



SUPERIOR LAND PRESERVATION SOCIETY NEWS

SPRING-SUMMER
2013
P.O. BOX 130041
ANN ARBOR, MI
48113-0041

Buying and Eating Locally!



by Michelle Hartmann

When you think of farmland in Superior Township, our first thought is most likely of fields of corn, soybeans or wheat. But within our 36 square mile township there is a hand-full of emerging small-scale food producers. Unlike the GMO farmers who spray 2-4-D and plant roundup ready seed, these farmers are doing things the old fashioned way, organically. They are our townships emerging food activists. They have given up their corporate suits in favor of digging in the dirt. They are forging connections with the land, its plants and animals. In this process they are also creating deep connections with their families and our community.

Take for example, Dick and Diana Dyer of Dyer Family Organic Farm and Dick's Pretty Good Garlic. Both Dick and Diana have multiple advanced degrees in the health care field and nearly dropped out of Grad school in the 70's to pursue their passion of farming and seek the prevention side to health care. In 2009 they gave up their careers and purchased a 40-acre farm in the northeast section of Superior Township. They began growing more than 40 varieties of garlic. You can purchase their garlic through their CSA-Community Supported Agriculture- by buying a share, or at several farmers markets around town.

They were inspired by the essay "The Land Ethic": in a book by Aldo Leopold, "A Sand County Almanac":

"Land is not merely soil, it is the fountain of energy that flows through a circuit of soil, plants and animals."

"We abuse land because we regard it as a commodity belonging to us. When we see land as a community, we begin to use it with respect".

Dave and Susette Steinhauser purchased their land off Joy Road in 1995. Steinhauser Farm is another township farm which raises high quality, pastured raised beef, Berkshire pork, garlic and onions. Like the Dyer farm, one can join through a CSA or at the Ann Arbor Farmers Market.



Then there is Ferris Farms, an 85 acre farm in Superior Township. They believe that every family in America has a right to healthy food and are committed to providing quality, naturally grown, chemical free, fresh picked food to our local community.

Ferris Farm's sustainable, chemical free operation includes a 1-acre-plus vegetable garden, an orchard with peach, pear, apple, cherry and plum trees, 750

see Locally p.3

News from the Chair

By Marion Morris

Another year has gone by since our last newsletter, as we continue working on issues relating to preservation in this wonderful township of ours.

Most of our board members have been involved in this manner since 1991, when we joined with Jack Smiley to form Superior Land Conservancy. We worked on that board until we decided to form a new group, Superior Land Preservation Society, so we could concentrate solely on preservation issues within Superior Township.

One of our recent collaborative efforts has been the preservation of 145 acres next to Schroeter Park, running south to Ford Road. Working with Superior Township officials, Washtenaw County Natural Areas Preservation Program, and the Superior Township Parks Department, 65 acres adjacent to the park will forever be preserved, and 80 acres will be covered by a conservation easement ensuring agricultural use, and will be owned by a local farmer. The monies you have so generously donated will be used for preservation of this property, which will be named in honor of Ellen Elliott Weatherbee, a naturalist whose natural features survey of the township helped identify this property as valuable for preservation.

In early May, my friend Ellen Kurath and I walked a portion of the 65 acres. What a beautiful woods and wetland, with old growth stately trees, wildflowers, and shadbush blossoms emerging! What a gift to ourselves, future generations, and wildlife.

Thank you to all of our supporters for allowing us to be part of such a worthy project!



Colony collapse disorder got you down?

Try some native bees to pollinate your trees and garden



Illustration by John Copley

by Dan Moerman

We all have heard of the catastrophe which has struck the European honeybee (*Apis mellifera*). Many colonies have disappeared or died over the winter; perhaps as many as two thirds of all colonies died this past winter across the US. This disastrous situation is not yet fully understood, although various possible causes have been identified including several types of mites. Pesticides, especially systemic ones (and perhaps in particular the new “neonicotinoid” pesticides which are synthetic versions of nicotine) may also be to blame.

The exact causes of colony collapse disorder are unknown, but the fact of the matter is that there has been a disastrous decline in our preferred pollinator, the European honey bee. What to do?

Did you know that there are approximately 3500 native species of bees in North America? While many of these have suffered from pesticides, they are much less susceptible to other pests, especially mites, since they are “solitary bees,” meaning they don’t use communal hives with queens and worker bees. Females mate with male bees, then find small holes in trees or elsewhere, into which they burrow, and lay eggs, each with a series of larvae, each with its own supply of honey to eat while becoming a full grown bee ready to hatch early the following spring. Perhaps the most famous and well known of these natives is the “orchard mason bee,” *Osmia lignaria*. Generally referred to as orchard bees, these guys (er, gals) are

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blueberry bushes, raspberry bushes, strawberries, a 2,100-square-foot greenhouse, a year round hoop house, eight bee hives and a flock of 128 breeding ewes to produce lamb.



Carola Guenther at the Dixboro Farmers Market

Then there is Agricola. Artisan baker Carola Guenther bakes pretzels, hand made cookies and wonderful deserts. Carola and David Guenther own a 6 acre farm that is home to some 300 + apple trees, with many varieties of heirloom apples. If you want to eat any of Agricola’s homemade items you’ll have to get to the Dixboro Farmers market early before she sells out!

Our Handmade Life, on Vreeland Road, is run by Jason and Julia Gold. They created a modern day homestead to get back to a simple life, and quickly



Jason, Julia and their daughters.

learned that it isn’t all that simple. Jason and Julia are very passionate about family, food and friends. Our Handmade Life Farm concentrates on six areas of food production: vegetables, herbs, animals, fruit, mushrooms, and honey. The Golds grow over 50 varieties of vegetables using organic and biodynamic methods. Their largest crops are heirloom garlic and shallots. They raise pastured chickens for eggs and meat as well

as a small herd of dairy goats for milk, cheese, butter, yogurt, and soap.

Heart of the Hive is another thriving local food producer here in our own backyard. Owned by Randy and Sandy Graichen, both retired, they maintain 20 honeybee hives, and Randy helps manage another 120 hives. They are becoming known by locals for their many varieties of honey, such as Clover, Fireweed, White Sage, Wildflower, Star Thistle, Buckwheat and many others.



Mama Susan with her son Jeremiah at the Dixboro Farmers Market

I am also a big fan of The Mother Loaf, a family of bread bakers specializing in naturally leavened breads made with Superior Township-grown, organic ingredients when possible. The owners are “Mama Susan”, her son Jeremiah, and his wife Stephanie. The breads they bake are some of the very best I’ve ever tasted.

The theory of knowing your farmer and knowing your food is a reality here in Superior Township. The new food activists and growers are our neighbors. They are forging the way in building a community where we really do know our farmers and where our food is coming from. All you have to do is visit our very own Dixboro Farmers Market on any Friday from 3:30-7:30. We hope to see all of you there.



DONATIONS

We thank all the folks who have given so generously to Superior Land Preservation Society during the last year.

Charles and Roberta Anderson

Eric & Pat Appleberry

Cathy Bach and Brian Hazlett

Rosalind and Bob Barnsdale

Tom Berry

Carla Bisaro

John Brinley and Anne Schott

Betty Brower

Anita Burck

Paul and Linda Burger

Tim and Carol Burton

Misty Callies and Bill Secrest

Dr. Carl and Cathy Christensen

Juanita and Jesse Christian

John Copley and Jan Berry

Susan Falcone & Tom McClanahan

Bill & Lisa Ford and The Ford

Foundation

Tom and Cathy Freeman

Glenn Gall

Florence Gasdick

Joellen Gilchrist

Jack and Margaret Goodnoe

Bob Graichen

Ken and Mary Grunow

Rachel Brett Harley

Alice & Rowell Huesmann

Robert & Sue Hughes

Robert & Judy Kelly

Martha Kern-Boprie

Elisabeth Knibbe

Chloe Kozura & family

Ellen Kurath

Kathy Laughlin

Sandi Lopez

Bill McFarlane

Brenda McKinney

Daniel Moerman and Claudine Farrand

Peter and Marion Morris

Virginia Simson Nelson

Ron & Doreen Perry

Morand & Jan Piert

Philip & Kathleen Power

Bruce & Vera Proper

Steven Przybylski & Michelle Deatrick

Harold Rex

Ann Robbins

Steve and Darlene Secrest

Sylvia Taylor

Paul K. and Barbara G. Trojan

Jane and John Van Bolt

Ellen Elliott Weatherbee

Karl and Ann Zinn



OUR MISSION

- To maintain and protect open spaces in Superior Township, Washtenaw County, Michigan. These areas include, but are not limited to, nature sanctuaries, nature preserves, natural areas, many of which contain or contribute to habitat for wildlife and plants.
- To help residents of Superior Township obtain conservation easements on their properties to prevent them from being developed.
- And, overall, to preserve land resources for the benefit of present and future generations.

If you share our goal...

... of preserving the rural character and natural habitat of Superior Township, please become a member

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Great Horned Owl
\$1000 | <input type="checkbox"/> Red-tailed Hawk
\$500 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cooper's Hawk
\$100 | <input type="checkbox"/> Screech Owl
\$50 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Goldfinch
\$25 | <input type="checkbox"/> Other
_____ |

Name _____

Address _____

Please send to SLPS, P.O. Box 130041
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Colony, from p. 2

very efficient pollinators. Females are a bit larger than males, but a bit smaller than the familiar honey bee. They are a shiny black color with a blue sheen, quite fetching to my eye. While these bees do make honey, they only make enough for each larva, so they are not effective honey makers; but they do a fine job of pollinating, particularly native garden species like squash and melon. They are also excellent pollinators of fruit trees: cherries, plums, peaches, and apples. If you have a small orchard of 20 trees, you can get the entire thing pollinated by about 50 bees!

It is quite easy to provide comfortable accommodations for orchard bees. A simple 4 by 6 piece of pine or other softwood (not cedar, and definitely not “treated”), can be drilled with a few dozen holes, about 3/8 inches in diameter, 3 to 5 inches deep, and about a half or 3/4 inches apart. Directions can be found all over the internet; some are quite homely, while others are real works of art, using fancy woods, and cedar roofs. The bees also nest in hollow reeds, and in some plant stems. (They don’t need old hollow trees, like hiving bees do.) Some commercial firms make hollow tubes to fit into simple frames to make nice homes for orchard bees (again, see the internet; I find it hard to believe, but both houses and tubes are available on Amazon). One can also drill holes in natural pine logs; my guess is that this would be the most effective and simplest solution. Drill holes in a spiral around the log so they don’t bump into one another.

During the spring, the female bees find these tubes, lay eggs in them, then deposit a ball of honey; they make the honey by chewing pollen and nectar together adding saliva. They then wall up the egg with a wad of clay (hence, “mason” bees). Then they can lay another egg, with honey and clay. There can be up to 20 or more eggs in a single hole. When one is full, it’s on to the next; a bee might fill a half dozen or even more holes. They lay female eggs toward the back, and males toward the front of the holes. This means that if some predators -- woodpeckers, for example -- eat a few larvae they will get mostly males; one male can fertilize several females, so it’s not a big deal (but it is darned clever; even the woodpeckers could appreciate that).

Orchard bees are easily distinguished from honey bees by their color and size, but primarily by the fact

that they carry pollen on hairs on their bellies, unlike honey bees which carry pollen on their back legs. So, if you want to do something to get our flowers, trees, fruit trees, and vegetable gardens pollinated, consider setting out a few orchard bee houses. The one thing everyone should do is stop, or seriously curtail, the use of pesticides. Early season oil sprays (“Volck oil”) on fruit trees are probably safe (unless they are harboring orchard bees! But they probably aren’t). Any other pesticides, regardless of your intent, will probably end up killing bees.

What the Wild Things Are (or how do you name a group?)

compiled by Marion Morris



- A murmuration of starlings
- A covey of partridge
- A gang of elk
- A pride of lions
- A school of fish
- A siege of herons
- A gaggle of geese (or skein if they’re flying)
- A leap of leopards
- A drift of hogs
- A pod of seals
- A wedge of swans
- A party of jays
- A rafter of turkeys
- A labor of moles
- A trip of goats
- A knot of toads
- A route of wolves
- A dray of squirrels
- A bask of crocodiles
- A skulk of foxes



Illustration by John Copley



Illustration by John Copley

The Beaver - Engineer of the Wild

By Marion Morris

Beaver are now present in Washtenaw County. They are seen along the Rouge River and its tributaries. If allowed to increase, we may see them in Superior Township.

The beaver is a very interesting animal, who played an important role in the early exploration and development of North America. The beaver was like a supply store to the Indians and early settlers. Almost every part was used, from the teeth to the tail; the flesh was very tasty, and the tail was a delicacy. Powdered teeth were used to treat pleurisy, furred skin was used for bed robes and clothing, and the tanned hide was used for dresses, leggings, and thongs. Beaver hair was made into felt cloth, then into hats. At one time, no respectable man about town was seen without a beaver hat.

At times, beaver skins were stable currency for half a continent. Of course, this led to a serious decline in beaver, and in 1920 a very prolonged closed season on beaver hunting was imposed. In the 1930s, a season reopened, with strong regulations that have continued to the present.

The beaver is a rodent, the largest in North America and the second largest in the world, only surpassed by the capybara of South America. An adult beaver weighs from 40 to 70 pounds. The tail is the unique feature of the beaver. It is trowel shaped, flat, and covered with leathery scales. The uses of the tail are many: in swimming, it is a powerful rudder and

propeller; when cutting trees with its gnawing incisors, it is used as a prop and as a platform on which to sit. But perhaps its most known use is as a signaling device, when the beaver brings his tail down hard on the surface of the water with great noise and splash to warn other beaver of danger.

Beaver are colony animals, characterized by the presence of lodges in which they live. The colony consists of two adults, the yearlings (2 to 6 offspring of the previous year) and the kits (2 to 6 offspring of the current year). The offspring stay with the parents for 2 winters before making their own way.

There may be many dams or no dam, depending on the waterway in which they reside. Dams slow down the rush of excess water downstream – behind the dam, the stored water seeps into the ground. Turtles, mink, muskrat, fish, and birds are among the many beneficiaries when a beaver builds a pond.

Beaver are vegetarians, eating roots, twigs, and bark. In Michigan, they really prefer the twigs and bark of aspens (poplar) to anything else. They can take down as many as 200 trees in a year for food, dams, and lodges.



Dodging the Epidemics

By Ellen Kurath

Epidemics have gone through elm and ash trees, along with the native larch and pines that people have planted. Often, scarcely any other kinds of trees, which might have survived, were present.

Many kinds of trees and plants can grow here, but valuable types are slow-growing and not prolific, and may need help from people at first. This article addresses the reasons why diversity in plants is important, and why this diversity is not necessarily automatic and effortless.

Originally, Superior Township had been dense forest with great variety, even though this is near the northern limit of the range for some species. Settlers cleared the land, leaving few trees except in steep or swampy places, or desirable trees along lot boundaries

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Dodging, from p.6

and in some wood lots. As recently as fifty years ago, the Township was largely wide open fields for crops or pasture.

Neglected pasture land filled with whatever blew in and was fast and aggressive. By now, the nuisance plants are well known, and if anything they may prevent more desirable plants from taking hold.

Now there are many trees in the Township, but most are forty years old or less and are mostly the fastest and most prolific species, which has become the set-up for epidemics. Growth is out of balance, with a shortage of seed parents for more diverse and more valuable species, which can be slow to start and slow or infrequent about producing seeds or nuts. This is why some of the more desirable species may need some help to become established. Beech and hickory are slow for a long time while they are growing roots, and the root system makes it so they can only be moved when small. Additionally, they need protection in early growth, because if animals eat the terminal buds it sets back growth severely. Since it is at least 25 years before they bear seeds or nuts for natural propagation, any setback is bad news. Other varieties of valuable trees and shrubs need good soil or other particular conditions to thrive, which is why it takes effort and patience to diversify.

Understandably, when people plant things they want quick results. Widely available nursery varieties are the ones which tolerate transplanting and imperfect soil conditions, and which give fast results. This can produce a concentration of too few varieties that could possibly lead to another epidemic. Sources for extra hardy and less usual trees and plants are fewer than for the most popular stock, and not everything is available every year.

Areas that have been cleared of topsoil pose another problem. An established, healthy, wood lot has diverse trees and plants, and a complex community within the soil: not just earthworms, but many organisms that contribute to the balance of the system. These are complicated and interdependent, and bare soil is a deficient and difficult starting point. It is worth it to work to promote diversity in plantings,

not only for the beauty, but also for the health of the Township's ecosystem.

Here are some recommendations:

Relatively tolerant (but not for bad soil):

Blue Ash (which apparently copes with the borers)

Hackberry

Kentucky Coffee Tree

Black Maple and Red Maple (but not in dry areas)

Pecan

Persimmon (extra hardy only)

Very Small Trees:

Redbud

Viburnum prunifolium

Viburnum lentago

Paw Paw

Slow, and transplant only when small:

Beech (native white)

Shagbark Hickory

Shellbark Hickory

Ironwood

Blue Beech

Others:

Alternate-leaved dogwood is very nice but needs attention for several years if moved.

Copper beech or Rohan or the other fancy forms are European beech, which grows faster than the native beech and can be moved as a larger plant.



Illustration by John Copley



Another Threat from Garlic Mustard!

by Sandi Lopez

We all see mushrooms of one sort or another when we walk in the woods, or in the wild. Those mushrooms have a mycelium attached to them underground. That mycelium is a wonderful and fragile part of the symbiotic root system in nature.

The mycelium of various fungi is essential to the root systems of many of our plants and most of our trees. It recycles carbon, plant and animal waste and nitrogen, promoting the growth of many of our native species. These plants have a mutually beneficial relationship with mycelium, which have long filaments that penetrate the roots of the plants and the soil around the trees, essentially extending the plant's roots.

One of the larger risks facing the mycelia is garlic mustard. By the time many early spring flowers start coming up, the garlic mustard is already growing full tilt. It forms a dense mat that chokes out native species, including baby trees, before they start growing in the spring. Not only does it choke out native plants, it changes the soil biologically (by killing native fungi) and chemically in such a way that it actually can and does kill trees.

Its seed stays viable for up to 5 years or more, and the plant is an expert at putting out seeds. Its stalks can produce up to 300 billion seeds each. Therefore, it is important not to let this nasty little plant keep living in our woods or inadvertently spread the seeds. There is much information available, but not discussed in this brief article, on how to effectively and safely dispose of garlic mustard. You must be careful not to spread it while attempting to kill it.

For a list of references, contact the SLPS.



Illustration
by John
Copley



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