in my backyard. I had never seen anything like it. It was wonderful and a little strange. How could there be so much motion, so big a display, and yet no sound?

This is one of the things I like about doing inventory work for NAP—I discover natural beauty I've never seen before, right in my own town.



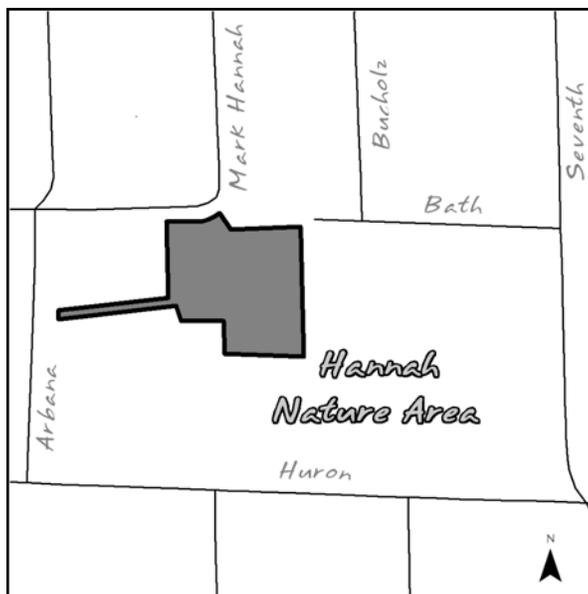
## Hannah Nature Area: A Neighborhood Undertaking

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Outreach Assistant, has worked the majority of the Hannah workdays in the past two years and couldn't believe how apparent the changes in the park landscape were. She notes, "This entire [now] open area was once crowded with buckthorn and honeysuckle that we spent a whole afternoon removing a year ago, and there are only a few resprouts! To come back to this area and see healthy native vegetation growing in place of the invasives really makes all the effort of our workdays evident!"

Although Hannah is headed in the right direction, there are still many invasives to tackle in the one-acre park. Shannan pointed to the taller Norway maples shading out some of the understory and said that in the near future she hoped to clear out these trees and get more of the sunlight into the area to keep the natives coming in. Both

stewards also expressed future interest in using Hannah as a Greenway connector to parks on the west side of town, such as Maryfield Park.



My experience visiting Hannah Nature Area made me realize that the park has come this far because of the concerned citizens, neighbors, and volunteers who took an active role in caring for Hannah. As I exited the trail I couldn't help but notice a small buckthorn sapling peeking through the soil, which reminded me that invasive control and removal is a continual process that will always require the time, effort, and dedication of volunteers. Even if you don't live in the neighborhood where

Hannah is located, I encourage you to volunteer at a Hannah workday during the 2011 calendar year—the neighbors will make you feel welcome, just as if you lived on the block!

# Volunteers of the Year: Manfred and Judy Schmidt

by Jason Frenzel

For the past four decades Manfred and Judy Schmidt have endeavored to protect 90 acres of land in the southeast corner of the city, teach children and adults about nature, and press city and state officials for land conservation; all while carrying on the fullness of an “average” life. In his thick German accent, Manfred authoritatively states, “If I had a quarter for every buckthorn I’ve cut down in that woods (Scarlett-Mitchell Nature Area), I could solve the City’s budget problem!”

Manfred, born in 1930 in Breslau, Silesia, skipped school so often his widowed mother sent him to an orphan’s home in the country. “It was a good decision,” says Manfred. “My nicest childhood memories were at the orphanage. The food was out of this world!” He hiked the Riesengeberge Mountains, herded cows for local farmers, and learned to garden which eventually led to his life’s work in landscaping.

Judy was a school librarian for 30 years—26 with the Ann Arbor Public Schools. Since retiring 17 years ago, she keeps busy quilting and storytelling. An active member of the Ann Arbor Storytellers’ Guild, Judy donates a door prize quilt for the group’s annual Tellabration. She tells stories regularly at Mitchell Elementary, and she notes that sharing stories with the same children week after week becomes very meaningful.

For more than 15 years both Schmidts have served as naturalists for the Ann Arbor Public Schools Environmental Education Program. Judy loves field trips and calls David Szczygiel, Environmental Education Coordinator, a “very talented teacher.” Characteristically, Manfred sees room for improvement. “Some kids are scared. They don’t really know what the woods are about. They don’t have any experience outside.” In their own ways both Manfred and Judy are passionate about introducing kids to nature.

The Schmidts began their efforts to preserve Mitchell-Scarlett Woods (as it was then known) in the late 1960s after moving into Colonial Square Cooperative and realizing that the woods was a neighborhood treasure. At first, with other co-op members, they concentrated on staving off developers. While Manfred advocated and negotiated, Judy documented their efforts. She notes that Bill Browning, previous Environmental Education Coordinator, sometimes acted as peace-maker between Manfred and Scarlett Middle School staff members.

“My biggest achievement was to force the schools to let me dig the pond,” Manfred beams. That pond now supports an amazing ecosystem. He mentions with pride securing an exceptionally low bid from the dredging contractor. A spring migration “Birdathon” helped fund that project.



In the mid-1990s, Manfred and Judy continued efforts to acquire the remaining portion of the woods for the public. To highlight its unique characteristics Manfred invited Ann Arbor parks staff and officials to walk the property. From 1996 to 1998 the Schmidts attended Michigan Department of Natural Resources meetings to secure state funding, lobbied for support from local environmental organizations, and convinced Colonial Square to donate \$50,000 towards the acquisition. “Gerry Clark and Ron Olson (then of the Parks Department) were very helpful,” says Manfred. He also emphasizes, “I could not have done all the work if I had a full time job. I’m lucky Judy let me go.” In the end, the state awarded Ann Arbor a grant of \$662,500 and the city contributed \$137,000 to acquire the remaining portion of what is now

Scarlett-Mitchell Nature Area.

On March 15, 1997 Manfred and Dave Borneman held the first public stewardship workday at the site, removing invasive plants. Manfred has good memories of working with many volunteer groups in the park, including groups from Temple Beth Emeth, Pioneer High School, and a UM fraternity. He enjoys introducing volunteers to this special place, and telling them what has been done to protect it.

After NAP came into this story, Manfred and Judy joined in our work, removing oodles and oodles of invasives, keeping trails clear and the woods clean of debris, monitoring plants and animals, and recruiting other volunteers to help. Manfred always mentions the consistent support he has received from Colonial Square and from John Yodhes, a resident of Turnberry subdivision. A. C. Tanner and Bob Gould have also been very active in this natural area.

Manfred and Judy have many more wonderful stories to tell about the special place that is Scarlett-Mitchell Nature Area. Just ask them about helicopters and hunting to name two. We encourage you to meet your neighbors who are working in the parks—they are only a few steps away!—or better yet, start to create your own stories.

# NAPpennings

thank you . . .

Many thanks to the individuals and following groups who attended NAP workdays in July, August, and September. We could not make such a difference without you!

Argo Livery Camp  
Concordia University students  
Concordia University, Luthern high school students  
Eastern Michigan University Community Plunge  
Emerson School teachers  
Greenhills High School, Junior Class  
Greenhills High School, 7<sup>th</sup> Grade  
IMU Brand, Inc.  
REI  
Rising Scholars at Huron, Pioneer, and Skyline High Schools  
Rowing teams from Huron, Pioneer, and Skyline High Schools  
Rudolf Steiner High School  
Saint Andrews Church of Saline  
Telluride Association Sophomore Seminar Service Committee  
UM Alumni Association staff  
UM Community Scholars  
UM Delta Sigma Theta  
UM Human Resources Department  
UM Law students  
Youth Volunteer Corps  
Youth Empowerment Project

## NAP Conducts Biggest Private Workday Ever!

On October 6<sup>th</sup> NAP collaborated with Community High School in NAP's biggest private workday ever. Approximately 360 students volunteered 960 hours in ten natural areas around the City, chipping trails and cutting invasive shrubs. The magnitude of volunteer effort not only benefited the local ecology, but also enhanced the students' ecological awareness. One said he didn't know Ann Arbor had woods like this left. Another expressed excitement at "really doing something" for the environment.

NAP relied on a large network of local peer organizations to make this event a success: the Stewardship Network, Matthaei Botanical Gardens and Nichols Arboretum, Legacy Land Conservancy, the Friends of Greenview Nature Area, and the Conservation Stewards Program. Internal city partners were Forestry, Park Operations, and the AATA. In addition, local residents stepped forward to help in leadership positions: Mark Charles, George Hammond, Ann Hubbard, Tricia Jones, Judith Judge and the Friends of Greenview, Tom Kussurelis, Danny Massengale, Cindy Overmyer, Jim Rogers, Norm Roller, and Dana Wright.

NAP enthusiastically thanks the students and staff of Community High School, the volunteer leaders, and the contributing organizations that made the event possible. Ann Arbor's restoration efforts have been raised to a larger and more cooperative level than ever before!



*The AATA donated passes to Community High School students to support their volunteering at NAP's biggest private workday.*

## City Acquires Land for Improved Access to Bluffs

NAP is pleased to announce improved access to Bluffs Nature Area. The Elks sold a strip of land to the City, creating public access off Sunset Street. Land has also been acquired from the property owner on the northern boundary of Bluffs, giving direct access off Huron View Boulevard. Both sites have street parking. The additional approximately 1.5 acres of land brings Bluffs to over 40 acres. As one of Ann Arbor's largest natural areas with woodlands, prairies, and lovely views of the Huron River, Bluffs is well worth a visit, and the improved access now makes that easier!

## NAP Reaches Out to Others in Region

NAP is charged with caring for Ann Arbor's natural areas, but there is also important work to be done collaborating with organizations around the state and region. This summer, NAP Manager Dave Borneman spoke at the Michigan Fire Council and the Arborculture Society of Michigan's annual conferences. NAP has also been invited to be part of a Core Design Team to help the MDNRE prioritize biodiversity areas in the southern lower peninsula. While NAP volunteers work hard in local parks, NAP is also reaching out to organizations to increase public awareness of the benefits of ecological restoration.

## Register Now for Conference on Restoring Ecosystems

The Stewardship Network and the Midwest Land Trust Alliance are cosponsoring the upcoming 2011 Science, Practice, and Art of Restoring Native Ecosystems Conference. The event will take place January 21 and 22 at the Kellogg Conference Center in East Lansing. This year the focus is on stewardship and a sense of place, with sessions including climate change, helping children explore nature, and a range of social and scientific topics. For more information, and to register, go to [www.stewardshipnetwork.org](http://www.stewardshipnetwork.org), or call 734.996.3190.

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# Staff Updates

hello . . .

## Christine Chessler

I joined NAP as the Workday Coordinator during the summer of 2010. I recently moved to Ann Arbor from the southeast, where I completed my B.S. in Biology from the University of South Florida and my M.S. in Biology from Valdosta State University. I look forward to integrating my ecological background with community outreach to help plan the best workdays for volunteers and the environment. After seeing palm trees my whole life, I'm excited to experience seasons for the first time—even winter! Outside of the office, I enjoy gardening, yoga, biking, reading, and exploring all that Ann Arbor has to offer.



farewell . . .

## Molly Murphy

After three seasons with NAP, I am now doing restoration work in New Mexico with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. I work with a crew that moves to various locations. First stop was the Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge in Socorro in the center of the state. On arrival I walked into the bunk house to find a diamond-backed rattle snake on the kitchen table! (It turned out the snake was anesthetized and part of a colleague's research.)



## Harold Eyster

After nearly a year as an intern for NAP, I regretfully had to say goodbye to NAP in August to make way for college A.P. classes. I want to profusely thank all of the NAPpers for their kindness and the freedom with which they shared their knowledge. You all made my year at NAP an educational, fun, and rewarding experience. *Editors' note: In addition to Harold's achievements with NAP, he was recognized by the American Birding Association as 2009 Young Birder of the Year (see NAP's Summer 2010 newsletter); he presented a paper at the Wilson Ornithological Society in Geneva, New York in May 2010; and he won a birding competition in Ohio that earned him a trip to Ecuador. NAP extends congratulations and best wishes for future success to Harold!*



## Matt Demmon

I left NAP last spring to concentrate on my own landscaping business and to work for a private restoration company. I've missed the crew but enjoyed working in new places. Now I get to enjoy the best thing ever, the birth of Caryn's and my daughter Hazel on September 3rd! She's already a big fan of the outdoors, and I can't wait to introduce her to some of the area's beautiful parks.



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## NAPpennings

*Continued from page 5*

### Studies Support that Being Outside Benefits Health

It can be hard to spend time outside in winter. Two articles have come to NAP's attention in support of what we all know, if often choose to ignore, that people feel better when they spend time in nature. We may even have strengthened immune systems and physical health.

The first article compares how students felt after spending time outside. Across the board, participants who spent time in natural settings consistently felt more energetic. The results of the study were that spending even just 20 minutes a day in nature, will significantly boost

vitality levels. (See a summary of the article at [www.treehugger.com](http://www.treehugger.com), search on "Want to feel more alive?")

The second article describes studies where it was found that people who spent a few hours in natural surroundings experienced increased immune function. Stress reduction is one factor, but scientists also credit phytoncides, the airborne chemicals that plants emit to protect them, which also seem to benefit humans. The scientists found that being in nature lowered cortisol levels, blood pressure, pulse rate, and increased white blood cells. (The article was printed in the July 6, 2010 New York Times, New York edition, page D5.)

# Volunteer Stewardship Calendar

## Winter 2010

### December

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**December 11, Saturday**  
**Year End Celebration!**  
**Matthaei Botanical Garden**  
**1800 N. Dixboro Road**  
**6:00 to 9:00 pm**

Join us in celebrating the Stewardship Network's Huron Arbor Cluster's restoration successes in 2010! No registration required, just show up for a good time and bring a dish to pass. Free and open to the public.

**December 14, Tuesday**  
**Stewards' Circle**  
**Bruegger's Bagels**  
**709 North University Avenue**  
**7:30 to 8:30 am**

Join the Stewardship Network's Huron Arbor Cluster for an informal discussion. This month's topic: "Before we do any restoration work we need to know what we're trying to accomplish. How do we develop a restoration plan? What resources are available to us?"

### January

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**January 11, Tuesday**  
**Stewards' Circle**  
**Bruegger's Bagels**  
**709 North University Avenue**  
**7:30 to 8:30 am**

Join the Stewardship Network's Huron Arbor Cluster for an informal discussion on a monthly topic with volunteer and professional land stewards and others interested in nature. Topic TBA.

### February

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**February 8, Tuesday**  
**Stewards' Circle**  
**Bruegger's Bagels**  
**709 North University Avenue**  
**7:30 to 8:30 am**

Join the Stewardship Network's Huron

Arbor Cluster for an informal discussion on a monthly topic with volunteer and professional land stewards and others interested in nature. Topic TBA.

**February 12, Saturday**  
**Citizen Pruner Training**  
**Leslie Science and Nature Center**  
**1831 Traver Road**  
**9:00 am to 1:00 pm**

Join us in this exciting new NAP program. Learn from experts how to prune young trees for shape and health. Be involved in long term upkeep of park plantings. Fun, and minimal time commitment.

### March

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**March 1, Tuesday**  
**Controlled Burn Public Meeting**  
**Leslie Science and Nature Center**  
**1831 Traver Road**  
**7:30 to 9:00 pm**

Bring your questions about controlled burns to this meeting. If you plan on joining our burn crew for the first time this season, it is recommended that you attend this meeting.

**March 2, Wednesday**  
**Controlled Burn Crew Training**  
**Leslie Science and Nature Center**  
**1831 Traver Road**  
**12:00 to 5:00 pm**

Always wanted to participate in a controlled burn? Here is your chance! This training is required for new volunteers. Experienced folks also welcome for refresher training. Please register by February 23.

**March 8, Tuesday**  
**Stewards' Circle**  
**Bruegger's Bagels**  
**709 North University Avenue**  
**7:30 to 8:30 am**

Join the Stewardship Network's Huron

Arbor Cluster for an informal discussion on a monthly topic with volunteer and professional land stewards and others interested in nature. Topic TBA.

**March 12, Saturday**  
**Salamander Survey Kickoff**  
**Leslie Science and Nature Center**  
**1831 Traver Road**  
**10:00 am to 12:00 noon**

New and returning volunteers are welcome to participate in animal surveys that monitor their populations and the health of habitats. No previous experience required. Please register by March 4.

**March 12, Saturday**  
**Frog and Toad Survey Kickoff**  
**Leslie Science and Nature Center**  
**1831 Traver Road**  
**1:30 to 3:00 pm**

The public is invited to help us monitor frogs and toads in the parks. You will learn their calls, then go out to listen! No previous experience required. Please register by March 4.

**March 19, Saturday**  
**Photo Monitoring Kickoff**  
**Leslie House**  
**1831 Traver Road**  
**10:00 am to 12:00 noon**

Whether you are returning or a new photo volunteer, please join us to get ready for the upcoming season recording restoration progress.

**March 19, Saturday**  
**Workday Leader Training**  
**Leslie House**  
**1831 Traver Road**  
**1:30 to 5:00 pm**

If you are leading a workday, how do you make it a safe, fun, and productive event? This meeting is strongly encouraged for anyone interested in leading or helping NAP staff to lead workdays this season.

# Native Plant Brochures Available

Whether you are an old hand at raising native plants, or just beginning to explore the possibilities, NAP recommends these handy brochures.

Each brochure lists species native to Michigan and includes plant descriptions, optimal growing conditions, planting notes, and special characteristics such as attractiveness to insects or birds. They also each have a convenient chart that summarizes all the plants at a glance.

The series includes: Native Wildflowers; Native Shrubs; Native Vines, Ferns, Grasses, Rushes, and Sedges; and Native Trees as well as a quick reference list. Copies are available for one dollar per brochure, or four dollars per set, plus

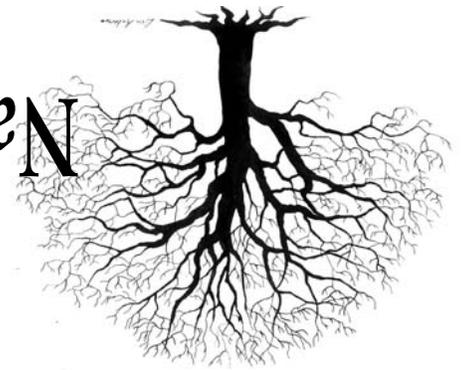


postage. Call or email NAP for an order form: 734.794.6627 / [nap@a2gov.org](mailto:nap@a2gov.org), or stop by our office at 1831 Traver Road in Ann Arbor to pick up your set, plus one for a gardening friend!

**Great gift idea!**

Winter 2010

## Natural Area Preservation News



Printed on recycled paper with soy-based ink.  If you would prefer to receive your next newsletter via email, please let us know!

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