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BMAP
BLUE MOUNDS AREA PROJECT

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Conservation and Community. Together.



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Outreach Ecologist's Updates

Sam Anderson

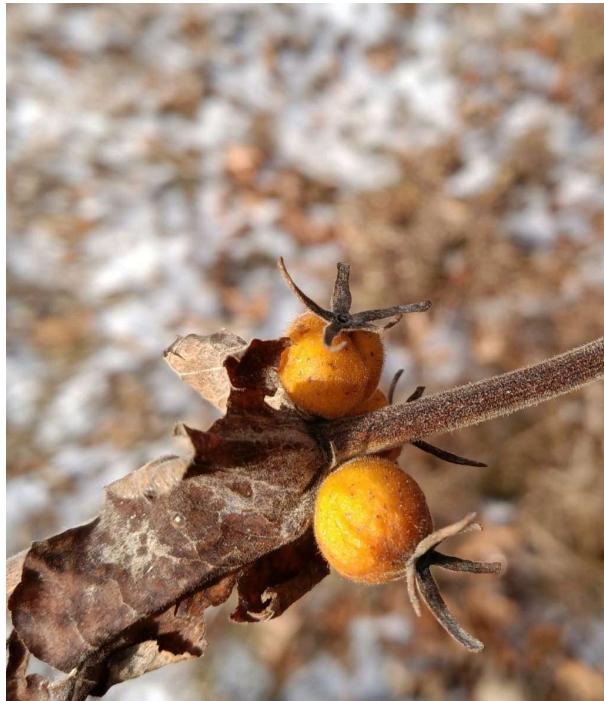
Hello BMAP!

I hope you all have had a safe and happy holiday season! As we move past the winter solstice, we enter into the heart of Wisconsin winters. In February, the BMAP community will once again meet to start our Winter Conversation series, while several other community activities will keep you busy until spring.

Over the next couple of months, I will be updating and revising BMAP materials to better meet member goals and restoration objectives. Don't hesitate to reach out to me if you have any questions about restoration practices, species of interest, restoration contractors, or cost-share programs.

The new year is also an excellent reminder to update your [Annual Membership](#). Through member dues, BMAP can continue to advance land conservation in southern Wisconsin, improve ecosystem diversity and function, and connect with like-minded people passionate about our region. You can also support BMAP by involving family, friends, and neighbors interested in land stewardship. [Encourage them to enroll as new members, sign up for a site visit](#), and join our community.

I will start formally scheduling 2025 BMAP Site Visits beginning in late February, but I'm available to BMAP members throughout the year! If you have a restoration or land management question, reach out to me directly at ecologist@bluemounds.org. There is



Winter fruit of *Horse Gentian* - *Triosteum aurantiacum* (Sam Anderson)

If you have appreciated any of our summer Site Visits, Property Tours, or Walks with a Naturalist, consider an additional [donation to BMAP](#). Donations allow us to continue to offer the events and support BMAP members through my work as the Outreach Ecologist.

Happy Holidays, and Happy New Year!

-Sam

Upcoming BMAP Events



Photo by Brooke Lewis

BMAP 2025 Winter Lecture Series

Look ahead to 2025, when we will be meeting to hear from regional scientists and land stewards about various aspects of local ecology and restoration

Thursday, February 6
Restoration at the former Badgerland Munitions Property
Sauk Prairie Conservation Alliance

Hear from a representative of the Sauk Prairie Conservation Alliance about their efforts in the former Badger Army Ammunition Plant, including management goals, progress, and highlights.

Thursday, February 20
Coyotes in Our Grasslands
Carl Anderson

Learn about coyotes' behavior and impacts on grassland communities in southern Wisconsin. Gain a better perspective on the importance and complexity of Wisconsin's most abundant wild canine.

Thursday, March 6
Garlic Mustard: Natural History & Management
Greg Jones - BMAP President
Sam Anderson - BMAP Outreach Ecologist

Here about the natural history and the biology behind one of Wisconsin's most persistent invasive species. Learn about on-the-ground experiences and techniques in managing and controlling Garlic Mustard in southern Wisconsin forests.

Other SW Wisconsin Events & Resources



Photo by Brooke Lewis

Know of a local event that might be of interest to BMAP Members? Send the information to ecologist@bluemounds.org

Dane County Parks: Classes, Workdays, and Seed Processing

Dane County Parks does a great job of bringing community together around public lands, including offering various classes, workdays to practice skills, and hands-on packaging of native prairie seed.

TPE Workdays and Events

The Prairie Enthusiasts also offer regular opportunities to work on restoration projects throughout the region. If you'd like some hands-on experience with knowledgeable stewards, TPE is a great group!

Ice Age Trail Alliance Workdays and Events

The Ice Age Trail Alliance puts together large volunteer opportunities to work on prairie and woodland restoration, primarily in central Wisconsin.

NATURALIST'S NOTEBOOK

Winter Land Management Tips



Photo Credit: Sam Anderson; all photos are ongoing restoration at the [Springfield Hill Natural Resource Area](#)

While the growing season is a great time of year to reintroduce fire, address non-native species, and spend free time outside, the winter season can be just as important to improving habitat and meeting your stewardship goals. Since I regularly get questions on how to handle brush work, I thought I'd provide a bit of an overview.

Brush Work

There's a reason why lumberjacks historically did their work in the winter. Cutting brush and trees is heavy, physical work. Managing woody species in the winter has the benefit of avoiding insects, avoiding dense underbrush, and avoiding prohibitively hot temperatures. You are also less likely to damage and degrade the soil and desirable understory plants with your manual labor in the winter. Plus, burning brush piles can keep you warm even on the coldest January days!

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Making and Burning Brush Piles

Piling and burning brush is an artform. When choosing a location, know that your pile will take years to degrade if unburned or will sterilize the soil and leave a scar for the next 2-3 years. On steeper slopes, I prefer to girdle an unwanted tree to prevent my pile from rolling down the hill. Just girdle the tree, apply your herbicide of choice, and begin stacking.



To construct a pile that burns well, stack your brush like matches in a matchbox. The more parallel the branches are, the more compact your pile will be. I typically make my piles ~6-8ft in diameter, depending on the vegetation I am removing. Every once in a while, throw a larger stump or log on top of the pile to compress it more. I usually stop once my pile is 5-6ft tall



Space your piles evenly

Hauling brush is physical work, so you may find yourself constructing multiple piles for large jobs. I typically clear an area ~20-30 yards in diameter, then begin making new piles. You end up with more, smaller burn scars, which seem to heal a bit faster than larger piles.



Burning Brush Piles

Most contractors will burn piles as they work, but occasionally, piles will be left for the end of the season (drier fuel) or for habitat purposes. Starting green brush piles requires more fuel, but it can make winter work more pleasant. As with all burning, check with the local sheriff to make sure you are not violating a burn ban. Only burn in conditions where wind

easier. Brush piles can sometimes take several days to completely burn out, so checking on piles throughout the weekend or extinguishing them with snow are good courses of action.



Applying Herbicide

Cut stump applications of herbicide can still be done in sub-zero temperatures, but there are some considerations you should be aware of.

- 1) Cut stump treatments are best if applied within 1 hour of cutting
- 2) [A Forestry Oil](#) should be used as a vector for herbicides. Any water-based herbicide will freeze/break your equipment and will not be taken up by the stump. Diesel fuel can work in a pinch. Some herbicides have both water and herbicide soluble forms, so make sure that the formulation for any herbicides that you add is for oil. I like using the [Renz Weed Science](#) Datasheets as a good starting place.
- 3) Using a dye in your herbicide makes keeping track of treated stumps much easier, especially in snow
- 4) If you don't treat your stumps in the winter, you will have to wait until mid-growing season to foliar spray the resprouts.
- 5) If there is snow, cut stumps as close as you can to the ground. Otherwise, you end up with a hillside of 6in tall stumps. If snow is really deep, I've purposefully left stumps ~18in high so i can easily cut again after snowmelt.

Surveying Property

If manual labor isn't a high priority for you, taking stock of your property is an excellent winter activity. UW Extension has abundant resources to [Learn About Your Land](#). The understory is easier to navigate, it is easier to see topography or large trees. These walks can help you take stock of your progress, plan next steps, and establish a timeline for

Recording Progress

Adam Savage (Mythbusters) said “the difference between screwing around and science is writing it down.” Keeping track of the time, money, resources, and partners involved in restoration can get complicated, especially if you have been working on your property for years. Annual recording of inputs and outputs lets you reflect on your management progress, while accurately estimating future costs. Winter is also a great time to research what types of [partnerships and programs](#) apply to your property and land ethic. Many private contractors have exceedingly busy schedules, so being able to accurately describe the work you need done and giving them ample notice can improve your chances of working into their schedules.

Tools Worth Mentioning

We all have tool preferences, but some tools are especially helpful if you are diving into brush work. I have no strong opinions, but it is generally easier to find [Stihl service providers](#) in the greater Madison area.

Brushcutters

Harness Brushcutters are handy if you have several acres of woodland or grassland to manage. The grass blades and saw blades allow you to tackle different types of invasive species, making it a versatile, year-round tool. Brush cutters are also relatively easy to transport (8-20lbs usually), meaning you can cover lots of ground quickly without having to stoop or kneel like you would with hand tools or chainsaws. [Stihl](#), [Husqvarna](#), and other makers all have models available for various prices, and battery powered models are increasingly available. As you get comfortable with these tools, you can even cut down brush up to ~6in in diameter. If I were to have one machine for a restoration project, it would be a reliable brush cutter.

Chainsaws

There are lots of opinions about chainsaws, but they are fantastic tools for clearing large brush and trees. If you are considering chainsaws, know that many makers have ["home" and "professional" models](#) of saws. Unless you plan on running your saw for several hours, are cutting many large trees, and working for months on end, a "home" model of saw will fit your needs. Most restoration work can be done with an 18in bar, unless you have several, large trees than need cutting.

If you've every used someone else's chainsaw, you'll understand how every chainsaw has a 'trick' to getting it started. [Battery powered saws](#) are a great option if you don't want to struggle to start your saw. Battery life, especially in the cold, is typically limited to about 3 hours of worktime, so plan accordingly.

available for landowners. Even if you have used saws for years, classes always have new information and offer great opportunities to pick up additional skills. Chainsaw chaps and protection for your eyes, ears, and head are the bare minimum for chainsaw work. Lastly, try and work with other people while sawing. At a bare minimum, inform someone else when you leave to work, where you are working, and when you will be back.

Snippers

Most nonnative woody species have smaller suckers that you will miss with larger blades. Having a pair of snips on your person allows you to quickly take care of stragglers. Unabashed, [Felco](#) makes great durable snips that are easy to use and sharpen, with a high-quality spring.

Hand Sprayers

Small, portable sprayers (~1gal) are easier to move as you work, allow for precision application of herbicide, and allow you to mix small batches of herbicide as you go. Generally, models with high quality gaskets and metal nozzles perform better and last longer in the cold. If you are using bark oil, know that sprayers will get gunky over time. It's just the nature of the beast. I've never used a [Buckthorn Blaster](#), but I imagine you could use these with a bark oil herbicide throughout the winter for smaller jobs.

Conclusion

Winter is my favorite season for restoration work. Clearing brush is hard, but the results are immediate and extremely satisfying. Every project and invasive species is different, so don't hesitate to reach out to the [BMAP Ecologist](#) if you have specific questions. Happy winter, and stay safe!

Make a donation

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.

Thanks to all our members for your support!

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