



Branching Out

Spring 2013

The warm weather is here, a time to appreciate the unique and rare habitat in Huron Woods. This newsletter serves to educate landowners about the plants and animals with whom we share this precious place. We extend to you a warm invitation to attend our Habitat Stewardship events to add to your knowledge about our natural heritage.

Coming Events

Wildflower Fact Sheets- created by Brian Lasenby, posted on neighbourhood signs as each species comes into bloom

June 8, 1:30 p.m.- The Poison Ivy Walk- Sharon Callan, by the mailboxes in front of the clubhouse

June 20- 7:00 p.m. Klaus Keuneke- The Great Trails Project, at the clubhouse

The oak savanna is considered a remnant of a community that once existed along the edge of the grasslands that extended over much of the Great American Plains. In the last two centuries, the millions of acres of savanna that once existed have dwindled to just a few thousand, with one of the largest remaining examples of this community being found in Huron Woods and Pinery. Now rarer than the rain forest, the oak savanna ecosystem enriches the dune landscape of this area. Massive oaks preside over a mosaic of prairie grasses, wildflowers, shrubs and sun-drenched meadows. It is home to 30 species of mammals, 60 of butterflies, 300 of birds and 700 species of plants, some very rare.

There are three distinct layers in a biodiverse forest:

Canopy of biodiverse trees

protects our homes from temperature extremes & creates oxygen

Understory of diverse shrubs and

young trees gives auditory and visual privacy & protects trees from wind damage

Biodiverse Indigenous Ground Covers

anchors tree roots & provides food and shelter for animals



Biodiversity is the key

Ten Good Reasons to Maintain the Native Biodiverse Ground Covers

1. **To enhance recovery of species-at-risk.** The Eastern Hog-nosed Snake and the Five-lined Skink need indigenous biodiverse ground cover with fallen logs and leaf cover to survive. Lawns fail to provide this.
2. **To secure and stabilize tree roots.** Native ground covers have long roots that intertwine with tree roots to keep trees stable during high winds. Grass roots in a planted lawn are too short to do this.
3. **To help trees use nutrients.** Native ground covers have bacteria that assist tree roots to absorb natural fertilizers in the soil, provided by rotting leaves and plants. Lawns do not provide these bacteria.
4. **To keep soil moist during drought.** Native plants have evolved to resist periods of drought, keeping tree roots moist at these times. Grass dries out in times of drought without frequent watering, which uses an extra **30-50% more water** than all other household uses combined.
5. **To prevent pollution of ground, river and lake water.** Native ground covers do not need application of fertilizers to thrive. Chemical fertilizers rapidly seep through our sandy soil to affect ground water, our river and finally, the lake. Fertilizers that flow into the Old Ausable Channel encourage overgrowth of vegetation there.
6. **To preserve a peaceful environment.** Native ground covers do not require lawn equipment like mowers, trimmers and leaf blowers for maintenance. Grassy lawns require regular use of noisy equipment, which interferes with our neighbours' peaceful enjoyment of their properties.
7. **To provide food and shelter for native species of animals.** Native plants are diverse, offering a variety of materials for woodland creatures, some of which are exceedingly rare. Leaf cover provides shelter. The plants themselves provide food. However, a lawn forms a monoculture which does not support a wide variety of plant and animal life needed for a healthy ecosystem.
8. **To provide perennial floral displays.** Native plants offer beautiful floral displays throughout the growing season, and all without artificial watering or fertilizer. Lawns do not bloom.
9. **To maintain the value of our properties.** Manicured properties are always available in London, but properties with natural vegetation like ours are rare and highly valued.
10. **To contribute to a worry free lifestyle** Native ground covers are self maintaining, freeing residents from laborious, time consuming, yard work. Lawns take work and fail to thrive over time resulting in moss growth. **Lawns do not flourish in our sandy soil. Unlike savanna grasses, cultivated grass dries out and is eventually replaced by moss.**

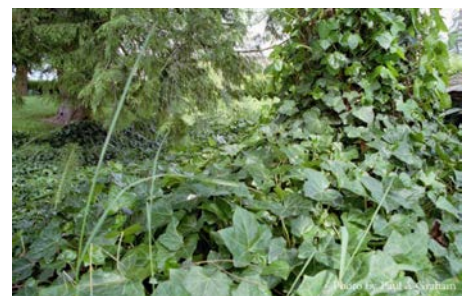
How to Renaturalize a Manicured Lawn

1. Do nothing...let nature reclaim the land with biodiverse plants that were present before construction. Once native ground covers are removed, it takes 7 years for them to recover on their own.
2. Transplant wildflowers from other areas of the lot, supplanted by a **variety** of purchased **native** plants.



Periwinkle-a pretty but highly invasive ground cover chokes out wildflowers and invades neighbours' woodlots-takes years to remove

Plant only indigenous species. Look for Native Species at local garden shops eg. Westland, in cooperation with Lambton Shores and Communities in Bloom, is offering 20% off Eastern Hemlock, Red Oak and Service Berry trees



English Ivy-highly invasive ornamental ground cover that takes over a woodlot-mature plants can cover walls, roofs and trees, their weight pulling trees down over time-once established, takes years to remove

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