

## GHOSTIES AND GHOULIES

Most of us, especially when we were children, believed in the existence of little people or spirits: brownies, faeries, goblins and the like. In literature it is said that children can see the little people because they are innocent, not yet spoiled by the trials and tribulations that face teens and adults. Some people never out-grow these beliefs.

Where did these beliefs originate? And why do they linger today in a world where science has disproved the reality of such fantastical beliefs? Some of the answers lie way back in the mists of time.

The idea of goblins seems to be rather universal. Generally considered to be small creatures, goblins are usually attributed with negative characteristics. Kinder tales describe them as mischievous, whereas in most stories they are downright evil. From creating nightmares to spilling milk and stealing babies, these devilish creatures have been blamed for all sorts of misadventures.

Although goblins, per se, are generally seen as coming to us via the folklore of Britain and the early Germanic tribes, similar creatures inhabit other cultures around the world. In Zimbabwe they have a goblin called a *zvkwambo* that is blamed for fathering any child born with a disability. Japan has mountain goblins, called the *tengu*: creatures that can look either like an old barefoot man with a very long nose or a man with the wings, beak and claws of a crow. The *tengu* are noted for starting fires and for stealing and eating children.




In many traditions, goblins are (conveniently) invisible. This made it easy to blame them for all sorts of ills. The milk spilled over in the barn? Blame the goblins. Fire started in the woods and burned down the town? Must've been a goblin. Sally's gone missing? No doubt a goblin stole her away.

Paganism is attributed with the creation of many fantastical creatures: faeries, kobolds, brownies, pookhas, selkies. No doubt most of these beings were created to explain the unknown: why people disappeared in bogs, why children died in their sleep, why some people were "touched in the head." Wherever you travel in the world, though, ancient peoples created stories to explain the unknown. Some stories are lost to time, while others have hung on to this day. Knowledge, especially in the sciences, is most likely the reason why most of these creatures disappeared: once the unknown becomes known, the mystery is gone.

Still, once a year we all like to believe that there is another world out there - the world of spirits and goblins. Perhaps this is because we all like a good (safe) scare now and then. So, come the end of October we don scary costumes and watch scary movies - it is, after all, Hallowe'en, the night when the veil between the worlds of the living and dead is thinnest.



If you are feeling the need for a gentle scare around the third week of October, come on out to The Dahlem Center for our annual Goblin Walks. We won't have any real goblins on hand (bring your own), but we will entertain you with stories and skits about some of Michigan's "scariest" animals, and afterwards you can enjoy our campfire while eating donuts and drinking cider. See page 3 for details on how to register. 

*PawPrints is published for members of  
The Dahlem Conservancy*

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*The Dahlem Conservancy's  
mission is to provide  
environmental education &  
land conservancy services  
to the residents of  
south central Michigan.*



# From the Director's Desk

In my last article, I discussed some of the disturbing statistics related to our society's lack of outdoor experiences for children.

It's a new challenge that has been growing and not many people are aware of it yet. One potential cure that is being tested across the country is the restoration of something called *nature play*.

What do you remember about playing as a child? Millions of Americans fondly recall playing outdoors in natural settings, doing things like climbing trees, catching frogs, and daydreaming in a special hiding place. These activities are all *nature play*: unstructured childhood play in "wild" areas, whether it's the vacant lot next door, the local neighborhood park, or the "back forty" on your farm.

At it's very best, nature play isn't scheduled, planned or led by adults, nor is it confined by grown-ups' rules. Instead, it is open-ended, free-time exploration and recreation, without close adult supervision. For many of us, this sort of nature play virtually defined our childhood.

There is a growing body of research about the multiple positive impacts of nature play on children's social, emotional, intellectual, and physical well-being. Richard Louv has done a great job of reviewing these benefits in his best selling book *Last Child in the Woods: Saving our Children from Nature Deficit Disorder* (available in Dahlem's gift shop).

Possibly the most valuable impact of nature play may be on conservation. For over 25 years, multiple studies in several countries have found that frequent, unstructured childhood play in natural spaces is the most common influence on the development of life-long conservation values and behaviors. Thus, for the task of building greater future societal support for conservation, frequent nature play is more powerful than education, participation in youth groups, or even the influence of parents and other mentors. Nature play is strong stuff!

If nature play is so powerful for children and society, what can we do about it here in Jackson at The Dahlem Conservancy? Contact us at 517-782-3453 to find out more. This is the second part of a multi-part series where we'll be looking at why we need nature, how important it is to us as individuals and as a society, and what The Dahlem Conservancy would like to do to address some of these problems. You can find the above nature play information and more at [www.greenheartsinc.org](http://www.greenheartsinc.org).

~ Brad Whaley, Director



# 2011 GOBLIN WALKS - REGISTRATION FORM

Mail or drop-off your form: The Dahlem Conservancy, 7117 S. Jackson Rd., Jackson, MI 49201  
Share this event with family, friends and neighbors. Questions? Call 517-782-3453

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**Please indicate your 1st and 2nd choices for Day and Time:**

\_\_\_\_\_ Friday, October 21                      **OR**                      \_\_\_\_\_ Saturday, October 22

\_\_\_\_\_ 6:30 PM      \_\_\_\_\_ 6:45 PM      \_\_\_\_\_ 7:00 PM      \_\_\_\_\_ 7:15 PM  
\_\_\_\_\_ 7:30 PM      \_\_\_\_\_ 7:45 PM      \_\_\_\_\_ 8:00 PM      \_\_\_\_\_ 8:15 PM      \_\_\_\_\_ 8:30 PM

Total # of Adults \_\_\_\_\_ + Total # of Children \_\_\_\_\_ = Total # of Tickets \_\_\_\_\_

Total # Members \_\_\_\_\_ @ \$5.00 each = \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
Total # Non-members \_\_\_\_\_ @ \$8.00 each = \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
Total amount due/enclosed: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Method of Payment** (select one)  
\_\_\_\_ Personal Check (payable to: The Dahlem Conservancy)  
\_\_\_\_ Credit Card      \_\_\_\_ MC      \_\_\_\_ VISA  
# \_\_\_\_\_  
Exp. Date: \_\_\_\_\_ 3-digit verification code: \_\_\_\_

## JOIN OUR BOO CREW! VOLUNTEERS MAKE IT HAPPEN



Where can you help?

- \_\_\_\_ Decorations: Thurs. 9 AM - 2 PM
- \_\_\_\_ Pumpkin Carving: Fri. 12 PM - 3 PM
- \_\_\_\_ Registration Table:      \_\_\_\_ Fri.      \_\_\_\_ Sat.
- \_\_\_\_ Costumed Trail Guide:      \_\_\_\_ Fri.      \_\_\_\_ Sat.
- \_\_\_\_ Serving Refreshments:      \_\_\_\_ Fri.      \_\_\_\_ Sat.
- \_\_\_\_ Song Leader:      \_\_\_\_ Fri.      \_\_\_\_ Sat.
- \_\_\_\_ Storyteller:      \_\_\_\_ Fri.      \_\_\_\_ Sat.
- \_\_\_\_ Parking:      \_\_\_\_ Fri.      \_\_\_\_ Sat.
- \_\_\_\_ Event Floater:      \_\_\_\_ Fri.      \_\_\_\_ Sat.

Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Your Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

## 12th annual friends' SCARECROW CONTEST

Celebrate the season by creating a one-of-a-kind scarecrow! Individuals, local clubs, organizations, and businesses are invited to gather up old clothes and submit a character to represent them. Scarecrows will greet hundreds of visitors along Dahlem's popular "Scarecrow Lane."

Tall metal stakes will be in place for your entry, and straw can be provided by request (call 787-3163). Please set-up your scarecrow between Oct. 18 and Oct. 19. Judging will take place by 5PM on Oct. 20. First through fifth place winners receive Nutshell Gift Certificates. Be sure to include signage with your group's identity. Don't miss this excellent publicity opportunity!

Call The Dahlem Center to register  
your scarecrow creation: 517-782-3453.

*Sponsored by The Friends of Dahlem*

# The Ancient Art of Wreath-Making

Thousands of years ago, our ancestors turned to the reds and greens of the ever-green plants (pines, firs, spruces, hollies, ivies) to bring a bit of color to the cold and dark of winter. The festive colors and bright aromas helped alleviate the dull greys and browns of winter and carried the reminder that spring, while seemingly ages away, would come back.

Some say that the wreath dates back to the ancient Persian empire, when people wore circlets around their heads as symbols of importance (think crowns). Originally these diadems were made of fabric, and some may have incorporated jewels (depending on the person's status). By the time the first Olympic games rolled around, someone thought it was a good idea to crown the winners with circlets made from laurel leaves. When the games started to move from city to city (some things never change), the wreathes were made from whatever greenery was locally available.

So when, and why, did this head gear become a popular thing to hang on one's wall during the middle of winter? No one knows exactly, but it's not out of the



realm of possibility to imagine that the victors went home and displayed these trophies on their walls.

The ancient Celts, from whom many of our Christmas traditions originated, made wreaths from all sorts of plant materials to celebrate the changing of each season. Evergreens were of great importance to the Celtic people, symbolizing the immortality of their deity and the promise of spring's return.

The Christian faith, especially the Catholics, readily took to the wreath, incorporating it into their own symbolism of life eternal.

Today, whatever one's faith, the holiday wreath figures prominently in our celebrations of the winter season. Each year, staff and volunteers gather at the Dahlem Center to create wreathes from a variety of evergreen materials to sell in our gift shop.

If you would like to try your hand at wreath-making, please join us on Tuesday, November 29, 5:00 - 8:30 PM. We provide the boughs, bows, and baubles, wire, hangers and music. Come join the fun! 🍀

## Holiday Bazaar - Seeking Crafty People

Do you like to sew, paint, carve or craft? Do you love to create things, but lack a venue for your talent? Then how about putting that talent to work for the Dahlem Center!

What kinds of things are we looking for? Fancy bird feeders, holiday decorations, and home decor; quilted items, Dobby socks, and wooden toys; table runners, home-made jewelry, and paintings; hand-blown glass baubles, beeswax candles, and sachets; leatherwork, basketry, and hand-tied fishing flies. If you can make it, we'd love to have it!

All items are donated to The Dahlem Conservancy for sale at our annual Holiday Bazaar, which takes place Friday and Saturday, December 2 & 3. Monies raised at this festive event go toward the operating costs of

the Dahlem Center and the Dahlem Ecology Farm.

So put on your creative hat (do you make creative hats?) and try your hand at fashioning some one-of-a-kind items for the bazaar.

And if crafts aren't quite your thing, how about baking?

Homemade edibles (cookies, cakes, candies, etc.) are just as good (and don't collect dust after the holidays are over).

We welcome all your contributions and thank you in advance for your generosity. Happy holidays! 🍀



## Casino Night to Benefit "Nature for All" Trail



Every year the Jackson Junior Welfare League has a gala event to raise money for a worthy local cause. This year The Dahlem Conservancy is the beneficiary, and the money donated from this event will go toward upgrading and improving our Nature for All Trail.


For many people with disabilities or limited mobility, the thought of getting out into nature is pie in the sky. Fifty years ago this might have been true, but today we are fortunate to have much more know-how to make nature accessible to people of all abilities. Special surfaces can be installed that make trails wheel-compatible, perfect for strollers, walkers and wheelchairs. Railings, benches and viewing platforms are easily incorporated to provide resting places for those who prefer a slower pace. Signs can be created that capitalize on senses other than vision.

The Dahlem Center's Nature for All Trail begins right

outside the Nutshell Giftshop and loops through the first few acres of the property, taking in much of the Fanny Beach Arboretum, crossing a pocket wetland, passing alongside Crouch Creek, and bringing visitors back to the main building.

This year the JJWL's Gala Event is billed as "Casino de Monte Carlo." While we can't guarantee Wayne Newton will be there, you will have a chance to have your photo taken with a real Vegas showgirl!

So mark your calendar: Saturday, Oct. 22 at 7:00 PM at the Armory Arts Building in downtown Jackson. Your \$50 ticket to this unforgettable evening provides you with dinner, access to the gaming area and lounge, \$20 in chips to get you started, entertainment, and cash bar. Registration is required.

Poker tournament (additional \$50 entry fee) will be held at 7pm and pre-registration is required. Visit [www.jjwl.org](http://www.jjwl.org) for more information, or call 517-780-4640. 


## Beekeeping 101 by Beckie Shotwell

We gathered outside the big white barn at the Dahlem Ecology Farm, August 11, 2010 for our first beekeeping class. Fourteen of us were there from various backgrounds--members from the Dahlem Community Gardens and The Dahlem Environmental Education Center and others from the community who were curious about backyard beekeeping.

Originally we were going to meet every other Wednesday until October when we would winterize the two hives on the Dahlem property and then meet up again in March to assemble hives for our own bees. What actually happened was a continuation throughout the winter of informal learning about bees and all related topics. We got to know each other, sharing food as we met for an apitherapy class. We enjoyed each others' company as we each built our top-bar hives over several work "bees."

Most importantly we got to know a very special couple who love the Earth and want to live with it instead of on it. Jessica and Keith Steller share their knowledge of bees and encourage anyone who wants to try their hand at bee husbandry. Now, after meet-

ing with them, we all want to foster an animal essential to pollination and help bees thrive. It is a fascinating hobby that has the benefits of increasing the population of a useful insect and produces some very tasty by-products!

Without my Dahlem class, I would not have had the opportunity to join such a great group! The new class has gathered and it includes people from Ann Arbor, who can't find any classes like this in their area, and the director of the Albion College nature center who wants to learn about bee-watching and conservation. I have installed my bees in my hive and am ready for the next level of learning. 



*Beckie Shotwell was one of the Beekeeping 101 students at the biweekly beekeeping classes held at the Dahlem Ecology Farm for the last two years.*

# Oct.-Dec. 2011 Public Programs & Events

## October

### Adopt-a-Stream Collection Day

Saturday, Oct. 1, 9:00 AM - 1:00 PM

Join the Jackson County Conservation District for half a day as they sample freshwater invertebrates as part of their stream monitoring program. Program starts at the Dahlem Center. Call 517-784-2800 to register.

### Let a Story be Told

Sunday, Oct 2, 2:00 PM



Back by popular demand, Jenifer Straus, storyteller and artist, shares her amazing collection of stories and tales to delight and amaze children of all ages. From mysteries and camp stories, to urban legends and animal tales, Jenifer's action-filled style captures the imaginations of all.

### Alternative Energy for Homeowners

Tuesdays, Oct. 4, 11, 18, 25, 6:00 PM

Alternative energy has become a popular topic for home owners, small business, and farmers. Tony Kiszka draws from personal and professional experience to introduce you to solar thermal, solar photovoltaic, and wind turbine power, focusing primarily on function, installation, and interconnection. The four-part series covers the installation process, permitting, and pitfalls commonly encountered. Cost for the entire series is \$40 for individuals, \$60 for families. You may also drop in on an individual class for \$15/person/class.

### Beekeeping 101- Winterizing the Hive

Wednesday, Oct. 26, 6:00 PM

Keith and Jessica Steller wind up their beekeeping classes with this final session about how to winterize your hive. The class meets at the Dahlem Ecology Farm.

### Self-Sufficiency Series: Winterize Your Garden

Wednesdays, Oct. 12, 19, 6:00 PM

This is the second in a series of self-sufficiency classes offered through a partnership between the Dahlem Center and Jackson Community College's Corporate and Continuing Education Department. Learn how to put the garden to bed and how to take care of your tools. The first session meets at JCC, while the second session is a hands-on lesson at the Dahlem Ecology Farm. The program is \$49/person and registration is required via JCC's Corporate and Continuing Education Department ([www.jccmi.edu/cce/](http://www.jccmi.edu/cce/) and select the CCE catalog, or call 517-796-8671).

### Leaf Print Silk Scarves



Saturday, Oct. 15, 2:00 PM

Celebrate the cool fall season by making a leaf-printed silk scarf with Ellen Rathbone, our Education Director. We'll spend some time outside learning basic tree ID while collecting those special leaves we want to remember. Then it's indoors with metallic paints and brayers, where we will decorate richly colored silk scarves with delicate prints. \$10 for members, \$15 for non-members. Pre-registration **required**.

### Ghost Stories!

Saturday, Oct. 15, 7:00 - 9:00 PM

The Dahlem Center and Jackson Storyfest are planning an evening of Ghost Stories featuring Judy Sima, a professional storyteller from West Bloomfield. Warning! The stories will become more intense as the evening progresses! Between stories, parents with young children will be encouraged to head for home! Those in middle school and older will probably love it! Storyfest is providing this event free of charge in celebration of its 25th year as a storytelling festival. We will have some ghostly treats, so please make a reservation by calling the Dahlem Center by Thursday, October 13.

The Dahlem Center is proud to announce that these programs are sponsored by a generous grant from



# Oct.-Dec. 2011 Public Programs & Events

## Grand River Paddle

Sunday, Oct. 16, 12:00 PM

The Dahlem Conservancy and The Grand River Environmental Action Team (GREAT) invite you for a paddle on the Grand River. We launch at the DNR access site on Tompkins Rd. and paddle to Baldwin County Park on Onondaga Rd., where a free picnic awaits all hungry paddlers. Boats are available at no charge from GREAT - call 517-416-4234 to reserve.



## Goblin Walks

Friday & Saturday, Oct. 21 & 22, 6:30-8:30 PM  
Pumpkins galore line the walkways and set the stage for Dahlem's annual Goblin Walks. Kids of all ages enjoy the sometimes spooky, often hilarious, skits that tell the stories of some of nature's scariest animals. Afterwards, enjoy our campfire with hot cider and donuts. \$5/members, \$8/non-members. Guided tours leave every 15 minutes. Reservations required.

## November

### Getting Your Birdfeeders Ready

Saturday, Nov. 5, 2:00 PM

Winter is on its way and it's time to think about our feathered friends. Join Dahlem naturalists, Gary and Ellen, to learn how best to clean and repair your feeders, what feeders are best to use, and what feeding options you have to keep the birds in your backyard happy when the snow flies.

### Floral Arrangements with Mark Snedeker

Sunday, Nov. 13, 2:00 PM

With the winter holidays fast approaching, consider taking some time to learn how to make your own floral arrangements. Mark has many years of experience creating decorative pieces with fresh and dried flowers, and will help you create the perfect piece to make your holidays bright.

## Weave a Cattail Visor

Saturday, Nov. 19, 2:00 PM

Cattails are incredibly versatile: they can provide you with food, clothing and shelter, even help you start a fire. Come join our Education Director, Ellen Rathbone, if you'd like to learn to make this fun hat. Some weaving knowledge is a plus, but not required.

## Turkey Trot

Saturday, Nov. 26, 2:00 PM

The bird's been eaten, the dishes are done, and you still have a house full of guests. Come work off some of that feast at Dahlem with a post-Thanksgiving walk on the trails with a staff naturalist.

## December Holiday Bazaar



Friday & Saturday, Dec. 2 & 3, 10:00 AM - 4:00 PM  
Come one, come all! The holidays are almost upon us and there's no other place where you can find one-of-a-kind handmade gifts for those friends and family who are hard to shop for. Homemade baked goods and birdseed sales round off the offerings at this annual event, where we have something for everyone.

## Owl Prowl

Saturday, Dec. 10, 4:00 PM

We tend to think of spring as the time when birds mate and raise their young, but for owls, winter is the season of love. Soon great-horned and barred owls will be seeking mates and setting up nesting sites, so this is an ideal time to go out at night and look for these somewhat secretive birds. Our evening begins with an indoor introduction to owls, followed by a campfire. After we are all warm and fed, we'll walk the trails in search of our resident owls.

## Community Garden Program: Bulbs

Sunday, Dec. 11, 2:00 PM

Add another dimension to your gardening experience with bulbs. Learn how to extend your bloom season, multiply your bulbs, force bulbs, and grow spices with bulbs from Dahlem's Farm Educator, Lisa Brown.

All programs require pre-registration. Call 782-3453.  
\$3/person and members free, unless otherwise noted.

## Stewardship Snippets

When I think of restoration, the word *stewardship* also comes to mind. If you look up “stewardship” in *Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary*, it will tell you that stewardship is “the office, duties, and obligations of a steward.” Google the word and you will find it is also “an individual’s responsibility to manage his life and property with proper regard to the rights of others.” But, stewardship, to me, is taking special care of one’s own space. Whether it’s a 1000 acre site or a small condo balcony, you can make a difference in helping Mother Nature.

You may think “why bother - it won’t make a difference; let nature take its course.” But if you think about how we have altered our landscape (removed fire, brought in non-native species both by accident and on purpose), we really have made a mess of things. By creating large, less bio-diverse communities and even non-native plant monocultures (think lawn), we have reduced insect populations drastically. We (yes, you and I) have accelerated and amplified what would normally have taken eons to occur.

Why is this an important point? Remember what Dr. Douglas W. Tallamy told us in his book *Bringing Nature Home*: having alien plants in the natural landscape reduces insect biomass. Again, why is this important? Think about who eats the native insects. Insects are an essential part of the diets of innumerable species of reptiles, amphibians, birds, and mammals. In simple terms, insects are bird food and 96 percent of the terrestrial birds (Dickinson, 1990) in North America feed them to their young. And why not? Pound for pound, insects contain more protein than beef and are high in valuable energy (Lyon, 1996), which is important for helping those baby birds grow up fast. The



## News from the Farm

Earlier this year, The Dahlem Conservancy partnered with the Farm Service Agency (FSA) and the National Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) to repair erosion damage caused by runoff from the heavy rains we’ve experienced in recent years. Just under three acres of land was taken out of agricultural production in the Wickwire Field to install a grassed waterway and a grade stabilization structure, both designed by NRCS. These land improvements function to keep the soil in place, slow the flow of runoff water, and prevent further damage to the property. Eroded soils and fertilizers have washed into the sensitive fen area at Dahlem, which is home to Massasauga Rattlesnakes. Allowing this to continue could seriously impede the success of these rattlesnakes, which is why the Dahlem Conservancy is pleased to preserve fen habitat by resolving our erosion issues on the Wickwire Field.

Meanwhile, on the beekeeping front, beekeeping plots available in our new apiary for a plot rental fee of \$15 per year. This fee includes not only rental of the space for your hive, but also hands-on mentorship from Keith and Jessica Steller of Steller Apiaries. You can choose to use a “natural” hive like the Stellers promote, or you can install a traditional Langstroth hive.

The season is wrapping up in the Community Gardens. Now is the time to plant garlic and any late season crops you might desire, like kale or spinach.

~ Chris Gancsos, *Farm Manager*



(continued on page 9)



**Thursday, October 27th, 2011**  
**7:30 a.m. – 8:30 a.m.**

Please join  
 The Dahlem Conservancy  
 for a complimentary breakfast  
 & inspiring program

Davis Conference & Banquet Center  
 3576 Francis Street

RSVP by October 12, 2011  
 782-3453 or [bpilgrim@dahlemcenter.org](mailto:bpilgrim@dahlemcenter.org)



*(Stewardship Snippets, con't from page 8)*

longer they stay in the nest, the more they are exposed to predation.

The way I see it, we have been given a little piece of heaven to nurture and care for, be it big or small. I have always tried to leave a place better than how I found it.

Does that mean that one's property should be a rich native plant community with nothing but local genotype native plants? Sure! If that's what you want, it would be the best possible scenario. But I think a better plan is to incorporate natives into your existing landscape and to keep your favorite non-natives, as long as they are not on everyone's non-native invasive plant species list (if you need a copy please contact me at The Dahlem Center).

So start incorporating native plants into your planting beds now! And if you want to help us do the same here, the Cut and Dab Society meets at 9:00 AM on Thursdays, and we'd love to have your help.

~ Gary Siegrist, *Naturalist*

## Dahlem Book Club

The Dahlem Book Club's next meeting is Tuesday, October 11, at 3:00 PM.

Have you read any good books lately? Would you like to share? This meeting we are doing Reader's Choice, so bring along your summer reads and let us know what you thought of them.



## Special Recognition of Sponsors


The Dahlem Conservancy, like many non-profits, owes a lot to the often unsung heroes who make our existence possible: volunteers and sponsors. We are fortunate to have some truly wonderful volunteers who help teach programs, maintain trails, and provide assistance with a variety of projects often at a moment's notice, and we thank them all.

Likewise, we have several sponsors who annually support special projects or programs. We'd like to recognize them with special thanks in PawPrints. In this issue, we extend our thanks to American 1 Credit Union, who has generously sponsored part of our Birds, Blooms and Butterflies Festival for the last three years.

According to Liz Niles, Community Relations Manager

at American 1, "Something that sets American 1 apart from many other financial institutions is our belief in the community and in giving back to those we serve by offering thousands of dollars in donations and sponsorships to local events, festivals and organizations. And to go above and beyond that, our staff also organizes over 12 free community events benefiting several non-profits in our service area."



Dahlem is grateful to American 1 for choosing to include the Birds, Blooms and Butterflies Festival in their roster for contributions. Thank you. 



## MEMBERSHIPS

(Through 9/6/11)



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Kay Bishop  
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## The Friends of Dahlem

The Friends of Dahlem had it's 24th Annual Meeting in June. Our organization has been going since 1987. Listed below is the membership we enjoy today. Some are financial supporters only, while others offer both financial support and volunteer for our monthly activities:

|                        |                              |
|------------------------|------------------------------|
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Betty Desbiens, *Membership Chairman*  
*Directors:* Dorothy Dyer, Louise Riggs,  
Vera Tuttle, Irene Sonnett, Val Periat



# Naturalist's Niche

by Ellen Rathbone



Grasses are the unsung, unadmired, mostly overlooked members of the plant world. Well, maybe algae are more underappreciated, but since we are on the cusp of the Great Plains here, the land where grasslands once flourished, it is to the grasses that

we should turn our attention.


Once upon a time, much of the Midwest rippled with tall- and short-grass prairies. Sadly, those vast seas of waving gramma gave way to the plow, the bulldozer, the lawn. Much was lost: native birds, native insects, native mammals, native flowers. Yet one can still find remnants of native grasslands where small pockets have survived, or where people have engaged in habitat restoration.

Thanks to the mania for the perfect lawn, we have been led to believe that grass must be green and no more than two inches tall. But there is nothing quite like walking out into a prairie ecosystem where the grasses

tower a foot or more above one's head.

And, oh, the colors! The pinks and yellows of big bluestem's stigmas and anthers; the warm russet oranges of Indian grass; the subtle blue-green tinge that clings to little bluestem - they are as pleasing to the eye in the fall as any flame-colored foliage found in the Northeast.

Perhaps the most impressive part of the grasses is the part we can't see: the roots. Native grasses have some of the most extensive root systems of any plant. Consider this: big bluestem's roots can reach ten feet or more down into the soil! Compare that to your typical lawn grass roots, which at best are but a few short inches in length. Think of all the soil that our native grasses stabilize with those impressive roots!

Wherever I live, I find myself in awe of the beauty of wild grasses. It is well worth the time it takes to visit an area where native grasses are growing. Walk up to them, look at them, touch them. Their structure, color and variety is enough to amaze even the most cynical among us. 

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www.dahlemcenter.org

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