



# The Blue Mounds Area Project

Promoting Ecological Restoration and Stewardship of Native Habitats

Volume 7 Number 2  
Spring 2004

And The 3rd Annual Bur Oak Award Goes To...

Kelly Kearns—  
Concludes BMAP  
Winter Lecture Series

New Edition of Wetland  
Restoration—Handbook  
Now Available

Local Natural History  
References, Part 2

First Things First:  
The Importance of Site  
Preparation, Part 1

The bur oak, a sturdy tree  
with thick corky bark,  
could survive the frequent  
fires of the oak savanna.

It represents both the  
dominant native plant  
community of our region  
and symbolizes persistence  
in the face of adversity.

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Notes from the Annual Meeting

## And The 3rd Annual Bur Oak Award Goes To...

Over 40 people gathered at the Mount Horeb Community Center on March 6th for the BMAP Annual Meeting.

Our featured speaker was Kristin Westad, the Military Ridge Prairie Heritage Area (MRPHA) Project Coordinator. She introduced the MRPHA—40,000 acres of southwest Dane and southeast Iowa Counties rich in high-quality prairie and oak savanna remnants—and presented the reasons for embarking on the project. The valuable plant communities found in the MRPHA provide habitat for a number of endangered species, including the Regal Fritillary Butterfly (*Speyeria idalia*), which is rapidly vanishing throughout its range. The MRPHA, if protected, would also serve as a safe haven for grassland bird species, including Eastern Meadowlarks (*Sturnella magna*) and Upland Sandpipers (*Bartramia longicauda*).

Kristin outlined the goals of the MRPHA project, which include protecting and enhancing the open landscape as wildlife habitat, improving water quality, helping local economies, and bringing non-governmental organizations and governmental resources together to help landowners restore native habitat. She added that we could one day see the reintroduction of Prairie Chickens (*Tympanuchus cupido pinnatus*)!

The benefits of protecting and restoring the MRPHA extend far beyond our local communities. The area includes the headwaters of the Pecatonica River and numerous creeks that feed into the Mississippi River. Kristin pointed out that the MRPHA project will reduce the flow of excess nutrients from farmland into these waterways. Such nutrients eventually reach the Gulf of Mexico and contribute to formation of an oxygen-depleted "dead zone" that extends 8,000 square miles and severely affects the spawning and migration of fish. For

contact Kristin by calling 608-935-2791 x134 or sending an email to [kristin.westad@wi.usda.gov](mailto:kristin.westad@wi.usda.gov).

Following Kristin's presentation, Bob Wernerehl, BMAP ecologist, presented the BMAP's third annual Bur Oak Award for Outstanding Land Stewardship to Mark Mittelstadt, owner of Blue Ox Forestry Service. This award is given to a landowner for excellence in private land stewardship. In line with the goals of the BMAP, the honor is bestowed on those who show leadership and innovation in conservation, sensitivity to the local landscape, and enhancement of the habitat of threatened, endangered, or special concern species, or rare plant communities.



### ...Mark Mittelstadt

pictured with Brenda Gasch and Bob Wernerehl, BMAP ecologist. — Photo by Michael Anderson

Mark is co-owner, with Francisco Rodriguez, of 322 acres of land in Iowa County. Eight rare plant species listed by the State of Wisconsin as endangered, threatened, or special concern are found on their land. Three of the state-endangered plant species are so rare they are found only in a few other locations in the entire state. Despite its remarkable diversity, the site is used primarily

for timber production and crops, and was purchased by Mark and Francisco for this purpose without an awareness of the rare plants existing on the site.

Bob stated, "Since discovering the rare species, Mittelstadt and Rodriguez have paid for extensive plant inventory and restoration work, both of which have helped to maintain the populations of rare plants. As a professional forester, Mr. Mittelstadt planned ongoing and future land management activities so as to preserve or expand the rare plant populations. In addition, the landowners have set aside a portion of the land for a permanent research site for the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources."

"Mark has kept track of flower and seed

# Kelly Kearns, Wisconsin DNR Invasive Species Expert, Concludes BMAP Winter Lecture Series

Paul Kaarakka, BMAP board member

Continuing the BMAP Winter Lecture Series last February, Kelly Kearns, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Plant Conservation Program Manager and invasive species expert, helped a crowd of nearly 50 enthusiastic weed hunters get a better understanding of successful strategies for coping with aggressive plants in their native landscaping projects. The large turnout indicated that people restoring native habitat and gardeners working on a smaller scale often find invasive plants to be a serious problem. Indeed, Kelly stressed that control of invasive species is one of the most serious challenges in creating a successful restoration project.

Kelly started out by defining invasive plants as those that become established and take over. Both

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Because many invasive plants are successful in a wide range of habitats, they can lead to a homogenization of the landscape...

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native and exotic plants can be invasive depending on conditions, but for a variety of reasons exotics tend to be more of a problem. She said that there are about 2366 native plant species in Wisconsin, and about 877 nonnative species. Of this total, 33 to 130 species are considered invasive.

Invasive plants are a problem primarily because they displace native vegetation. In ecological remnants this happens when invasive species such as Garlic Mustard (*Alliaria petiolata*) or Reed Canary Grass (*Phalaris arundinacea*) shade out or otherwise compete with native plants. This can limit tree regeneration in woodlands or endanger rare species in any habitat. In restoration projects, where there may be disturbed ground, aggressive weeds can greatly reduce seed germination and success of desirable plants. When invasive plants displace native vegetation, wildlife habitat is degraded and, in some cases, the loss of native plants can endanger wildlife dependent on those plants for shelter or food. Kelly presented as an example the Karner Blue Butterfly (*Lycaeides melissa samuelis*), whose numbers have been greatly reduced because of the displacement of its food plant, Wild Lupine (*Lupinus perennis*). Because many invasive plants are successful in a wide range of habitats, they can lead

to a homogenization of the landscape and the loss of the beauty associated with plant diversity and patchiness.

There are also socioeconomic effects associated with invasive plants, such as making some areas impassable for hunting and hiking, or ruining waterways for fishing and boating. This can decrease tourism in affected areas. If invasive plants limit tree regeneration then forest woodlot production can be reduced, or pastures may be taken over by plants which are unpalatable or toxic to livestock. Some invasive species can cause health problems in humans.

Our speaker urged us not to be discouraged

though, because often there are control strategies that will work. One key factor is knowing what is growing on your land –and on the borders of your land–and catching an invasion while there are only a few plants to cope with. In situations with established populations of invasives, Kelly recommended concentrating your first control efforts

in those areas that are least affected, keeping the invasion at bay as best you can. A second key factor is recognizing the target plants and knowing the vulnerabilities of those plants. Invasives are susceptible to different control methods at different times during their lifecycle and it is important to exploit those vulnerabilities in order to avoid wasting time, money, and effort. There are a number of good sources of information about control strategies for individual species; a few of these sources are listed at the end of this article.

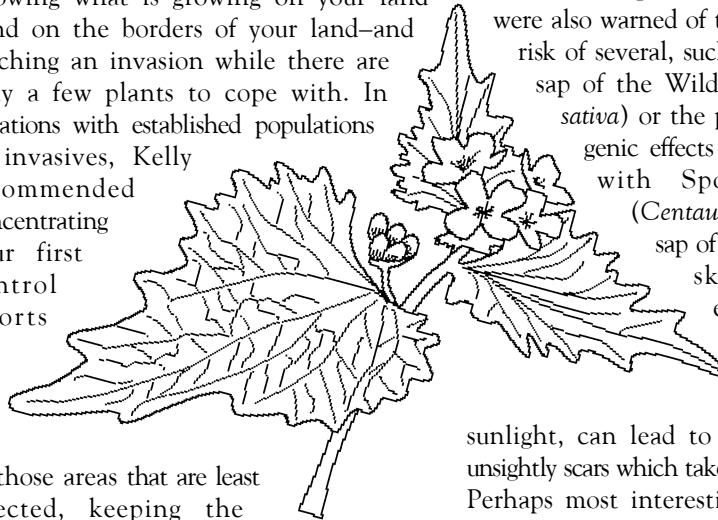
Kelly outlined four general categories of control methods:

1. Manual: cut, pull, girdle, or graze selected plants.
2. Mechanical: mow, plow, or scrape affected areas.
3. Chemical: treat areas or individual plants with foliar, basal bark, or cut stump herbicide. Burning, and perhaps flooding, are also included in this category.
4. Biological: use natural predators or diseases to reduce a population of invasive plants.

These techniques are often used in combination and at different times of the year depending on the plant to be controlled.

The lion's share of Kelly's program, though, featured slides of a rogues' gallery of invasive plants in woodlands, grasslands and wetlands. She showed us nearly thirty common problem plants and discussed control strategies for many of them. We were also warned of the potential health risk of several, such as the phototoxic sap of the Wild Parsnip (*Pastinaca sativa*) or the potentially carcinogenic effects of repeated contact with Spotted Knapweed (*Centaurea maculosa*). The sap of Wild Parsnip causes skin to become especially sensitized to ultraviolet light and, when

exposed to sunlight, can lead to painful burns and unsightly scars which take a long time to heal. Perhaps most interesting—and depressing—were the 15 or so newly or nearly arrived plants which may be problems in Wisconsin in the near future. These potential invaders included plants like Kudzu (*Pueraria montana*), which we might have heard of but never imagined would show up here. Others, such as Giant Hogweed (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*) are related to our indigenous plants; in this case, Cow Parsnip (*Heracleum maximum*). Giant Hogweed can grow over 15 feet tall with leaves over 5 feet wide! Quite a curiosity, except that it is very (cont. page 5)



# Local Natural History References, Part 2

Bob Wernerehl, BMAP ecologist

I am often asked by landowners what the best books and references are for identifying plants. There are plenty of choices out there, and this is somewhat a matter of taste, but I think the following suggestions offer a time-tested, efficient, and cost-effective method for basic identification. When purchasing, please remember the small local bookstores that make up an important part of small-town life. Our long-time partner is Prairie Bookshop in Mount Horeb, where owner John Stowe provides space for a BMAP display table.



<http://wisplants.uwsp.edu/>. Merel Black has done it again. After creating one of the most useful websites for regional flora, for the Wisconsin State Herbarium at UW-Madison, a site used by botanists all over the Upper Midwest, she has created yet another gem for the botany department at UW-Stevens Point. Former BMAP board member and 2003 Bur Oak Award winner, Merel Black, brings this site to life by providing range maps of every plant found in the state as well as photos for most plants and drawings for grasses. One can search for a plant by common name as well as scientific name. When trying to identify a mystery plant, the range maps are extremely helpful, displaying immediately whether your first guess for a species is way out of range or not, and, to a certain extent, how common the plant is. If your first guess turns out to be wrong, the "Identification Guides" back at the home page could be quite helpful. Or you can click on the link for the plant family, often the best start for a second guess, where all the other members are illustrated with thumbnail images. The identification guides are by color. Alternatively, there is an ingenious guide by plant characteristics, essentially an electronic key, all well illustrated and easy to use. I tried finding ditch stonewort, an odd but common plant in the Saxifrage family, using its key characters

such as petal number and leaf type, and it worked fairly well.

This site has a number of improvements over the previous website created by Ms. Black, many already mentioned above. The page for each species begins with a full explanation of the scientific name, a good way to learn about this important subject. Next comes a line for status, indicating whether the plant is native, introduced, endangered or threatened. Following this is a description of the plant and flower, such as color, petal number, height of plant and flowering period, followed by a number of links. I tried several links and found them all useful. There are Google search links, both for images and for information. One click and a new page opens with a search already done for that specific species. On the page for multiflora rose, I clicked on Google search for information and the best pages dealing with this nasty invasive species were immediately displayed.

**Newcomb's Wildflower Guide, 1997**, Laurence Newcomb, published by Little, Brown and Company, available in paperback or hardcover. This book covers the entire northeastern United States and adjoining Canada and depicts 1375 species of wildflowers, shrubs and vines. An asterisk is used to indicate those plants not native to the region.



In my opinion this is the best all around local guide to plants smaller than trees. It is easy to carry in the field. All plants are identified using illustrations, not photographs. In most cases illustrations are more useful for plant and bird identification. It has a very interesting method by which novice botanists can identify several simple characteristics of a plant and use a key to arrive at or near the page where that plant is found. Newcomb's Guide groups plants that look very similar together on one page, rather than the usual arrangement of grouping by plant family or petal color and time of year of flowering.

**Spring Flora of Wisconsin, 4th edition, 1976**, Olive S. Thomson, published by University of Wisconsin Press. This book covers all of the plants in Wisconsin that flower before June 15 and includes trees, shrubs, vines and wildflowers, but does not include non-flowering plants such as ferns. The text, in most cases, indicates whether a plant is not native to the state.

This book is inexpensive, light and easy to carry in the field, but is rather technical for the amateur and uses many scientific terms. Other wildflower books do not cover all the species in this state, so this book works well as a secondary reference work. Harriet Irwin, a veteran naturalist, former UW-Baraboo biology instructor and fellow BMAP member, says that when venturing out in the spring, she carries the same two books as I do, "Newcomb's" and "Spring Flora."

**Wildflowers and Weeds, 1992**, Booth Courtenay and James H. Zimmerman, published by Van Nostrand Reinhold. This book covers wildflowers and a few small shrubs in a more narrow geographic range, closer to Wisconsin, than Newcomb's guide. It is entirely photo-illustrated. The flowers are grouped by plant family and groups of similar plant families. A key to these families and groups is provided in the front. There is no indication of native or nonnative status.

This book has been out of print for some time. However it isn't uncommon to see one available in a used bookstore or at a friend's house. Many amateurs in Wisconsin have used "Wildflowers and Weeds" for years. Both authors worked primarily in Wisconsin, which explains the excellent coverage here. The short text for each plant discusses blooming time, plant height, flower size, and habitat where the species is likely to be found.

Remember, it is fairly easy to misidentify species based on books. Plants are highly variable. To a botanist, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, and cauliflower are all the same species! Patience and some help from others are often required, but these references will really help. 🌿

*Editor's note:* This is part 2 of a three-part article. The first part, printed in the Winter 2004 BMAP Newsletter, covered birds. Part 3 will cover additional references on wildflowers, as well as trees and shrubs.

# First Things First: The Importance of Site Preparation, Part 1

Michael Anderson

The most common reason why your newly seeded prairie may fail is inadequate site preparation. Site preparation refers to preparing the soil prior to planting and generally consists of two components: eliminating weeds and creating a quality seedbed. Never skimp on site preparation unless you want to grow weeds. This article discusses the weed control aspects of site preparation. Seedbed preparation will be covered in the next newsletter.

Eliminating weeds before planting is important because they compete with prairie seedlings for sunlight, water, nutrients, and space, thereby slowing or stopping the growth of the flowers and grasses you paid good money for and worked so hard to plant. Site preparation weed control relies on either herbicide (the no-till method), tilling the soil (the bare soil method), or a combination of these methods (the combination method).

If your site has a heavy thatch layer it is helpful to start with a burn regardless of which site preparation method you're using. In addition to removing the thatch, which intercepts and wastes herbicide and makes it difficult to till the soil, a burn also destroys weed seeds and weakens or kills live weeds. Mowing can substitute for a burn, although it is usually not as effective unless the clippings are removed.

If you're using the no-till method, allow the vegetation to regrow to three to five inches after burning or mowing and then apply the herbicide. In any case, make sure to spray before any weeds can set seeds. Reapply the herbicide each time the field greens up, probably two or three more times during the growing season, again making sure that no weeds set any seeds.

A herbicide mixture of glyphosate (e.g., Roundup), which is nonselective, and 2,4-D, which targets broadleaf weeds, is commonly used and gives better control than either herbicide alone. Use of any herbicide involves risk to the applicator and to nontarget species. Take proper precautions, know what you're doing, and follow all label directions.

If you're using the bare soil method, you will likely need to till the soil for an

entire growing season, maybe longer if your site is especially weedy. If possible, begin by fall plowing or disking about six inches deep the year before you want to plant. This will increase the mortality of many perennial species because their roots will be exposed to cold and desiccating conditions during the winter. Fall plowing and the bare soil approach are not recommended for erosion prone sites.

The following spring, till the soil to about four or five inches deep after the site greens up, but before any weeds can set seeds. Continue tilling at two- to three-week

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**Never skimp on site preparation unless you want to grow weeds.**

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intervals throughout the growing season. The tillage depth may be reduced to one to two inches once the perennial weeds are under control. A shallower tillage depth reduces the number of germinating weed seeds, but still kills the recently germinated weeds. Be diligent—too long of an interval between tilling may increase the density of rhizomatous perennials, such as quack grass, because each rhizome fragment has the potential to grow into a plant.

I often combine the no-till and bare soil methods. Typically, one or two herbicide applications are used to start the process and to provide effective control of perennial weeds, which can be difficult to eliminate by only tilling. Once the perennial weeds are under control, the remainder of the site preparation is done by shallow tillage to exhaust the weed seed bank, as outlined above. If perennial weeds are observed during the tillage process they can be spot-sprayed with a herbicide.

Another useful site preparation method is smothering, although it is most useful for small sites. Smothering involves covering the vegetation you wish to eliminate with a thick layer of mulch, black plastic, carpet, or newspaper (at least 15 layers thick, securely anchored). Leave the material in place for a full growing season.

Remember, never skimp on site preparation unless your goal is to grow weeds. You must control the weeds before you plant or they will control your planting. 

*Michael Anderson is the owner of BioLogic Environmental Consulting and a former BMAP board member.*

## Thank You New and Renewing Members and Donors

Member Changes and Donations Since the Last Newsletter

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(*burr oak cont. from page 1...*) species and noted how they reacted to each management practice," Bob continued. "He has hosted a half dozen workshops where other landowners and professionals have learned about the site and the management practices in place. He restored 15 acres of crop land to prairie, making extensive use of locally collected seed, and has conducted nearly a dozen prescribed burns to revive native wetlands and woodlands. Populations of Cream Gentian, a state-threatened species, have skyrocketed with the burns, and a state-endangered species has flowered and set seed with much greater vigor than ever before."

The BMAP's annual Bur Oak Award is generally given to a landowner whose volunteer activities off their own land are also remarkable in some way. Bob stated, "Through his work in forestry Mark has found several new locations for listed plant species and alerted other botanists to these sites for further inventory and confirmation. He has pointed out rare plants to landowners who then have taken measures to preserve or enhance their habitat. In addition, Mark has volunteered

countless hours at Deer Valley Golf Course near Barneveld, home to v a l u a b l e , high-quality prairie remnants, working with the manager to keep him in touch with interested management groups such as The Nature Conservancy and the Military Ridge Prairie Heritage Area, conducting burns on the property, and monitoring populations of the state-threatened Tuberous Indian Plantain." Mark is also a founding board member and active volunteer with the Driftless Area Land Conservancy, a non-profit land trust for southwest Wisconsin, and has donated p r o f e s s i o n a l services to The Nature Conservancy, setting up timber sales to help remove trees from prairie sites.

Accepting the award, Mark encouraged landowners to always be on the lookout for rare plants on their land. "When we purchased this parcel we had no idea there were rare plants there. It seemed like a forgotten and neglected property. But it is often in the most remote locations, on the poorest piece of soil, that these plants are found." Thank you Mark for caring for the land and plants and animals that depend on it. 🌿

(*invasives cont. from page 2...*) aggressive and can grow very densely, effectively shading out everything in its path. Like the Wild Parsnip, Giant Hogweed has phototoxic sap.

A number of good questions followed Kelly's presentation. One listener asked whether exotics adapt to new habitats, and Kelly gave the example of Garlic Mustard, which seemed to be dormant here for many years and then suddenly spread much more quickly and aggressively. Another questioner raised the issue of invasive species being sold at garden centers as ornamentals. Kelly responded that it was true, but that they were trying to avoid a battle with the nursery industry and instead are meeting with industry representatives to try and find some common ground. Several other questions focused on research and development of new biological controls and Kelly related that there might be some new controls for Garlic Mustard and Buckthorn (*Rhamnus cathartica* and *Rhamnus frangula*) within the next several years.

It was a pleasant and informative evening and we thank Kelly Kearns for taking the time and energy to come out and speak with us. She has also generously allowed us to put her slides on the BMAP website; you can view them at <http://www.bluemounds.org/invasives/>.

The following web sites have excellent information on specific species and extensive collections of links to get you hooked up with other information sources:

<http://www.ipaw.org/> - Invasive Plants Association of Wisconsin (IPAW). IPAW also runs an email discussion list focusing on invasive species control, which you can join through their web site.

<http://www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/land/er/invasive/> - Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources website listing invasive species.

<http://plants.usda.gov/> - United States Department of Agriculture website. 🌿

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## New Edition of Wetland Restoration Handbook Now Available

*Paul Kaarakka, BMAP board member*

**Wetland Restoration Handbook for Wisconsin Landowners, 2nd edition, 2004, Alice L. Thompson and Charles S. Luthin, published by the Bureau of Integrated Science Services, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources.** The Wisconsin DNR site describes the handbook this way: "This new edition of the Wetland Restoration Handbook, published by the Wisconsin DNR, continues to encourage responsible and effective restoration of wetlands. The authors once again present the fundamentals of wetland restoration in a fun and exciting way. Just as in the first edition, colorful quotes and interesting side-bars provide insight into all aspects of the field. New pictures, photos and chapters were added to the second edition, as well as an expanded reference section highlighting top web sites to visit."

The book has chapters on a wide variety of topics from "Getting to Know Your Wetland" to invasive species management and dealing with regulations. There is even a chapter on wild rice community restoration! The chapters which lay out the process involved in executing a successful restoration (assessment, planning, implementation and monitoring) have value not just for people considering a wetland restoration but for other kinds of restoration projects as well. Best of all, this 154-page book is free! It can be downloaded from the DNR website: <http://www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/water/fhp/wetlands/resman.shtml>. You can also order a printed copy of the handbook online as "Miscellaneous/Other Publication #SS-989 2004." using the link provided on the DNR website. To order a hard copy by phone, call Martin Griffin at the DNR at 608-226-0842. 🌿

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Correction: In our Winter 2004 newsletter, we erroneously stated The Prairie Enthusiasts recently purchased a conservation easement in Pleasant Valley Conservancy. They are actually in the process of purchasing an easement in Pleasant Valley, 230 acres of oak woodland/savanna, maple woods, wet meadows, and prairie plantings owned by Ken Wade and Pat Trochlell.

<http://www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/water/fhp/wetlands/resman.shtml>.

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## Board Meeting Schedule

Your voice is important. This is your organization and we value your input.  
Please attend a board meeting.

**Next meeting: June 1**

Meetings begin at 6:30 PM and end at approximately 8:30 PM.

They're held at the Evangelical Lutheran Church,  
315 East Main Street in downtown Mt. Horeb, a few blocks east  
of the downtown stop light. The front door is handicap accessible.

## Calendar of Events

The BMAP has no lectures or workshops scheduled for the summer...  
check our summer newsletter for upcoming events.

**June 13, 2004**

The Prairie Enthusiasts are sponsoring a field trip to Mark Mittelstadt's property.  
Mark is this year's BMAP Bur Oak Award winner.

See what makes this property special.

Time: 9:00AM - 3:00PM. Bring a lunch and footwear for crossing a 15" deep river.

Contact: Mark Mittelstadt at (608) 935-3241 for information.

Directions: From Rewey (10 miles north of Platteville) drive east on Hwy A for  
2 miles, left (north) on Cook-McFall Rd for 3/4 mile, right on a dead-end lane.

**August 8-12, 2004**

19th North American Prairie Conference at UW-Madison.

For information visit [www.napc2004.org](http://www.napc2004.org).

## Helping Landowners Improve the Ecological Health of Their Land

- **Prairie and Savanna Restoration**
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*With the end of the spring  
burning season, now is a  
great time to plan your burns  
for fall and next spring!*



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## Our Mission:

The Blue Mounds Area Project is a community-based organization that seeks to inspire, inform and empower private landowners in the Southwestern Wisconsin region to enjoy, protect and restore native biodiversity and ecosystem health.

## Our Objectives:

- 1) Promote understanding, appreciation and conservation of native woodlands, prairies, wetlands and savannas and their special species in an economically viable manner, through community outreach programs and private contacts.
- 2) Act as a clearing house for information from people and organizations involved in preserving native biodiversity including information about plant, animal and habitat identification, management, restoration, seed sources, native plant nurseries and invasive, nonnative species.
- 3) Encourage cooperative, volunteer restoration and management activities.
- 4) Identify public and private land use changes that may affect ecosystem health and promote community-based stewardship of the unique natural heritage of the Blue Mounds and the Southwestern region of Wisconsin.

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The Blue Mounds Area Project Newsletter is published quarterly. We welcome your comments, submissions, and advertisements. Send them to: Editor, Blue Mounds Area Project, PO Box 332, Mount Horeb, WI 53572.

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If you would like to be a member of the BMAP Board please contact Carroll Schaal at (608) 437-6247 or send an e-mail to [schaal@mhtc.net](mailto:schaal@mhtc.net)

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*\*\*All contributions are tax-deductible to the fullest extent of the law.\*\**

Make check payable and return to: BLUE MOUNDS AREA PROJECT, PO BOX 332, MT. HOREB, WI 53572



“When one tugs at  
a single thing in nature,  
he finds it attached  
to the rest of  
the world”

— John Muir



*The Blue Mounds Area Project*

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