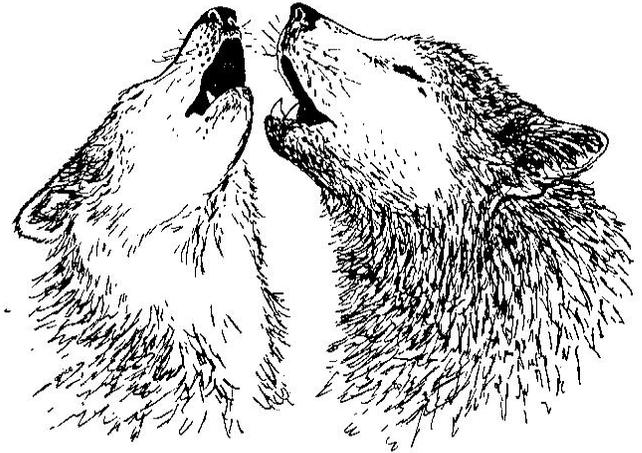


# Osborne Oracle



Spring 2024

Clayton County Conservation

Vol. 47 No.1

## Thoughts On Being Green by Jenna K. Pollock, Executive Director

For as long as I can remember, my favorite color has been green. Grass green. John Deere green. Emerald Isle green. The lush color signifies a living, vibrant thing.

While I've always loved green, I've struggled with the varied references to labeling something "green" and the vast connotations that are applied to the color as an adjective or even a verb.

Labeling a young professional as "green" implies that they have a lot to learn. They're fresh, and just starting out in the industry. "Green" as in new to experiences or perhaps inexperienced.

Labeling someone "green" seems to carry a slightly negative connotation. The label is often offered up as an excuse for their actions or negatively referencing them as "green as grass," highlighting the persons inexperience and naivety. Rarely is it used to reference the opportunity to help shape, guide and mold a young professional for the better.

"Green with envy" is an idiom often used to explain an extreme desire for coveting someone else's

material possessions or position. It implies jealousy for another person. It's no surprise that in the Wizard of Oz, the witch was green-skinned, and that imagery has transferred to our ideas of all witches. In the Wizard of Oz the witch covets what Dorothy has- the shoes!



Green-skinned witches seems to carry another meaning as well that isn't quite as negative. The green-faced images go back several centuries and symbolize the close connection to nature the people, in this case witches, are viewed as healers. More precisely natural healers, closely connected with nature and the elements nature provides that offers healing.

Ironically, while green skin depicts witches for their connection to mother earth and wellness, the phrase "green under the gills" implies illness in others. A rosy complexion implies good health and a green complexion illness, especially pertaining to upset

stomachs. That English connotation has been around since the 1300s.

*Continued on page 2...*

---

## Thoughts On Being Green ...continued from page 1

---

There are certainly positive references to green as well. When things start “greening up” it implies a prosperous future. As cover crops take root in crop fields, it’s reassuring coverage to prevent soil erosion caused by wind and rain and simultaneously serving to capture nutrients that would otherwise be depleted from soils.

Cattle have been referenced as “green” when they enter the ring in a sale barn. In that instance, they are usually considered green if they have a lower body condition score, lighter, young cattle, and at a stage where they’re going to really start putting on mass with the right nutrition regimen. That usually carries a positive connotation and higher price, but it does vary depending on a buyer’s preference.

“Going green” is a way of life that aims to reduce the amount of harm imposed on the natural environment, to conserve resources, and perpetuate a future. “Green practices” are far-reaching and varied in terms of the variety of ways to lessen a carbon imprint, reduce energy consumption, reduce waste, and measures aimed at protecting the environment.

Hiring a “green employee” is identifying intrinsic skills within a person to help reduce a company’s impact on the environment. That would involve selecting

an employee that embodies the mindset to reduce waste, improve efficiencies and effectiveness to the benefit of the natural environment.

Perhaps we’re all a little confused as to whether “green” is meant to be positive or negative. As we stroll into spring and things start “greening up” perhaps it’s GO time, as “green means go.” Think of what “being green” means and what “going green” would imply for the future. Perhaps the adjective can be the proverbial scale by which we measure our actions, both positive and negative.

One thing is for sure: when we visit a greenspace, we want to see *green*. When that imagery gets sullied by an old paint can embedded in a streambank, or an old bottle of Windex tossed carelessly in a ditch, some of us start to see red.

One of the simplest ways for us to “go green” is to simply get the trash where it needs to go. We’ll be hosting a **household hazardous waste collection day** to help you take care of that old can of...something that’s been sitting in your basement for decades.

Here’s to spring cleaning!

### Household Hazardous Waste Collection Day

Saturday, April 13th (9AM - Noon)  
Appointments Required  
Osborne Nature Center

The Household Hazardous Waste Collection Day is available to Clayton County residents. This the perfect time to start your spring cleaning and properly dispose of hazardous household materials!

Call 1-877-982-4288 to determine if the materials you want to get rid of are acceptable and set your appointment.



# Clayton County Conservation Board's Upcoming Events & Programs



## **Motor Motor 5K/10K Trail Runs**

*Registrations required*

*Saturday, March 16th*

*Motor Mill Historic Site*

off that winter malaise with a run through rugged hills, woods, and prairies surrounding the Motor Mill Historic Site! Proceeds will go towards the Pony Hollow Trail extension to connect the north end of the trail to Elkader.

## **DIY Walking Stick Workshop**

*Monday, April 22nd 5:30 PM*

*Osborne Nature Center*

*Registration Required*

Celebrate earth day by making and decorating a walking stick to use this season on your hiking adventures.

## **May Day Hike**

*Wednesday, May 1st, 5:30 PM*

*Motor Mill Park*

Join a naturalist for a walk along the Grau Memorial Trail to see spring birds, blooms and maybe mushrooms.

## **Savanna Saunter**

*Friday, May 17th, 5:00-7:00 PM*

*Bloody Run County Park*

Join a naturalist for a walk along Well's Hollow trail to see the restored savannas and bluff prairie at Bloody Run County Park. The wildflowers and neotropical migrant birds make this one of the most beautiful natural areas in the county.

## **Kid's Fishing Clinic**

*Saturday, June 8th*

*Backbone State Park*

Take advantage of free fishing weekend with a day at Backbone Lake! Naturalists will be on site offering demonstrations and live critters to view between casts.

## **Family Camping 101**

*Friday, June 28th -29th 5:00PM -11:00AM*

*Osborne Park*

*Registrations Required*

Have you always wanted to try camping with your family? Well here's your chance to test it out. We have the gear! Bring your family to learn tent camping basics with the Osborne naturalists like how to set up your camp site, start a fire, campfire cooking and night hikes.

## **Motor Mill Prairie Hike**

*Wednesday, July 10th, 6-8 PM*

*Motor Mill*

Take a walk through one of the CCCB's finest prairie reconstructions on the south side of Motor Mill! Midsummer sees this 20-acre unit in peak splendor, with culver's root, butterfly milkweed, and blazing star putting on a show each year.

## **Backyard Biochar**

*Friday, August 9, 6-8 PM*

*Osborne Pond*

Want to give your yard waste a second life restoring soil and storing carbon, while you enjoy a campfire at the same time? Come on out to the Osborne Pond for a primer on the methods for creating biochar, a powerful soil amendment that can be made simply and easily from upcycled materials and organic waste! This program will cover the methods and applications for biochar, including some do's and don'ts for creating your own.



Clayton County Conservation will be hosting 2 Hunter Education Courses in 2024 at the Osborne Conservation Center.

### **June 8th – Online Field Day**

8am – Noon

Participants must complete the online course prior to the field day and bring their voucher to class.

Laws presentation, firearm handling, and testing to be covered.

### **August 5, 7, 9, & 10th Full-Course**

Mon, Wed, Fri evenings 6pm – 9pm

Saturday 7:30am – Noon Live Fire Field Day

Participants will attend 10 hours of class time, participate in a live-fire field day, and take the exam to receive their certification.

Visit: <https://www.iowadnr.gov/hunting/hunter-education> to register.

## **Motor Mill Open Weekends**

*Weekends Memorial Day through Labor Day*

*Motor Mill Historic Site*

*Noon-5:00 PM*

*Additional tours available upon request, pending staff and volunteer availability.*

# Clayton County Day Camps



Register now for Summer 2024! [Click here for registration](#)

# SUMMER CAMPS 2024



OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES . GAMES . CRAFTS . FUN

June 21- River Rats - Rivers and Ponds Camp, 10-15 year old  
July 19 - River Rats - NE IA Hidden Treasurers, 10-15 year old  
July 12 - Motor Mill S.T.E.A.M. Camp, 6-12\* year old  
July 17—Osborne Outdoor Games Camp 6-10 year old

July 24—Wonderful Woodland Camp 6-10 year old  
July 26 - Motor Mill S.T.E.A.M. Paddle the Turkey, 10-15 year old  
August 7—What's in the Water? 6-10 year old

More information at [www.claytoncountyconservation.org](http://www.claytoncountyconservation.org)

## O.W.L.S.

Older, Wiser, Livelier Souls

“Farm and Ag Tour” Looking for an excuse to get out of the house, meet new friends, and enjoy a good meal while exploring our area?

Join us the 3rd Thursday of each month March through November.

March 21 - Dummermuth Historical Buildings  
April 18 - Country View Dairy  
May 30\* - Norman Borlaug Boyhood Home  
June 20 - Turkey River Farm  
July 18 - The Secret Octagon Barn  
August TBA - Maiden Voyage

Reservations are required for both program and lunch

Call with questions on cost or time



Osborne Nature Center

Phone: 563-245-1516

[www.ClaytonCountyConservation.org](http://www.ClaytonCountyConservation.org)

# Plant This, Not That—Northeast Iowa Version - by Kenny Slocum

Type “Plant This, Not That” into a search engine and you’ll get page after page of information on commonly planted invasive/non-native species and their appropriate native counterparts.

But if you’re reading this, you’re likely long past the stage of planting burning bush or bamboo. Even the most casual gardeners know which plants to ardently avoid at the garden center, perhaps by the unfortunate experience of having introduced one or two to their garden once already (looking at you, butterfly bush).

The native gardening movement has taken root. There is a growing recognition that with a little thought, our yards can help stem the rising tide of biodiversity loss. More and more seed producers have emerged in response, helping provide supply to meet the demand.

In *Nature’s Best Hope*, author and ecologist Douglas Tallamy outlines the imperative for landscape-level change on private lands to stem the rising tide of biodiversity loss.

Most of the land in the USA is privately owned, meaning we’ll never recover wildlife populations through public land protections alone. Enter native gardening.

But spend a little time talking with the hardcore botanists around the state, and you’ll find the idea of “native” species, like most ideas in ecology, has not yet found a universally agreeable definition.

Part of the issue in Iowa comes from a lack of good records. Most of our natural areas disappeared, or at least became heavily altered, long before herbarium records could make totally clear what belongs where.

However, we can see from what *did* get documented that prairies are not a monolith—at least not historically. Just because a species is native to Iowa does not mean it belongs in *northeast* Iowa.



**Purple Coneflower** (*Echinacea purpurea*) provides a prime example. Looking through the historic records for this now-ubiquitous species, it appears to have had a fairly hard boundary at roughly the I-80 corridor.

In other words, it’s native to Iowa, but Pere Marquette probably didn’t see it on the goat prairies overlooking the Mississippi River valley when he first laid eyes on them.



**Pale Purple Coneflower** (*Echinacea pallida*), on the other hand, had a much more widespread distribution. Both species make up a healthy proportion of native seed mixes today, but only one of them truly “belongs” here in the eyes of the native purist.



Tall Coreopsis

Likewise, **Tall Coreopsis** (*Coreopsis tripteris*) has become a regular component in diverse seed mixes, but truthfully probably had a similar range to the purple coneflower.

Some have observed that it appears to outcompete the much shorter **Prairie Coreopsis** (*Coreopsis palmata*), the more appropriate “native” analogue, though the former species certainly would have occurred nearby.



Prairie Coreopsis



Not so with **Indian blanketflower**.

*Gaillardia pulchella* has become another favorite in modern seed mixes. As an annual or short-lived perennial, it provides phenomenal color early in a prairie reconstruction. Pollinators love it for the long-lasting and nectar-rich blooms.

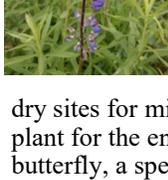


But, it has no real business here. This is a southwestern plant, historically ranging from Texas to the gulf coast. Far closer is the **great blanketflower**, *Gaillardia aristata*, but even this appears relegated to the drier great plains to our west and north.

The great blanketflower is an important plant to the tiny Dakota Skipper, a federally-endangered butterfly. It is unclear whether it will use the more easily found *G. pulchella*, as their low numbers make study difficult, but we can consider a similar case.



**Large-leaved lupine**, *Lupinus polyphyllus*, a show-stopping wildflower blooming in summer, has started to appear in more and more Iowa plantings. But this species belongs mostly west of the rockies, and north to Alaska.



The **wild lupine**, *Lupinus perennis*, has grown on Iowa’s hot,

dry sites for millennia. It is the only host plant for the endangered Karner blue butterfly, a species in rapid decline due to habitat loss.



The Karner blue will not use large-leaved lupine. However, the large-leaved lupine *will* use the wild lupine, potentially to hybridize, the offspring of which also offer no value to the butterfly.

*Continued on page 7...*

**LEAVE A LEGACY**

COMMUNITY FOUNDATION  
of Greater Dubuque

“To know even one other life has breathed easier because you lived. This is to have succeeded.”  
—Ralph Waldo Emerson

The Osborne Partners for Education Endowment Fund was started by Susi Nehls and Roy Blair in memory of Susi’s father, Dr. Joe Hickey. Dr. Hickey’s research led to the legislation that protected birds of prey like the bald eagle. Dr. Hickey’s passion for teaching others about the natural world was sparked early by adults who introduced him to the wonders of nature.

<https://www.dbqfoundation.org/donors/giving-center/osborne-partners-education-endowment>

---

## *Park Spotlight-Bloody Run by Abbey Harkrader, Naturalist*

---

Bloody Run County Park is one gem out of the 15 parks and natural areas that Clayton County Conservation Board manages. This scenic park near Marquette, Iowa is full of natural beauty and rich history. Nestled along Bloody Run Creek, the beautiful valley and trout stream is hemmed in by rugged bluffs and upland forests. Bloody Run is not exactly a secret; it is beloved by campers, hikers, and trout anglers making it one of our most popular campgrounds boasting three different sections to camp in.

The history of Bloody Run is just as interesting as its natural features. Not everyone realizes that McGregor and North McGregor (Marquette) were important gateways to the west and started as wild frontier towns. How the valley got its name starts way back before Iowa was a state and the towns sprang up. Very little is written down about the early trappers and traders who explored the land on this side of the Mississippi throughout the late 1600's and 1700's. It was wild land full of abundant game and the traders traveled extensively along this stretch of the river, trapping and trading with the Native Americans who lived here. The stream was originally called Giard Creek after the first official owner of the land. Basil Giard had been granted 5,760 acres in 1795, one of three Spanish land grants in Iowa. There are several versions of how the name was changed to Bloody Run.

One account can be traced back to a story found in "The History of Clayton County, Iowa" by Realto E. Price, 1916. The story is from memoirs written by John Henry Fonda who lived in the valley in 1834 for two years. He claimed that in the earlier days when the valley was still wild and mostly only trappers and traders were found west of the Mississippi, there were two trading clerks and their wives who lived in the valley, Mr. King and Mr. Stock. It was common practice to offer Indian fur traders credit when trading goods and cause them to rack up sizable debts to the trading post.

Reportedly, Mr. King became impatient with a Sauk Chief named Grey Eagle who was not repaying his debt and had been refused further credit. Against his wife's advice, he made a plan to go to the Indian village to confront Grey Eagle and planned to take his horse if he would not pay. King found the Chief on the way to the village, pulled him from his horse, beat him, and then took the horse home as payment. His wife warned him that Grey Eagle would seek revenge.

Soon after the Chief did bring several men to settle the score. When his wife ran in to warn King they were approaching, he went to the front door where Grey Eagle shot him in the head and he fell across the threshold. After his partner's death, Mr. Stock continued to refuse to extend any more credit to the tribe members who were in debt. This angered them further



and Stock was later shot as well, adding to the blood of the valley to be named Bloody Run.

The second story is more well known. In 1823 Lieutenant Martin Scott was sent from Fort Crawford across the river to supervise the Iowa outpost at the old Giard farm site. Lt. Scott had gotten quite a reputation as an unparalleled marksman. Not known for drinking, gambling or other forms of socializing, instead his passion was hunting. He was known to take his beloved pack of hunting dogs by canoe to his favorite hunting grounds up the valley that would become known as Bloody Run. It was said that he would boast about the number of animals that had bled that day and that the stream ran red with the blood of his kills as he field dressed them along the stream he affectionately named Bloody Run. A crack shot, he was known to favor the more difficult head shot, and would bring back the plentiful game of the valley including prairie chickens, woodcock, deer, and turkey to help feed everyone at evening mess. - Lockwood, James H. "Early Times and Events in Wisconsin." 1855

Which story is the original namesake is difficult to determine. The facts support that the valley was the favored hunting grounds of Lieutenant Scott, and Fonda even mentioned this in his account. The only evidence for the earlier trading post murders is the story Fonda had heard and passed on. No other evidence of when it occurred or if the men even existed has yet been found; an old foundation Fonda mentions could simply have been one of Giard's buildings he abandoned in 1808.

So, the question remains: did lieutenant Martin Scott give it its name, or was he making an allusion to the name it already had as he boasted something like "Bloody Run will run with blood today!" Either way he definitely strengthened the folklore of the stream and solidified it's name in history.

## Plant This, Not That (continued from page 5)

I had heard lupine takes years to show up in prairie reconstructions, so I took great delight in finding it in 2019 just a year after we seeded the prairie north of Osborne Pond. I was equally dismayed to learn it was not the native variety, and the potential consequences therein.

Even worse, many seed mixes will have “wild lupine” listed among their components, but the large-leaved lupine shows up. It’s not malicious, but more an issue of nomenclature; many varieties of *Lupinus* have the colloquial “wild” prefix in certain locales.

Everything about the lupine story highlights why the aforementioned hardcore botanists are the way they are. Their insistence on using scientific names feels overwhelming or frustrating at first, until you realize there’s real consequences for having 5 different plants called “honeysuckle.”

Likewise, the distinction of native ranges between purple and *pale* purple coneflower can seem almost obnoxiously hair-splitting, but we’re still trying to disentangle the relationship between plants, animals, and landscapes.

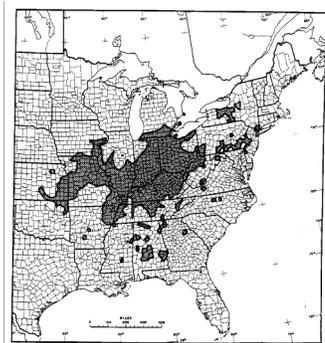
We don’t know for sure if or how planting purple coneflower all across the state might disrupt some more ancient relationship, but we do know that a lot of our present ecological problems come from humans voluntarily moving things to where they didn’t historically occur.

Now, full disclaimer (which probably belongs at the beginning), I have personally and professionally planted many such “disjunct” species, including all those listed here. There is no doubt that most birds and pollinators will be happy with “pretty close,” and if a plant meets your goals for native gardening, most of us can live with being a few miles or even states out of range.

We also must consider that “historic” means “past.” As in, no more. When it comes to invasive species, altered climates and precipitation patterns, more CO2 availability, and habitat fragmentation, certain elements of that historic regime are gone forever. So perhaps we shouldn’t get too bogged down in the details of how the state *used* to look.

Many land managers, particularly foresters, have already begun tossing aside the “historic” framework for restoration and started looking forward.

Species like Chestnut, Elm, Butternut, and Ash once made up significant portions of our forest canopy, but it’s difficult to envision a future where that will be the case ever again.



Shellbark hickory native range

We still need diversity in our forests though. That’s what provides stability in the face of pathogens, alterations in moisture regimes, and swings in the timber markets (for better or for worse, a major driver of our forest compositions).

Trees from a little further south, like **Shellbark Hickory** or **Sycamore**, can provide some of that diversity in the broad sense, even if technically they’re not “native” to Clayton County.



Sycamore tree

Shellbark Hickory can fill some of the “hard mast” niche formerly provided by butternut or chestnut, and sycamore can provision some of the “soft mast,” that ash used to dish out, though it probably has more importance simply in filling in the canopy for birds and tree-nesting critters on our floodplains.

Indeed, the US Fish & Wildlife Service has already begun planting these species, along with several others, further north of their natural range to get them established more quickly on the Upper Mississippi Wildlife Refuge, and for good reason.

Each canopy gap opened up by a dying ash tree on the floodplain provides a new spot for reed canary grass to get a foothold. Once it does, new trees struggle to germinate and replace the old ones amongst the thick sod-forming grass. But a little shade, any shade, can help keep RCG at bay.

Emerald Ash Borer, like Dutch Elm Disease before it, has highlighted the need for careful thought, particularly in the “urban forestry” sector.

As cities and counties contend with the considerable physical and financial toll of dealing with all their dying ash, we can see clearly the need to focus on diversity in our urban planting, and that includes your yard.

Too much of any one species is always a recipe for disaster. Yes, maples are pretty, and can create a dazzling boulevard on a fall day. But if some unforeseen event in the future causes a mass die-off of maple (gulp), that boulevard is in big trouble.

That’s really the crux of “native” gardening—plant diverse stuff that plays well with others. Pay attention to how the surrounding landscape interacts with it—is it really invasive, or just not native?

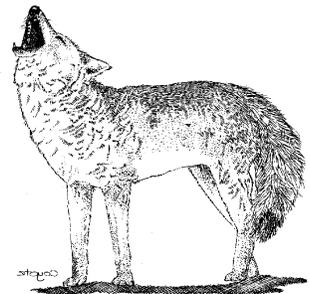
I think of something like Sweet Salsify, or Goat’s Beard. I see it pop up here and there, and despite its Eurasian heritage it seems to make our Iowan birds and bees perfectly happy. If it’s adding to the local biodiversity, instead of detracting from it like more truly “invasive” plants, I can live with it.

Depending on your goals, you may or may not want to wade into the minutiae of county-by-county range maps and faunal associations when planning for native gardening. If you do, try to keep at least one eye towards the future while you look to the past.

For every light/moisture regime, there’s something you can plant that will fuel the local ecology. For every hosta, there’s a wild ginger. For every daylily, there’s a Michigan lily. We can create more functional landscapes without sacrificing our aesthetic values—we just have to do a little homework.

**Clayton County Conservation**  
 Osborne Conservation Center  
 29862 Osborne Rd, Elkader, IA 52043  
 (563) 245-1516

*Osborne Public Programs  
 listed inside!*



The Clayton County Conservation Board does not discriminate against anyone on the basis of race, color, sex, creed, national origin, age or handicap. If anyone believes he or she has been subjected to such discrimination, he or she may file a complaint alleging discrimination with either the Clayton County Conservation Board or the Office of Equal Opportunity, U.S. Dept. of Interior, Washington, D.C. 20240

**Conservation Board Members:**

Daryl Landsgard, St. Olaf.....Chair  
 Dave Asche, Monona.....Member  
 Gary Kregel, Garber.....Vice Chair  
 Larry Stone, Elkader.....Secretary  
 Natasha Hegmann.....Member

**Staff**

Jenna Pollock.....Director  
 Zach Dingbaum.....Park Ranger  
 Hunter Jensen.....Operations Manager  
 Abbey Harkrader.....Naturalist  
 Kenny Slocum...Naturalist/Resource Manager  
 Molly Scherf.....Office Manager  
 Ean Popenhagen.....Office Assistant  
 Nick Moser.....Operations/Maintenance

**Website:** [www.claytoncountyconservation.org](http://www.claytoncountyconservation.org)  
**Facebook:** [Clayton County Conservation](https://www.facebook.com/ClaytonCountyConservation)  
**Instagram:** [@ClaytonCountyConservation](https://www.instagram.com/ClaytonCountyConservation)

**Osborne Nature Center &  
 Gift shop Hours**

**Monday-Friday**

8:00am - 4:00pm

**Weekend Hours**

(Starting April 1)

**Saturday**

8:00am - 4:00pm

**Sunday**

Noon-4:00pm



Clayton County Conservation Board meetings are the second Tuesday of every month. Meetings are open to the public. See website for details, locations, and past meeting minutes.

*The mission of the Clayton County Conservation Board is to promote the health and general welfare of the people and to encourage preservation, conservation, education, and recreation through responsible use and appreciation of our natural resources and cultural heritage.*