The Prairie Pulse

A newsletter brought to you by the Poplar Creek Prairie Stewards

Issue date: October 2026

Upcoming Workdays

Saturday, 10/24 **Sunday, 11/1** **Saturday, 11/7**

Saturday, 11/14 (Seed Processing Party) **Saturday, 11/21**

Sunday, 11/29 **Saturday, 12/5**

For more information: PCPS website.

A Memorable Anniversary Celebration






Would we have a workday on Sunday, September 20? If not, there wouldn't be any anniversary celebration. All week there were forecasts of rain for the entire day. Actually weather persons were not particularly concerned about our workday and anniversary, but rather the Bears game at Soldiers Field (where Caleb Williams subsequently slipped on wet grass and injured his hamstring). Fortunately the threat of thunderstorms and lightning was removed from the morning forecast, so Alicia and crew "gave it a go."

What a surprise when 21 volunteers dressed in appropriate rain gear showed up at 9am for Circle-Up.   And, they promised to stay for our 37th anniversary celebration post-workday. So, in a light mist the group headed out to plant almost 200 plugs and collect seed, while Jan headed to Garibaldi's to order pizza, then on to the back pavilion to set-up for lunch. Kathy came back early from seed collection to "hold down the fort" while Jan did the pizza pick-up. Walking back from the worksite the rain did start to come down, so the ponchos and hooded jackets worn by volunteers were useful.   Meanwhile we took advantage of the driveway directly up to the pavilion recently installed by FPCC, backing in so not a drop of rain hit a pizza box!

Under the protection of the pavilion 24 volunteers enjoyed pizza, a variety of desserts and some good conversation. Jan noted to the attendees that PCPS has two anniversary dates: August 19, 1989 when The Nature Conservancy organized an on-site volunteer workshop and recruitment meeting which launches the Poplar Creek prairie project, and September 30, 1989 - our first major workday organized by Poplar Creek Prairie Stewards, which included harvesting seed and brush control in the Shoe Factory Road Prairie Nature Preserve.   We selected a date between the two for our 37th year celebration. At this event our "oldest" volunteer was Dave Webb, who began volunteering with PCPS in 1991 (he was a mere youth back then!). What an amazing amount of work has been accomplished since those early days. Above are some pictures from the anniversary celebration which almost didn't happen.

October 4 at Carl Hansen Woods, was our last workday of the season transplanting plugs! Volunteers planted eight flats with four different sedges and one cold-season grass, augmenting growth in our original woodland area around Turtle Pond.

Upper left: Leaders John T (navy blue shirt) and Diana (stripped shirt) direct volunteers as they arrive at the planting site. **Upper right:** Alicia and Jamie work with students planting near the pond. **Lower left:** Volunteers spread out in the woodland planting and watering the new plugs. **Lower right:** After planting in the woodland Sam, Ahmad and Adyan remove tickseed trefoil seeds that have attached themselves to their pant legs while off trail planting. The seeds were saved and will go into a woodland seed mix…a fitting transition from workday transplanting to 100% seed collection.






Interesting Creatures on the Prairie.

Left: Crawfish in the stream by the culvert under the trail at the Carl Hansen site (photo: John Taseff). **Right:** A stinkbug and nymphs on a rattlesnake master plant in the prairie (photo: Ally Zinck).




Seed Processing Party Nov 14, 10am




Note: This is Saturday, not our regularly scheduled Sunday workday!

We reap the rewards of our seed collecting efforts at our annual seed processing party, our chance to marvel at the bounty! Mark your calendar for **Saturday, November 14** and also are **starting time an hour later at 10am**. Our task will be to clean the seeds in preparation for planting and to create seed mixes for the different habitats to be planted.

Every year we enjoy this chance to get together, take stock of our harvest and prepare the seeds for planting. It is quite a sight to see the volume of seed we've spent several months collecting. Details are below.

TIME: The workday begins at **10:00 am** and we'll break for lunch at 12:30. A pizza lunch will be provided. If there's still more seed to process we'll continue working after lunch.

LOCATION: 640 Cosman Rd., Elk Grove Village. The facility is located in Busse Woods, just east of Route 53. Google map: https://goo.gl/maps/wGRkd6Vw2BN2. Look for the red barn and follow the signs to the large building toward the back of the property.

ATTIRE: Wear older clothes that can get dusty. It is best not to wear leggings, sweat pants or fleece which may attract sticky seeds and leaves. Dress in layers; the building is heated, but we may partially open some doors to freshen the air. Bring your own water bottle.

MASKS: We recommend wearing them as protection from all the seed dust we will stir up! Disposable masks will be available.

Please Note: Seed Processing is an official workday and as such any volunteers under age 18 must be accompanied by a parent or guardian.






Seed harvesting on the prairie: **Upper left:** Collecting seed along the trail. **Upper right:** Holly and Bridget gather seed. **Lower left:** Break time in the tall grasses. **Lower right:** Searching for seed among the tall grasses.

A Family Portrait through Coincidence

In August Janet Wukasch took a picture of an interesting insect on a blooming button blazing star (*Liatris aspera*) in the Shoe Factory Road Prairie Nature Preserve. She identified it through iNaturalist as a Snowberry Clearwing (*Hemaris diffinis*). See the picture below left. This unique day-flying moth mimics the appearance of a bumblebee and the hovering flight of a hummingbird. Its mimicry wards off predators, while its rapid hovering (up to 70 beats per second) allows the moth to sip nectar using a long, straw-like proboscis. Adults act as vital daytime pollinators for deep, tubular flowers.

On September 23 at a weekday workday where volunteers were harvesting seed in the Shoe Factory Road Prairie Nature Preserve, Megan Thompson spotted an interesting looking brown caterpillar with a row of black dots. See the picture below right. She identified it as a Snowberry Clearwing. The dots help with camouflage, while the caterpillar may be brown as well as green. When a green caterpillar finishes feeding and is fully grown and ready to pupate, it often undergoes a dramatic color shift to a dark reddish-brown. This color morph helps the caterpillar blend in with woody stems, twigs, and brown leaf litter or mulch on the ground rather than bright green leaves. When Megan announced the identification, Janet, who was leading the workday crew, thought the name sounded familiar. She later checked her iNaturalist log. Megan spotted the juvenile, while Janet saw the adult. Two chance sighting of an intriguing insect in our nature preserve… amazing!




PRAIRIE POOP

A Successful Merch Project. The Poplar Creek Prairie Stewards merchandise has arrived. You can pick up your order from Natalia Taseff at a workday or it was shipped directly to you. A huge thanks to Stacey Shintani for her work on the project: identifying a vendor, creating our temporary website and most importantly taking the varying input from committee members and putting together a desirable and workable selection of merch. We had over 30 orders!   And, lest we forget Katie Shindler who designed the attractive "Follow Me to the Prairie" artwork. Thanks Katie for your design and making us all walking recruitment advertisers for PCPS.

New to the Greeter Crew. Welcome to Jamie Thompson, who is our newest workday Greeter.   Her first day was October 4 and she will be rotating with the other seven PCPS Greeters. Their tasks include greeting volunteers as they circulate the sign-in sheets, welcoming new volunteers, gathering basic information about them, and of course, supplying and setting up snacks at break time. A friendly and outgoing volunteer, you can identify Jamie by her pink hair and the red brimmed hat she often wears.

Back Again. Thanks to Sam, Nick and Preston, all Harper College students, who have been volunteering at our sites as part of the Harper Promise program. They volunteered with us during high school for Harper Promise hours and came back as college students. As part of the Harper Promise program, college students must continue their volunteer commitment. We are pleased that they returned to our Poplar Creek sites.

Never Say Die. Volunteer Kirk Garanflo highlights a Yahoo News story which describes an on-going, century-old experiment in seed survival. After 141 years two species, common mullein (*Verbascum thapsus*) and moth mullein (*Verbascum blattaria*), are still germinating when removed from their buried containers. The latter species (photo below) is a very pretty "weed." What is significant for us is that both species grow at Poplar Creek's Carl R. Hansen Woods! To see the full article from the *American Journal of Botany* check the following PDF: https://bsapubs.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.1002/ajb2.16250. The link to the Yahoo News story about botanist William James Beal's unique seed study where buried bottles filled with seed are dug up every 20 years, see: https://www.yahoo.com/news/science/articles/1879-scientist-buried-bottles-filled-174438630.html .



EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES

To view and register for classes please make sure you are logged into your FPCC volunteer account and have JOINED the Trainings page by clicking on the JOIN button to the right in the banner image. Remember that you must meet the minimum requirements in order to view and register for a training.

Visit our Training Page (https://givepul.se/gwnuba) to find a class that inspires you. Please note that minimum requirements must be met in order to view and register for trainings.

ASTER & GOLDENROD ID
Have you ever puzzled over the identification of asters and goldenrods? Two plant groupings that instill fear in many a botanist's heart, asters and goldenrods can be notoriously difficult to identify. Learn identification tricks that will help you make sense of these colorful Autumn blooming plants.
Available on demand.
This class is presented in a recorded online format and may be viewed at your own pace.
A written transcript of the presentation is included in the class materials.
ACCESS HERE: Aster & Goldenrod ID On-demand Class (https://givepul.se/jtaodt)

CHICAGO WILDERNESS BRUSH PILE BUILDING AND BURNING
Take the first step towards being certified as a Chicago Wilderness Brush Pile Burn Boss*.
In this regionally accepted training, learn how to properly construct, safely ignite, monitor, and secure brush piles as part of restoration projects. Understand the pre- and post-burn communication requirements, become confident in utilizing weather data, supervising others around a brush pile, and making site observations that will inform decisions at workdays. Two field observations are required in addition to the classroom training.

The Chicago Wilderness Brush Pile Building & Burning Class is a training opportunity for experienced volunteers currently working to manage natural areas. 15 hours of reported ecological stewardship service and experience with ecological stewardship and brush pile burning are required for enrollment.

*This course does not certify you to manage or participate in a prescription fire program or crew.
November 21, Sagawau Environmental Learning Center, Lemont
9:30-12:30pm
REGISTER HERE: Brush Pile Building & Burning (https://givepul.se/wa3bo4)

READING THE LANDSCAPE
How do land managers decide how and where to develop and focus ecological restoration projects? This class will show you how to interpret the landscape by looking at historical records, land use, climate, soil, and vegetation clues that will help you understand the ecological health of a site and guide your understanding of how to prioritize restoration work. Topics include an introduction to the Public Land Survey, historical aerial photos, plant succession, and human impact. Try your hand at creating our own stewardship priorities using all the tools you'll be introduced to in this class.
Available on demand.
This class is presented in a recorded online format and may be viewed at your own pace.
ACCESS HERE: Reading the Landscape (https://givepul.se/oj62l1)

ORGANIZED CHAOS
Learn about the evolution of the Forest Preserves' use of fire as a conservation tool to rejuvenate our preserves. Glean insight into the seasonal rhythm of our robust fire program and what a typical burn day is like in the field. Join John McCabe, Director of Resource Management, on the challenges of implementing prescription fire in the second most populated county in the country. John has been utilizing prescribed fire as a land management tool for more than 30 years and is President of the Illinois Prescribed Fire Council.
Available on demand.
This class is presented in a recorded online format and may be viewed at your own pace.
ACCESS HERE: Organized Chaos (https://givepul.se/4jufp7)
On-Demand Class Library

FIRST AID/CPR/AED
National Safety Council training class. Participants will learn to:
* Recognize a medical emergency
* Handle breathing and cardiac emergencies
* Act appropriately and effectively and sustain life until professional help arrives
* Prevent disease transmission
* Identify and care for bleeding, sudden illness and injuries

15 hours of reported volunteer service are required for enrollment. Please check our website for current class availability. Additional classes will be added. All classes run 8am-2pm at our Training Center in Western Springs.
REGISTER HERE: First Aid (https://givepul.se/56zzkp)

Delve into our library of on-demand training and enrichment classes. Visit the "Resources" tab at the Training Page to access. Requirements vary by class. Current classes include:

Aster and Goldenrod ID
Group Leadership
IDOA Herbicide License Study Materials
Keeping the Wolves Away
Management Schedules Demystified*
Managing Invasives*
Mentoring Stewardship Leaders*
Native Seed Training
New Invaders
Organized Chaos
Practical Herbicide*
Reading the Landscape
Soils & Restoration*
Who's Afraid of the Dichotomous Key?*

* a transcript of the presentation is included in the class material
ACCESS ON-DEMAND LIBRARY HERE (https://volunteer-fpdcc.givepulse.com/group/resources/942193)

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