

# Natural Area Preservation News

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

Volume 8, Number 2

Summer 2003

## Park Focus: Fritz Park *by Maggie Hostetler*

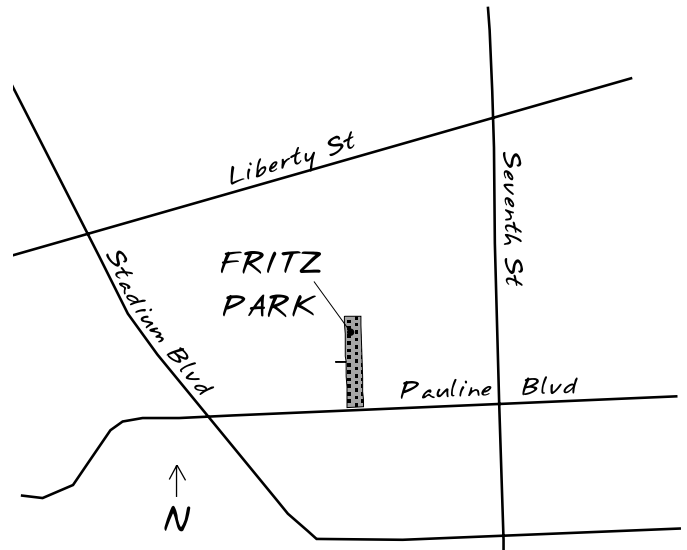
When Europeans first arrived in the Ann Arbor area, they found a beautiful landscape dominated by oak-hickory forest. Growing beneath the trees was a floral carpet, rich with species unknown to the new settlers — trillium, trout-lily, and wild geranium, to name a few. As the area developed, this lovely landscape quietly ebbed to the margins of our community. We rarely see within our city limits the native ecosystems that have been thriving here for the past 5,000 years.

But islands remain where the forest has managed to keep a foothold. Fritz Park is one such island—a five-acre gem. It seems an unlikely candidate as the holder of a wild heritage—nestled so closely on all sides by development—homes and apartments to the east, west, and south, and Eberwhite School to the north.

When NAP Botanists, Bev Walters and Tim Howard first visited the park to inventory plants in 1995, descendants of the original oaks and hickories formed the canopy. Below these grand trees, the rootstock and seeds of native flowers were still bringing forth blooms. They recorded a total of 81 natives. On their list were flowers like black snakeroot, tall sunflower, May apple, white baneberry, and bristly green brier; shrubs such as maple-leaf arrowwood and red-osier dogwood; and trees including ironwood and flowering dogwood.

Unfortunately, these hardy natives were not alone. Alien invasives also made their home at Fritz, most notably, buckthorn. This shrub had turned parts of the park into a mass of underbrush — unsightly, difficult to move through, and acting to suppress the native flowers.

Steve Bean has been Park Steward at Fritz for five years. During his tenure, he has seen a transformation. Soon after that original inventory, NAP organized workdays where Steve and other neighborhood volunteers worked



to cut out the larger buckthorn shrubs, those measuring two or three inches in diameter. This eliminated the seed source for more buckthorn. Says Steve, "We really opened it up. Fritz is visually very different now with those out of there." Every spring Steve works to prevent a return of the buckthorn by hand pulling the seedlings springing from the seed already in the soil. A prescribed burn in 2000 also knocked back the seedlings. Now the openness of the woods is broken only by graceful redbuds and flowering dogwoods. Wildflowers that have expanded their range since then include blue-stem goldenrod and woodland phlox.

The elimination of the buckthorn provided a double benefit for the park neighbors. Not only did it open up the forest floor, encouraging the spread of native wildflowers, but it also helped solve another problem. Near the middle of the park is a small, mowed area with a playground. The dense buckthorn thicket served as a screen, making it difficult for parents to keep an eye on their children.

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## Coordinator's Corner

# The Stewardship Network - Fanning the Flames

Long-time readers of the NAP Newsletter have heard about the Southeast Michigan Stewardship Network before. We first mentioned it in our Spring 1999 issue, shortly after it received initial funding in 1998, although NAP's involvement in the Network goes back even further to the summer of 1995, when we first started meeting with Bob Grese from UM and Paul Rentschler from the Huron River Watershed Council. The rest of the history is nicely summarized in the following excerpt from an article just written for the Michigan Natural Areas Council's newsletter by Lisa Brush (who coordinates the Network) and Bob Grese.

*Preserving natural areas can be incredibly challenging in a landscape that has had broad ecosystem processes disrupted, is increasingly fragmented, and is threatened by invasive species. Increasingly, some level of active ecologically-based management has become essential to preserve the integrity of natural areas. Recently, groups from across Southeastern Michigan have banded together to share expertise and network for providing protection for natural areas in the region.*

*In 1998 the Huron River Watershed Volunteer Stewardship Network was born with an aim to improve existing volunteer stewardship programs and expand efforts throughout the river basin to protect a variety of plant and wildlife species and the ecosystems where they are found. Through this project the Huron River Watershed Council, the City of Ann Arbor Parks and Recreation Department's Natural Area Preservation Division, and the University of Michigan (the original partner groups) worked to develop a coordinated and expanded network of volunteer stewardship programs and activities for the protection of biodiversity and ecosystem integrity within the Huron River Watershed, primarily focused in Ann Arbor and the surrounding counties.*

*In the fall of 2001 representatives from 15 volunteer, nonprofit, governmental, and private entities got together to take stock of where we were after three years of launching this project. With new partners on board, we broadened our geographic focus to include all of Southeast Michigan. This diverse partnership of individuals, non-profit organizations, businesses, and governmental units is working to foster land and water stewardship dedicated to preserving and restoring natural areas in Southeast Michigan by increasing individual and collective capacity for this work.*

*Since that meeting in 2001, the Stewardship Network has accomplished many exciting things. Most recent has been the first eight-session Steward's Training that met over the course of six months. Teams from Oakland and Washtenaw counties developed three management plans for important local natural areas.*

*Continued on page 6*



**Parks & Recreation**  
CITY OF ANN ARBOR

### **Natural Area Preservation**

is a Division of the City of Ann Arbor  
Department of Parks and Recreation.

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

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For up-to-date information on  
stewardship activities, call the  
"hotline" at 734.996.3266.

# Park Steward Erudition

We thought you might like a summary of all the current Stewards. So here you are...

Argo.....	Gillian Harris	Furstenberg Native Plant Garden.....	Aunita Erskine
Bird Hills.....	Bob Heinold	Hansen.....	John Heider
Black Pond Woods.....	Ted Hejka	Hollywood.....	Katherine Yates-O'Brien
Bluffs.....	Catherine Riseng	Leslie Woods.....	Peggy Rabhi
Bird Hills.....	Ric Lawson	Marshall.....	Ken Shaw and the East Ann Arbor Kiwanis Club
Brown.....	Mark Charles	Miller.....	Howard Krausse
Buhr Park Children's Wet Meadow.....	Jeannine Palms and the Blossom Home Schoolers	Redbud.....	Jessie Wood
Cedar Bend.....	Adriane Chapman	Scarlett Mitchell.....	Bob Gould
Cranbrook.....	Bruce Hubbard	Scarlett Mitchell.....	Manfred and Judy Schmidt
Dolph.....	Sue Miller	Sugarbush.....	Anita Yu
Fritz.....	Steve Bean	Swift Run.....	A.C. Tanner
Fritz.....	Ray Fahlsing		

Here are the new Park Stewards to introduce this season...

**Janice Selberg** has lived in Ann Arbor for 27 years. She became involved in **Kuebler Langford Nature Area** to further her interest in preserving natural areas. Janice is a lawyer, an amateur naturalist, and has been a volunteer with the Washtenaw Land Trust, the Huron River Watershed Council, and the Top-of-Michigan Trails Council (part of the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy). She's looking forward to garlic mustard, weed-out events and other learning experiences. Her partner Park Steward, **Don Cody**, is a native Ann Arborite and has been a teacher in Ann Arbor Public Schools for 34 years. He remembers hiking and exploring many of the wetlands and other open space areas of Ann Arbor 45 years ago with his brother.

**Monica Milla** will be taking care of the **NAP Native Plant Demonstration Garden**. She has been gardening for about ten years and once won a Green-Thumb Garden award from the City of Saline. She favors tall perennial plants and shrubs that attract wildlife. She says, "I have a bad habit of moving just as my garden is coming into its own." She also noted that her three cats have established a truce with the critters at her feeders.

**Jean Kluge**, a recently retired Ann Arbor Public Schools teacher with a life-long interest in nature, is now stewarding **Lakewood Nature Area**. Being a Steward for Lakewood is a natural for her, since she (with the guidance and encouragement of the late Bill Stapp) helped persuade the City and public schools to jointly purchase the ten-acre parcel (known then as the Wagner Woods) from the Wagner family about 35 years ago. Throughout the years, her children have taken part in many school and scout projects relating to these woods, and she helped to establish the first paths and bridges across the seasonal stream. Says Jean, "I look forward to helping to continue these traditions with the Lakewood School community and hope to encourage neighborhood interest and stewardship in preserving and enhancing Lakewood."

These additions mean we have 26 Park Stewards in 24 parks, and what a wonderful group of new folks they are. Welcome aboard!

## Stewards' Circle meetings

All events are from 7:30-8:30 am at Bruegger's Bagels, North University, Ann Arbor (unless noted otherwise)

**June 10, Tuesday** Topic: Working with neighbors. What are the methods for communicating with neighbors?

**July 8, Tuesday** Location TBA This month's topic: Sharing technological resources.

**August 12, Tuesday** Topic: Soil erosion. What techniques work to control soil erosion?

Email Lisa with your questions at [lbrush@umich.edu](mailto:lbrush@umich.edu).

# Summer 2003 Natural Area Preservation Volunteer Stewardship Calendar



NAP is located at the Leslie Science Center (1831 Traver Road, Ann Arbor, 48105). Our phone number is 734.996.3266. Workday orientation starts promptly at 10:00 am. A short nature walk will be held at the end of each workday, time permitting. Please wear pants and closed-toe shoes. Minors must either be accompanied by a guardian or contact NAP in advance to obtain a release form.

## JUNE

**June 7, Saturday**  
**Early Bird Walk**  
**at Gallup Park,**  
**7:30 to 9:30 am**



Join City Ornithologist Dea Armstrong as she leads a walk to look for birds in the morning in Gallup Park and Furstenberg Nature Area. Bring binoculars if you have them but they are not absolutely necessary. A great walk for beginning birders! Meet at the Gallup Park canoe livery.

**June 7, Saturday**  
**Furstenberg Native**  
**Plant Garden,**  
**10:00 am to 1:00 pm**



Help in the garden and learn a bit about native gardening. Your help at this workday will be appreciated by hundreds of park users. Meet at the circle drive at Furstenberg Nature Area off Fuller Road. Aunita Erskine, Master Gardener and Park Steward, will be leading this workday!

**June 7, Saturday**  
**Argo Nature Area,**  
**10:00 am to 1:00 pm**



It's National Rivers and Trails Day! Join us in removing invasives and improving trails to protect the Huron River. Meet us in the parking lot north of the Argo Canoe Livery, off Longshore Drive.

**June 13, Friday**  
**Downtown Ann Arbor,**  
**6:00 to 9:00 pm**



The third annual Mayor's Green Fair! See NAPpenings for more information.

**June 14, Saturday**  
**Ann Arbor Landfill**  
**Bird Walk, 7:30 am**



Meet at the small parking area just inside the Platt Road entrance, which is south of the intersection of Platt and Ellsworth Roads. These walks are for all levels of birders, but beginners are especially welcome. Binoculars are nice but not essential. Leader: Dea Armstrong. Call NAP for more information.

**June 14, Saturday**  
**Marshall Nature Area**  
**Butterfly Walk,**  
**9:30 to 11:30 am**



Join NAP Entomologist Barb Barton in surveying our natural areas to find, and learn more about, our local butterflies. Meet in the parking lot off Dixboro, north of Plymouth Road.

**June 14, Saturday**  
**Fritz Park,**  
**10:00 am to 1:00 pm**



Come out and meet Park Steward Steve Bean as we walk through Fritz Park to do some housekeeping. We'll be cleaning up the park and removing various invasives. Park on Russett Street, at the east entrance of Fritz. \*\*\*See the Park Focus on Page 1 for more information about Fritz Park\*\*\*

**June 28, Saturday**  
**Bluffs Park,**  
**10:00 am to 1:00 pm**



Help remove spotted knapweed to ensure the lasting beauty at one of Ann Arbor's few perched wetlands. Meet us in the parking lot of the Elks Pratt Lodge on Sunset Road by Wildt Street.

## JULY

**July 6, Sunday**  
**North American Butterfly**  
**Association's Fourth of July**  
**Butterfly Count, 8:30 am to 6:00 pm**



Help survey numerous parks throughout Ann Arbor. This is a great way to learn butterfly identification, as you will be spending the day with Ann Arbor's finest butterflyers. Please call 734.576.8427 to register.

**July 13, Sunday**  
**Huron River Day**  
**Gallup Park,**  
**9:00 am to 4:00 pm**



Bring friends and family for a celebration of the entire watershed! Activities for the day will include canoe and foot races in the morning followed by entertainment and numerous environmental group displays in the afternoon. NAP Botanist Bev Walters will lead a botanical tour of Cedar Bend Nature Area at 10:00 am (meet at the Island Park parking lot, off Fuller). NAP Park Steward and Master Gardener Aunita Erskine will lead a tour of Furstenberg/Gallup Nature Areas at 1:00 pm (meet in the Furstenberg Nature Area parking lot, ¼ mile west of Gallup Park).

**July 19, Saturday**  
**Furstenberg Native**  
**Plant Garden,**  
**9:00 am to Noon**



Help in the garden and learn a bit about native gardening. Botanical tour will be provided, time permitting. Meet at the circle drive at Furstenberg Nature Area, off Fuller Road.

## AUGUST

August 9, Saturday  
Brown Park,  
9:00 am to Noon

Join NAP staff and Park Steward Mark Charles for a morning of trail maintenance! This work will help all sorts of park users in the coming years. Meet us at the parking lot off Packard Road, across from Easy Street.

August 23, Saturday  
Barton Nature Area,  
9:30 to 11:30 am

Join NAP Entomologist Barb Barton in surveying our natural areas to find, and learn more about, our local butterflies. Meet at the South entrance on West Huron River Drive, approximately  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile from the intersection of M-14 and Main Street.



## SEPTEMBER

September 7, Sunday  
Newport Creek Nature Area,  
11:00 am to 1:00 pm

Remove invasives from under some grand oaks in this new neighborhood park. Join us on Timber Trail between Springwood Court and Newport Creek Drive.

Many groups participate in NAP workdays, or arrange special workdays for their organization. Contact the NAP office if a group you are involved with is interested in planning a volunteer stewardship event.

## GPSing *by Maggie Hostetler*

NAP took to the woods and prairies this winter with our new friend Gypsy and completed a project that will make our work easier throughout the year. Gypsy is the Crew's affectionate nickname for the city's Global Positioning System (GPS-sounds like Gypsy) handset — a yellow, fist-sized device that is helping us pin down a lot of information that has eluded us till now.

For example: Where exactly are all those trails in Scarlett Mitchell Nature Area? You know their location when you are on the trails-but how do you get that information from the woods back to the office and put it on a map? In the past, NAP has had to rely on guesswork. Get the map up on the computer screen and draw lines freehand.

Another example: Where are the Kentucky Coffee trees in Lakewood Park? NAP Botanist Bev Walters, needs to monitor this rare species over the years. In the past, she has had to search them out each time-because they have not been precisely mapped.

This searching and guesswork is now a thing of the past for NAP! From December through March, even on those frigid February days, the Crew was out there GPSing every trail and management unit boundary in sixty parks throughout the city. In the coming months, photopoints and rare-plant locations will also be GPSed.

The information downloaded from Gypsy goes directly into the computer and onto the maps that will make NAP's work more efficient. Crew maps, burn maps, and management-unit maps now have precisely located features.

Helping with all this work were these volunteers: Mike Conboy, Curt Hamilton, Mike Landis, Laura Liebler, John McCorkandale, Sue Miller, Rick Neubig, Catherine Riseng, AC Tanner, and Nancy Taylor.

Thanks to the good work of the volunteers and Crew, NAP is now on the map.



## Park Focus: Fritz Park *continued from Page 1*

Steve reports that families now feel at ease bringing their small children to use the playground area.

Bev returns to the park frequently to see how the native plants are doing. Several years ago she recommended that the City stop mowing some of the lawn areas adjacent to the woods near the playground. "I thought that since the lawn interfaced so closely with a high-quality woods that if we left it unmowed, the chances of wildflowers appearing would be excellent." Sure enough, a stand of native heart-leaved aster has shown up in the previously mowed area. Bev's favorite spot at Fritz is near the southwest corner. "Right after you come in the gate, growing under the oak trees is our best population of woodland phlox. Overall, it is pretty uncommon in the city of Ann Arbor. This population has definitely increased since NAP began its work." Its five petals and pale blue color clearly distinguishes woodland phlox from the similar, non-native dame's rocket, which is more widespread, has only four petals and is more lavender in color.

Steve has also watched the progress of the wildflowers. "There's bloodroot in there, which is one of my favorites. I also like the wild geranium. It used to be scattered but is now more established in the northern part of the park. In the southeast I enjoy the carpet of trout-lilies that has really perked up since the buckthorn was removed."

Steve was one of NAP's first Park Stewards, and his work has shown how one volunteer can have a huge impact on a park. When another wave of invasive plants struck Fritz several years ago, Steve set out to beat it back. The culprit was garlic mustard. Says Steve, "It appeared out of nowhere - multiple patches in the north and south of the park. I'm a weed puller, and I worked very hard. There is very little of it left now, and it could be eliminated in a couple of years." Garlic mustard is a pernicious invader that drives out native plants very quickly.

Steve has also helped NAP recruit other neighbors to work in Fritz, such as Ray Fahlsing (Park Steward for the past year) and Jana Vanderhaar (former NAP Crew member). Without these folks' work, it is likely that Fritz's wildflowers would be gone or greatly reduced. They have all worked hard to eliminate many invasives, like purple wintercreeper, which showed up in recent years but is now under control.

"We are lucky," says Steve, "to have this park. It is unusual for a small neighborhood park to be a connector to a larger natural area — the Eberwhite Woods. The redbud trees are beautiful and so are the wildflowers. There just aren't many places this nice. It could have been left alone to be filled with invasives and trash, but with the help of neighbors and NAP, we have improved on its diversity."

## Coordinator's Corner *continued from Page 2*

Over the past year, the original Network has evolved into a series of linked, but distinct, "clusters" in the recognition that we need to grow a network that is as locally based as possible - that brings together people who work on the same piece of ground. So the Southeast Michigan Stewardship Network currently has an Ann Arbor Cluster, a Headwaters Cluster (in the upper Huron River basin), and (my personal favorite name) a Raisin Cluster (working along the River Raisin). Thus, regardless of your geographic location, there's a cluster for you! There are larger group gatherings/events for the entire Network, but most of the events are happening at the local cluster level. Here in the Ann Arbor Cluster, we continue to meet monthly for the Stewards' Circle, an informal, early morning discussion about various restoration-related topics. (7:30 to 8:30 am, on the 2nd Tuesday of the month, at Bruegger's Bagels on North University.) We're also looking forward to the repeat of the Stewards'

Training to be held this fall. If you're interested in learning more about any aspect of the Stewardship Network or would like to be put on the email list to be kept abreast of upcoming events, contact Lisa Brush at [lbrush@umich.edu](mailto:lbrush@umich.edu) or 734.769.6981.

The only other personal comments I'll make here is that it is really satisfying to see this effort finally starting to take off. And since I'm writing this in the middle of burn season, allow me to draw this analogy about the Stewardship Network: it's like a small campfire into which you slowly keep feeding twigs, until finally — if you're patient — it bursts into a self-sustaining blaze. I think the Network is starting to catch fire! I hope you'll find a way to help fan the flames!

- David Borneman,  
*Natural Area Preservation Manager*

# NAPpenings

## Thank You...

- Alternative Spring Break students - Loyola University - for their generous help at Furstenberg.
- The Church of Christ parishioners - for attending the Cranbrook workday and bringing lunch!
- Hindu Student Council - U of M - for all your wonderful work out at Furstenberg.

## Ann Arbor Mayor's Green Fair

Friday, June 13 (from 6:00 to 9:00 pm) will be the third annual Mayor's Green Fair. This event celebrates citizens, organizations, and governmental units (city and county) that have worked hard on numerous environmental issues this past year. Hands-on activities for kids, alternative fuel vehicles, and lots of environmental organizations will be part of the fun, so stop downtown A2 to check it out. Contact Matt Naud [mnaud@ci.ann-arbor.mi.us](mailto:mnaud@ci.ann-arbor.mi.us) if you would like to volunteer.

## 23rd annual Huron River Day

Sunday, July 13. Events will take place in various locations along the river including: Parker Mill County Park - tours of the historic grist mill and rubber-duck races on Fleming Creek; Cedar Bend and Furstenberg Nature Areas - botanical walks; Nichols Arboretum, Clean Water Trail - tours of restoration work; Gallup Park - various children's activities, live animal presentations, music, free canoe and kayak usage, canoe/kayak demos, food, the annual fun run, magic shows, the Bubbleman, and loads of wonderful environmental exhibits. For further information, watch the local papers or call NAP's stewardship hotline (a bit closer to the event).



## Bird Sighting



I am delighted to report a new bird to add to our list of species found in City parks. I heard a Barred Owl calling several times one evening in late March in Barton Nature Area. I am sure the bird was near the river in the more densely forested area. Keep

your eyes open for this wonderful addition to our park fauna, (ears, too - Barred Owls have been known to call in the daytime!) - Dea Armstrong (NAP Ornithologist)



## Herbicide Wand

One of the eternal paradoxes at NAP is that the Crew is a bunch of serious environmentalists whose job often involves applying herbicides. As a result, we make every effort to apply low-toxicity products as sparingly as we can. Inspired by a design published in a recent Wild Ones newsletter, NAP has cooked up a new tool for neatly sponging glyphosate-based herbicide onto the stumps of cut buckthorn and honeysuckle. (This prevents them from resprouting.) Anyone wanting more details about the herbicide wand can contact Ross Orr at [rossorr@eudoramail.com](mailto:rossorr@eudoramail.com) or call the NAP office.

## A Better Chainsaw?

NAP is always looking for ways to be greener. We recently took our first steps towards making our fleet of 2-stroke power tools less polluting. This past winter we replaced our broken down "dinosaur" chainsaw with a Stihl MS 180C catalytic converter model. This model is only available in California, but we managed to get the Stihl USA headquarters in Virginia Beach to send one to us. It has a 14" blade so it is a little small for bigger trees, but it works well on buckthorn, honeysuckle, and the other invasives we deal with. It is less powerful than our old chainsaw, but the reduced exhaust output is very noticeable-much easier on the user's lungs and on Ann Arbor's air.

We've also started using Stihl BioPlus chain lubricant and bar oil. This biodegradable lubricant is vegetable-oil based and is much less harmful to the users and the environment. A Stihl dealer should be able to order this product for anyone who wants to make the switch. If you have any specific questions, refer to the Stihl website at [www.stihlusa.com](http://www.stihlusa.com) or contact NAP.

# Thistles: The Good, The Bad and The Ugly by Bev Walters



My painful childhood experiences of stepping on the rosette of a thistle while running barefoot across a lawn served to prejudice me against these prickly plants. But in all fairness, some thistles are native and belong in our natural landscapes. Swamp thistle (*Cirsium muticum*) is certainly the friendliest of all thistles

with scarcely any offensive points. It is found in our local wetlands and fens and has distinctive, sticky flower heads. Much more robust, pasture thistle (*Cirsium discolor*) and tall thistle (*Cirsium altissimum*) are also native. Both of these species have dense, matted hairs on the lower surface of the leaves making them woolly white underneath. Pasture thistle is more common, especially in old fields and prairies, and has leaves that are deeply lobed—more than half way to the middle of the leaf. Tall thistle's leaves are less deeply lobed, and it prefers more shaded sites than pasture thistle. It has been identified locally only on the east side of Black Pond Woods.

As for non-native thistles, bull thistle (*Cirsium vulgare*) is a large, stout thistle that thrives on disturbance and is usually found towering over open areas, both wet and dry. One characteristic that distinguishes it from the native thistles is a wing, or flap, of leaf-like tissue that runs down the stem beneath the leaves. Sharing this trait, both plumeless thistle (*Cardus acanthoides*) and musk thistle (*Cardus nutans*) are even more prominently winged along the stem, but are generally shorter, more slender plants. They also prefer disturbed sites.

Ironically, the most feared thistle invader is one of the smaller species of the lot. Canada thistle (*Cirsium arvense*) has long been known as a noxious weed in agricultural fields, but it also invades natural areas. In addition to seed that can float aloft for some distance, it spreads by deep, creeping roots to form large colonies. It occurs locally in our prairie and wetland areas, and can be very difficult to eradicate due to its deep root system.

Although there are other thistles in Michigan, these are the species most likely to be seen in the southeastern part of our state. Watch for their pink flower heads in late summer or fall and see if you can tell the native species from the non-native.

## Natural Area Preservation News



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