Jackson Landing Newsletter

"Really meaningful thoughts happen while on a good walk"

The Buckthorn-Honeysuckle Wars

While enjoying a good walk a month or two ago you probably had little opportunity to enjoy what was hidden behind the thousands of invasive shrubs , e.g. Buckthorn and Honeysuckle, (henceforth BT and HS) that shielded you from seeing and knowing the real value of **Jackson Landing** to the health of Lake Mendota. It is safe to assume that neither of the aforementioned was present prior to European settlement of Wisconsin. Both were imported from Europe or Asia. For a decade or more those invasive shrubs had a free pass to do what best describes them….invade and destroy. A little history is in order……..

After the Westport Town Board purchased the land we now call Jackson Landing, it was agreed that the best use of the land was to restore its ability to protect Lake Mendota. Trails were established and the public was invited to enjoy 'a walk in the woods', woods that is 21 acres, more or less, of a dense stand of BT and HS. Trails, actually tunnels, allowed those who dared to dodge the clouds of mosquitos and duck under the virtually uncontrollable invasion.

In time, armed with loppers and saws, a small group of volunteers, scouts, and I began to widen the trails and attempt to conquer the invading army. Progress on the trails was slow and we were still surrounded by the enemy on all sides. It was impossible to control with just manpower.

Help was on the way with a grant from the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Grant Program. We were able to declare full out war on the two invasive enemies. Hooper Corporation provided the 'tanks' and attacked from all sides. In several weeks they leveled the sites you now see as prairies.

While it was a major victory, there were areas that were not accessible, even to the Hooper mowers. Those acres adjacent to the cat tails and the lake were too wet to mow. While we began our efforts to establish the prairies the BT and HS continued to grow. Any view Lake Mendota was impossible.

The first priority was to establish the prairies. We did so **without** the use of herbicides so we needed constant surveillance as the BT and HS tried to re-stablish. Pheasants Forever 'drilled' our new prairie seed. We watched for a new kind of green to appear. Spring couldn't arrive soon enough. The prairie was beginning to show. Some flowers bloomed and a few grasses emerged. We kept patrolling to catch any BT or HS trying to pop up. We cut them and pulled leaves off. We had them under control…..sort of. We still have to foray periodically to stop their persistence.

The bad news….they (BT and HS) still commanded the lakeside. With the help of a few volunteer and Scouts we attempted to clear and control some of the lakeside invasion. We've been winning and losing for several years

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A few months ago I received a message from one of Westshire's newer residents wanting to know if I could use some help. He had noticed my feeble attempts to open (cutting the BT and HS) in front of a few of the benches to allow for a view of the lake and the Madison skyline. We took a walk to talk about what he could do to help. I kept talking and he kept listening. I explained the nightmare of the years to control the BT and HS on the lakeside of Jackson. On the next day, Rick (Meier) began his attack. In the weeks that followed he and a small platoon of friends, relatives and other volunteers that he recruited have literally given Jackson Landing a whole new look.

L-R: *Debbie Meier-Doug Barncard-Rick Meier-Jean Lepro and Blue. Not pictured: Anna Besmer, Mike Collins*

Those who contemplate the beauty of the earth find reserves of strength that will endure as long as life lasts. There is something infinitely healing in the repeated refrains of nature–the assurance that dawn comes after night, and spring after winter. Rachel Carson

Honeysuckle – Everybody's Enemy

Ours and everyone's ecological nightmare. Native to Asia and Northern Russia, it was introduced in the mid-18th and 19th century for its showy flowers and fruit. It was also used for wildlife food and cover, and cover it did! In just a few years it covered most of Jackson Landing. To get a view of its potential look in to the untouched Willow Park along the trail.

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We are still outflanked and the enemy is persistent. Honeysuckle can rapidly form dense shrub layers in any forest. The fruit is highly attractive to birds. Over twenty species of birds feed on the fruit. Thus, birds commonly move seeds across the landscape. They also spread vegetatively by producing suckers and sprouts, especially after severe pruning. They will persist but we will continue to persist also by continuing to cut in preference to using herbicides, although we may have to use them sparingly and selectively.

Under the present conditions, e.g. HS growing everywhere and from neighboring forest seeds will be transported into Jackson Landing. Thanks to Rick and the his anti-invasion platoon, we will continue to try to subdue HS and it's persistent invasive equal……Buckthorn!

And….Equally despicable

Common, or European, buckthorn, and glossy buckthorn are the two non-native, invasive buckthorn species found in Minnesota. These buckthorn species were first brought here from Europe as a popular hedging material. They became a nuisance plant, forming dense thickets in forests, yards, parks and roadsides. They crowd out native plants and displace the native shrubs and small trees in the mid-layer of the forest where many species of birds nest. Glossy buckthorn has been sold by the nursery trade in three different forms, so its appearance can vary. The cultivar Frangula alnus 'Columnaris' is narrow and tall; the cultivars Frangula alnus 'Asplenifolia' and 'Ron Williams' have narrow leaves that give them a fern-like texture. We only have one and a second cultivar, maybe, more?....might be hiding in the midst of it all. Seeds from neighboring landscapes are possible. We shall continue to destroy!

Photos - Through Nancy's Eyes

"We simply need that wild country available to us… For it can be a means of reassuring ourselves of our sanity as creatures, a part of the geography of hope."
Wallace Stegner

"In the spring, at the end of the day, you should smell like dirt."
Margaret Attwood

"One touch of nature makes the whole world kin."
William Shakespeare

Photos by Nancy Gulyas

"I think that I cannot preserve my health and spirits, unless I spend four hours a day at least – and it is commonly more than that – sauntering through the woods and over the hills and fields, absolutely free from all worldly engagements."
……Henry David Thoreau

The trail leads not merely north and south, but up to the body, mind, and soul of man." – Harold Allen

Indian Mounds Near Jackson Landing: The Morris Group #2, located in the Governor Nelson State Park, should not be confused with other groups bearing similar names. Morris Group #1 used to exist nearby, just southwest of Morris Group #2. The group has 1 panther and either 5 or 6 conicals (accounts differ) remaining today. It used to have one more panther and another effigy, 1 linear and 1 tapering linear mounds. No doubt that culture roamed Jackson Landing and surrounding lands. Take a walk on Gov Nelson's trails to learn more of that culture.

Nancy G

Another beautiful season only weeks away!

"But now she loved winter. Winter was beautiful "up back" - almost intolerably beautiful. Days of clear brilliance. Evenings that were like cups of glamour - the purest vintage of winter's wine. Nights with their fire of stars. Cold, exquisite winter sunrises. Lovely ferns of ice all over the windows of the Blue Castle. Moonlight on birches in a silver thaw. Ragged shadows on windy evenings - torn, twisted, fantastic shadows. Great silences, austere and searching. Jewelled, barbaric hills. The sun suddenly breaking through grey clouds over long, white Mistawis. Ice-grey twilights, broken by snow-squalls, when their cosy living-room, with its goblins of firelight and inscrutable cats, seemed cosier than ever. Every hour brought a new revalation and wonder."

……L.M. Montgomery, The Blue Castle

Cattails

The broad & narrow-leaved species are very similar, but do have a few differences. Both are tall stiff plants, with leaves that look like giant blades of grass. Both species have a flower structure made up of a brown cylindrical spike on the bottom, which is the female portion, and a narrower yellow spike on top, which is the male portion. The broad-leaved species has pale green leaves nearly one inch wide and it grows up to ten feet tall. The narrow-leafed species plant is smaller and somewhat more salt tolerant. Its leaves are thinner, deeper green and typically extend beyond the spike. Also the male and female portion of the flower structure is separated by an inch or so of bare stem

Habitat

Cattails are usually found in a dense stand (many together) in up to 2 ft. of water in marshes and other wetlands throughout most of the world adaptations Cattails adapt in a variety of interesting ways: They can live in fresh or somewhat brackish water, and can live in up to 2 feet of water or grow in floating mats. They have two ways to spread: Seeds made by their flowers, and roots that creep, called rhizomes. Rhizomes grow new shoots quickly, creating thick stands that are great cover for many animals. Cattails use the wind to spread their fluffy seeds, and discourage over-population in well-established stands by emitting a toxin which prevents germination of their own species.

Reproduction

As mentioned above, Cattails reproduce by seed but more extensively, rhizome. In fact, an entire acre of cattails may consist of only a few individual plants (see adaptations). They flower from May through July, but the tiny flowers have no petals. They're packed into dense, cylindrical spikes; the narrow upper one contains the male parts, the wider lower one, the female parts. In the spring, the entire spike will appear until the male spike falls away after its pollen is shed. In early fall, the brown flower head enlarges (giving it that "hot dog on a stick" look), then pops open to let wind, water and gravity spread it's fluffy seed. The fruit of a cattail is a tufted nutlet that is less than 2 mm long!

Ecology Cattails provide important food and cover for wildlife and have been used by people in a variety of ways. Yellow-headed and red-winged blackbirds, and marsh wrens perch and build their nests on them. Waterfowl, such as Mallards and Canada Geese, nest among them. Frogs and salamanders lay their eggs in the water on and between them. Fish hide or nest among them. Many birds use the seed fluff to line their nests. Muskrats use rhizomes for food and the foliage to build their houses. This then provides resting and nesting sites for water birds. Deer, raccoons, cottontails and turkeys use them as cover. Insects eat and live on them. All of the cattail is edible. American Indians prepared the parts in many ways. The leaves were used for baskets, chair seats and mats.

The fluffy seeds are used as insulation for pillows and coats, and glue can be made from the stems. The pollen can be used like flour and is sometimes used in fireworks. The silky down surrounding the seeds can be used to stuff life jackets and mattresses.

Key facts

Cattails can reproduce by seed or rhizome. Their root systems help prevent erosion. Their stands create protection and nesting habitat for many birds, reptiles, insects and animals. They use the wind's energy to spread their seeds. Their "nutlet" seed fruits are an important food source. Many species of insects eat and live on them and become food for other species.

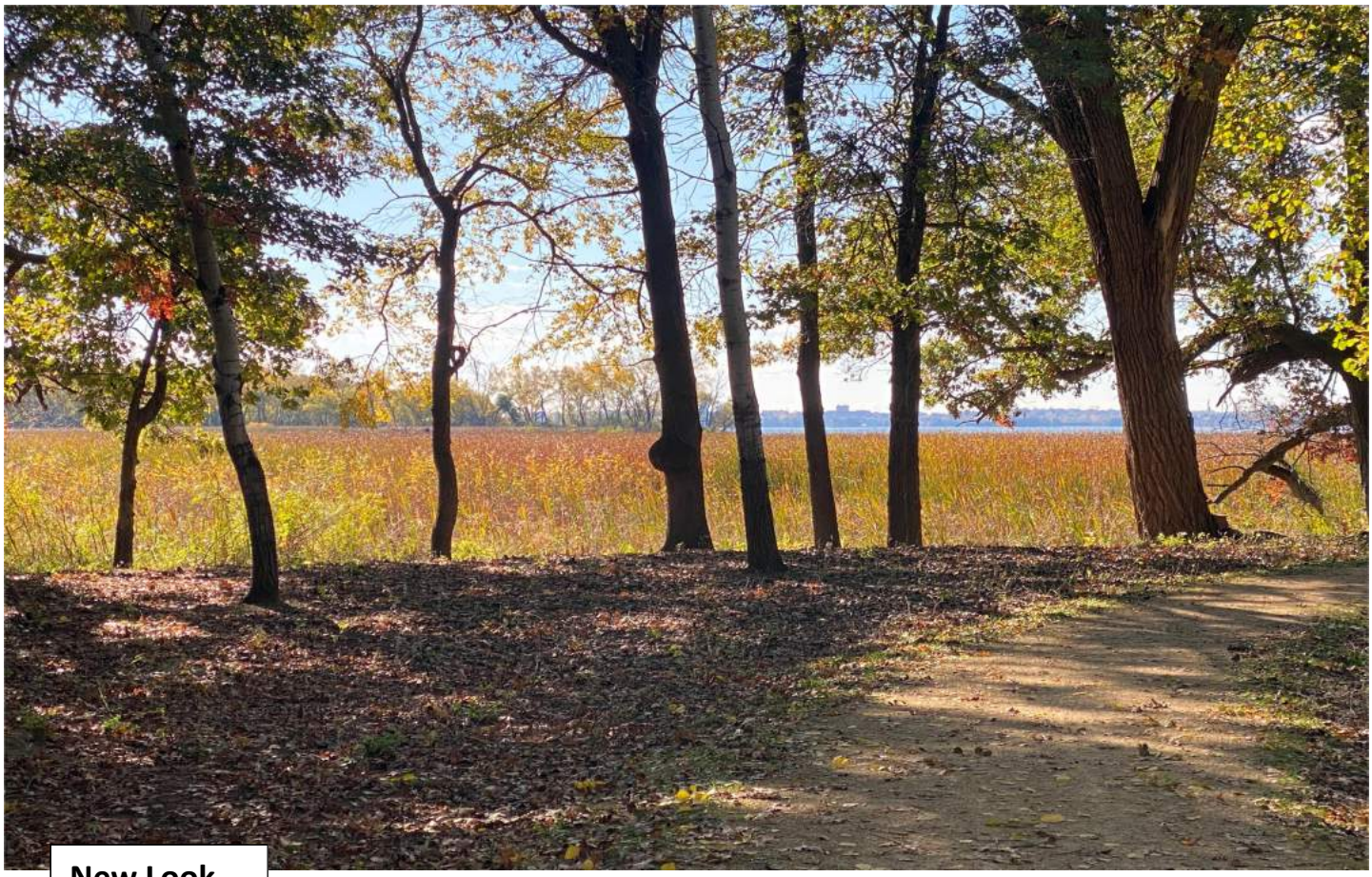
Nest maker: Fluff from their seeds is used by birds in nest building.

Useful to People: The American Indians ate various parts of the cattail plant, crafted chairs, mats and baskets from their leaves. The fluffy seeds are used for insulation for pillows and coats.

More Cattail Facts

No other North American plant is more useful than the cattail. This wonderful plant is a virtual gold mine of survival utility. It is a four-season food, medicinal, and utility plant. What other plant can boast eight food products, three medicinals, and at least 12 other functional uses?

In Euell Gibbons' Stalking the Wild Asparagus, his chapter on cattails is titled "Supermarket of the Swamp." The title aptly applies to the cattail. However, due to its medicinal and utilitarian uses, we may want to mentally modify the title to "Super Wal-Mart of the Swamp."



New Look