

Conservation Watch

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The Center for Plant Conservation Turns 25!

In May, 2009 the Center for Plant Conservation (CPC) started its 25th year of working to conserve and restore the imperiled native plants of the United States. The Center's mission is at least as critical today as it was in the early years of the environmental movement. Sustaining native plants is imperative for us and for the health of our ecosystem - plants are essential natural resources that provide food, medicinal benefits and much more. More than 200 U.S. plants have become extinct in recent years. More than 900 plants are federally listed as threatened or endangered, or are in the process of being listed as such. Nearly a quarter of our flora is considered to be of conservation concern.

In 1984 two recent Tufts graduates, Don Falk and Frank Thibodeau, became concerned about the lack of activity taking place to save endangered plants as compared to that taken on behalf of animals. They took the issue as a challenge and envisioned U.S. botanical gardens, arboreta and other institutions helping. With good mentors and supporters, they organized a nonprofit organization, starting out in the attic of the Arnold Arboretum of Harvard University.

The Center's work fits well with GCA's love of plants and concerns for conservation and The Garden

Club of America has supported CPC from its earliest days. The Center owes a debt of gratitude to GCA for helping it build a strong foundation. GCA members served on the CPC founding board, and "The Garland of Generations," a slideshow narrated by Christopher Reeve, was co-sponsored by GCA in 1986 to raise conservation awareness. Garden clubs all over the country have viewed the slideshow.

Mary Patterson, a GCA member from Greenwich, Connecticut, recalls, "Don Falk from CPC, when it was at Arnold Arboretum, came from Boston and gave a stirring talk along with the slideshow at a tri-club dinner meeting. Shortly thereafter, the three clubs jointly sponsored van Brunt's Jacob's



Michael Kunz, Conservation Ecologist at North Carolina Botanical Garden, collects seed for the CPC National Collection.

ladder, *Polemonium vanbruntiae*, for conservation. Subsequently, there were many more [sponsorships], and we all felt very good about the work we had done and continue to do.”

GCA provided leadership for CPC in 1986 by sponsoring Robbins Cinquefoil (*Potentilla robbinsiana*). The gift provided annual support to a CPC institution, the New England Wild Flower Society, for work with other partners that led to the removal of the cinquefoil from the Endangered Species List in 2003. It was the first plant delisted as a result of restoration work that had been accomplished! Today, 142 clubs sponsor 50 plants to sustain restoration work for the National Collection of Endangered Species, which CPC is continually expanding.



The Center’s effectiveness has grown. Today, the Missouri Botanical Garden hosts the CPC national office space in St. Louis, Missouri. The CPC network is comprised of 36 institutions, while the National Collection seed bank conserves 700-plus species, and is breaking new ground in scientific understanding of our native plants. The various institutions monitor more than 1600 vulnerable plant sites and work on nearly 190 reintroduction projects.

Over the years 155 garden clubs have given welcome support to CPC. The Center values GCA for its effectiveness in sending a strong conservation message. Through its role in national conservation policy, projects like Partners for Plants and effective leadership and connection to local communities, GCA has become an essential part of the conservation conversation in this country. GCA’s role is essential for the CPC’s long-term success.

Challenges to the flora are likely to increase in concert with climate change. Partnerships like that of the GCA and CPC will help protect our nation’s flora for generations to come. There are many opportunities to partner in our local botanical gardens’ conservation work, in educating our communities, in improving public policy, and in securing resources to support the urgent work needed.



A reintroduction project for harperella on the Deep River in North Carolina.

"I believe very strongly in the mission of CPC. I believe that, nationally and globally, plant conservation is something we must address," says Janet Meakin Poor, a twenty-year CPC board member and a longtime GCA leader. "When people work collaboratively, it gives us a much stronger position." Looking back on 25 years of progress, CPC thanks The Garden Club of America for helping it grow, looking forward to future partnerships for our priceless native plants.

*Kathryn Kennedy, Ph.D., Garden Club of St. Louis (MO) – Zone XI
President and Executive Director, Center for Plant Conservation*

The Smart Grid – What is It?

Electricity undergirds nearly every aspect of modern life, from delivering water supplies and running steel mills to controlling traffic lights and the Internet. But the infrastructure that distributes electricity across the U.S. has not kept up with the times. Soon after taking office, President Obama asked Congress to pass legislation that would double alternative energy production and build a new electricity smart grid within three years. The goal would be to deliver plentiful energy from wind and sunshine to power-hungry cities.

Currently, the U.S. power grid consists of three distinct regional grids - the Western, Texas, and Eastern interconnections, the last being a collection of smaller grids. Although we think of it as a national institution, it actually resembles a feudal system, with ownership split among thousands of different entities. Control of the power is spread out among dozens of jurisdictions. The grid grew together from many small systems and local regulators that have not been melded.

The existing grids are old and rapidly becoming inadequate. Output is intermittent and sometimes hard to predict. Currently 70 percent of the existing high voltage system is at least 25 years old and very little additional transmission capacity has been built during those 25 years. Most of the potential for renewable resources tends to be in places where there is no adequate transmission infrastructure. Even before the addition of renewable resources, the transmission system is being used closer to its limit more of the time than at any time in the past.

Without new transmission infrastructure, updated standards requiring the use of renewable resources are unenforceable. After decades of building coal, nuclear, natural gas and oil-fired generators close to customers, 28 state governments set renewable portfolio standards (RPS) that require utilities to supply a portion of their electricity using renewables. A typical state's goal might be to reach a level of 20% renewables by 2020 or even sooner.

However, those standards are meaningless with a grid that is incapable of assimilating intermittent energy without having to



build new fossil-fueled plants. Although fossil fuels will continue to be needed as backup power for the foreseeable future, the U.S. needs an efficient transmission system that crisscrosses the country much like the interstate highway transportation system, knitting together all the large wind farms, solar energy fields, geothermal pools, hydroelectric generators, and other alternative sources.

Construction of a national transmission system is within America's capabilities, and a regulatory statute already exists for implementation. The 2005 Energy Act gave the Dept. of Energy (DOE) backup authority "to approve new power lines over state objections by designing national interstate electric transmission corridors."*

However, the DOE is moving forward carefully. In two areas where they have tried to put this law into practice, it has provoked a firestorm of political objection. Even though legal authority exists to erect transmission lines, the political consensus may stand in opposition. In fact, major utilities and grid operators are now planning an expansion of the Eastern interconnection grid to handle the huge increase in renewable power that has developed as a result of implementation of the RPS. Utilities and grid operators may try to head off congressional proposals for federal grid planning and to show Congress that a grass roots planning approach will be more efficient than creating a new, top down planning process under federal control. The planning of grid operations on a state and regional level is already complex; utilities may claim that it is important to let states come up with solutions before federal authority takes over, thus preserving state's rights. The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) will have final planning oversight.

A *smart grid* relates to the grid's ability to utilize a number of power sources and integrate them as needed. Implementing a national smart grid requires a true national energy strategy, not a state-by-state strategy. Transmission reform must become an important enough priority to assure the resolution of disputes, beginning with federally elected officials, and reaching down to state and local levels. The ultimate development of clean energy cannot go forward without an adequate grid, and a *smart grid* is the grid of the future.

Benefits of a Smart Grid:

- According to the US Department of Energy (DOE), the huge expense of building a smart grid, about \$400 billion over 10 years, would save billions over the next 20 years by reducing inefficiencies and power failures.
- There would be less dependence on imported energy and a reduction of the carbon emissions that contribute to climate change.
- Investments in infrastructure could stimulate economic growth, increase green jobs, make electric cars more feasible and affordable, and bring the price of home and business-scaled, renewable power systems down because of shorter payback periods.
- Small players such as homeowners with solar panels, small wind turbines, and plug-in electric vehicles, and small businesses supplying their own alternative energy, could sell more power to their neighbors or back to the distribution grid.
- Larger commercial businesses with renewable or backup power systems that can provide clean energy can also sell power back to the grid at a profit during peak demands.
- Potentially, the use of cars to store electricity and sell it back at times of peak demand would help utility companies to keep voltage regulation more stable, especially when more power comes from intermittent sources.
- Power outages would be less of a problem. The grid would be able to isolate a problem quickly and create pathways around it.

- Buried power lines, if possible, would reduce accidents and storm-related outages, and make transmissions through lovely vistas and towns less objectionable.
- Consumers would use energy more wisely and save money with a sensor in the home that would show the price of electricity at any given time, so that the homeowner could set priorities and use more energy when the price is lower during off-peak hours. Through home automation network devices, home thermostats can be set to reduce energy loads during peak times, and lights in unoccupied rooms can be automatically shut off.
- Consumers would be able to tell which appliances are energy hogs, and identify energy vampires such as cell phone chargers, sleeping computers, digital clocks and hot water heaters.

*Wald, Matthew L., "Giving the Grid Some Backbone," *Scientific American* 3.0, Vol. 19, No. 1, 2009.

*Penny Thomas, G.C. of Princeton (NJ) – Zone IV
Former GCA NAL Committee, Vice-Chair – Climate Change 2007-09*

Your Cosmetics – Are They Safe?

Queen Elizabeth I probably did not realize that the white lead make-up she used could have caused her death. Neither the FDA nor any other Federal agency regulates the cosmetic industry in the US. It is self-regulated. Here is some information from the FDA's website: "Who is responsible for substantiating the safety of cosmetics? Cosmetic firms are responsible for substantiating the safety of their products and ingredients before marketing..."

<http://www.cfsan.fda.gov/~dms/cos-206.html>

The ingredients have to be listed except in the case of fragrance, which is proprietary information and does not have to be listed. This is where some dangerous ingredients can hide.

The European Community has much stricter ingredient controls in effect. However, some of the large manufacturers that sell cosmetics in the EU and the U.S. do not use the same formulas for each market. Some U.S. formulas have ingredients that are not allowed in the EU. The cosmetic companies' reasoning is that the traces of cancer causing chemicals, developmental/reproductive toxicity, allergens/immuno-toxicity and other concern items are too small to make a difference. But by buying the chemicals that produce these trace amounts they are causing another company to produce them. Look at this site to see how safe the products you use are:

<http://www.cosmeticsdatabase.com/>

If the ingredients don't scare you enough, the use of *nanotechnology* in cosmetics might. Cosmetic companies are using this technology to make particles so small they can penetrate the blood brain barrier, leading to heightened toxicity. And, they are not labeled. Friends of the Earth International is the world's largest grassroots environmental network. Their research has shown "that nanoparticles have entered just about every personal care product on the market, including deodorant, soap, toothpaste, shampoo, hair conditioner, sunscreen, anti-wrinkle cream, moisturizer, foundation, face powder, lipstick, blush, eye shadow, nail polish, perfume and after-shave lotion. Nano-scale titanium dioxide and zinc is widely used today in sunscreens. Major cosmetics manufacturers including Revlon, L'Oreal, Lancôme, Avon and The Body Shop use nanoparticles.





The concern is that nanoparticles in sunscreens and cosmetics may cause skin damage. Scientific studies have shown that nanoparticles of titanium dioxide and zinc oxide commonly used in sunscreens and cosmetics can produce free radicals, damage DNA, and cause cell toxicity, especially when exposed to ultraviolet light. The concern is that rather than offering us sun protection, nanoparticles used in sunscreens and cosmetics could actually result in serious skin damage.

Check out what is really in **your** cosmetic products, if you can. A helpful book that is available is called *Not Just a Pretty Face: The Ugly Side of the Beauty Industry*. This award-winning book by Stacy Malkais is a thought-provoking read.

*Tina Freeman, New Orleans Town Gardeners (LA) -Zone IX
Past GCA Conservation Committee, Vice-Chair – Air Quality/Toxic Substances*

[Special note from the author: If a consumer is pregnant, nursing, or wishes to lower her exposure to ingredients that may not be listed on the label, avoid products that list “fragrance.”]

History in the Making – GCA Committees Visit Green Building

At a recent meeting of the GCA Conservation and NAL committees, members toured the new, beautiful, and ultra-green Kroon Environmental Sciences Building located on “Science Hill” on the Yale University campus in New Haven, Connecticut. The group trekked to New Haven via train and car for an education in sustainability. And “Kroon” we did!

The newly completed Kroon Hall is home to Yale’s School of Forestry and Environmental Studies. It achieves remarkable energy savings from many ground-breaking techniques specially designed for the school’s New England climate. It is the university’s most energy-efficient building, as well as being one of the nation’s most environmentally sensitive. The Kroon houses classrooms, faculty offices and open study areas.



Kroon Hall is an educational tool as well, showcasing energy-saving concepts which the Forestry Department and Yale University hope will inspire builders nationwide to “go green”. “More than a decade ago, the School of Forestry and Environmental Studies set out to achieve an unconventional, even audacious, agenda, focused on breaking with the past and speaking to the future of environmentalism,”

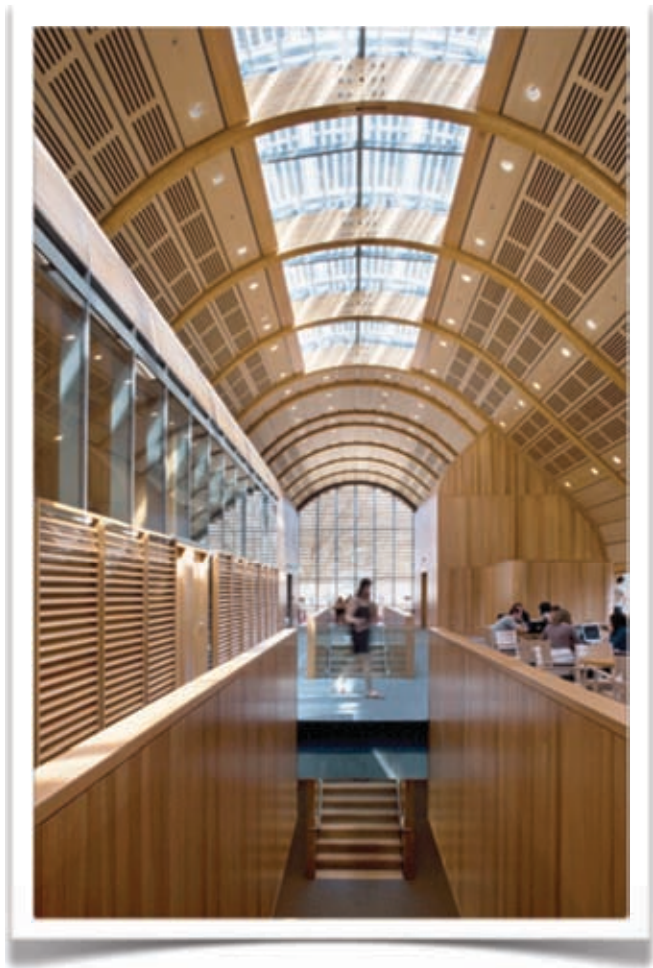
wrote the renowned Forestry and Environmental Studies Dean, Gus Speth. “We wanted a healthy place to study and work and to create a bridge between nature and people.”

The building uses natural materials. Its pale yellow stone exterior was inspired by other Yale buildings. Its shape, tall and thin with an east-west orientation, contributes to the heating and cooling of the building. The lowest floor is set into a hill, with only its south side exposed, providing thermal insulation, minimizing a northern exposure, and increasing the amount of natural light that enters the building. The shape of Kroon, combined with its glass facades, enables daylight to provide much of the interior’s illumination. Spaces are filled with natural light, its tall windows opening onto a tree-filled hillside. Louvers of Douglas fir can cover glass facades to prevent unwanted heat and glare. Light and occupancy sensors dim artificial lighting when not needed. Rooftop photovoltaic panels provide 25% of the electricity. Four 1,500-foot-deep wells use 55-degree underground water to heat and cool the building. Four solar panels in the southern facade provide hot water. Exposed concrete walls and ceilings provide thermal stability by retaining heat in winter and cool air in summer. An elaborate ventilation system transfers heat and cool air throughout the building as needed year-round.

Renewable Energy Certificates will be purchased for additional future electricity needs, which will eventually reduce Kroon’s greenhouse gas emissions to zero. The Kroon is expected to achieve a platinum rating in the green building certification program, Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED). Yale hopes to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions from all of its facilities by 43 percent in 15 years through continued green construction, conservation measures, and renewable energy projects.

The Kroon’s surrounding courtyards are landscaped with 25 varieties of native plants. The south courtyard is a raised platform with a “green roof.” The courtyards are watered by a rainwater-harvesting system which channels water from the roof and grounds to a courtyard where aquatic plants filter out sediment and contaminants. The *grey water*, held in underground storage, is then pumped back to Kroon for flushing toilets and irrigation. This system is expected to save 500,000 gallons of potable water annually.

Knowledgeable explanations from tour guides Susan Black and Eugenie Gentry of the School of Forestry and Environmental Studies intrigued the group. Our members were inspired by the new techniques that could be used in their own homes and cities. Sustainability can be beautiful. The Kroon proves it.



*Audrey Platt, Trustees’ Garden Club (GA) – Zone VIII
Former GCA Conservation Committee – Vice-Chair, Endangered/Invasive Species '07-'09*

And now for an “insider’s” viewpoint . . .

“From my perspective, the main value of the building [Kroon Hall] is that it demonstrates that a seriously and genuinely sustainable office building can be erected. And it can look good, as well. In fact, I think Kroon Hall is truly beautiful. When you’re on the front edge, as Yale has been with Kroon, you find that some of the features you want the building to have cost more. But the value of demonstrating the feasibility of those features is well worth this higher cost, especially for an environmental school. In addition, as more people build buildings this way, the cost gets lower, so after a while, greater building sustainability becomes more and more cost effective. For the Environmental School, sustainability is one of our “esthetics” and its additional cost is justified by the result.

“How have occupants received the building? When I’m there myself, I find the place very comfortable and very well connected to the light and views from outside. My colleagues who have offices there or use the classrooms seem to think it’s great. Their comments could hardly be more laudatory. A sustainable building does require more involvement and cooperation by its occupants than an ordinary office building. Unnecessary lights need to be turned off. Windows and window blinds need to be open at certain times and closed at certain times, depending on external conditions. But everyone is happily adjusting to those requirements, especially given the larger purpose involved. Students generally are completely enchanted by the fact that their school is raising the bar on building sustainability and showing the world how it should be done, and is being done. It’s a great accomplishment.”

William Ellis, Ph.D., Senior Visiting Fellow; Lecturer; and Resident Fellow in Industrial Environmental Management, Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies



Is Your Village Green ?

We know you’ve been thinking about it. Towns and villages nationwide are perking up to **green**. The interest usually comes from a group or organization and expands to include others and critical town players. Many begin with grants and municipal building energy efficiency audits.

GCA clubs are fast becoming instrumental in these initiatives. The Bedford (NY) Garden Club hosted a one-day Environmental Summit, in January 2009, planned in just a few months. It is emblematic of what is happening. Their Summit grew to attract 1,000 attendees. More than one hundred partners contributed programs and green wares were on display at tables lining the halls. The agenda was awesome with dozens of workshops and many renowned speakers. And, at the day’s end, the work was just beginning! That’s one way to go and the Bedford energy advisory leaders are eager to share their experience. Check out their website: **sustainablebedford.org**. The website will be updated thoroughly by mid-August of this year.

There are myriad other town-wide greening initiatives percolating throughout the U.S. You will be interested in checking out a single website of particular note. It’s very appealing, even fun to visit, and looks so down-to-earth helpful, you’ll be glad you did. Look for this website:

howgreenismytown.org

A quick visit there will certainly change your “**getting started blues**” to shades of **green**.

*Nancy Howard, Essex County Adirondack G.C. (NY) – Zone III
GCA NAL Committee, Vice-Chair - Forests/Redwood*

Conservation Exhibit Awarded the Marion Thompson Fuller Brown Award at GCA Annual Meeting “The No Run-Off Challenge”

For decades the gold standard of good development was to grade a site, install drainage to get water off it as quickly as possible, and then to cover the land with as many buildings and parking lots as possible, setting aside some land for landscaping and lawns. That plan lasted until someone noticed that rainfall was no longer soaking into the ground. Instead, it collected on hard surfaces or rushed into storm sewers and then into local streams at high velocity and in unnaturally high volume. That caused unusually high flows following even minimal precipitation, which resulted in ripped-up stream banks. Along the way, the rushing water picked up pollutants that included fertilizer, pesticides, motor oil from streets and parking lots, litter, pet waste and even rain-borne pollution. Public officials began to notice an increase in urban and suburban flooding and a decrease in the quality of stream water. This type of development was also responsible for devastation of the ecosystems of freshwater wetlands, as well as the marine areas affected by urban runoff.

In response to growing concerns about these issues, a new method of development was pioneered in Prince George’s County, Maryland in the mid-1980’s. This time, developers were challenged to achieve a greater balance between conservation, growth, ecosystem protection and public health. The new philosophy of Low Impact Development (LID) uses a number of site design and pollution prevention techniques to create a hydrologically functional and environmentally sustainable landscape. The guiding principle of LID is to manage runoff at its source, mimicking natural processes by using soil- and plant-



The Conservation Exhibit with its creators Claire Caudill, Diane Stoner, and Jane Whitaker.

based retention areas. These “rain gardens” reduce runoff volume, remove pollutants, and increase groundwater recharge. They also reduce the temperature of runoff from impervious surfaces.

Low Impact Development was the topic of the conservation exhibit at the 2009 GCA Annual Meeting held in Providence, RI. The GCA Conservation Committee submitted the exhibit, which was created by Jane Whitaker, Diane Stoner and Claire Caudill. The display focused on several LID techniques, including rain gardens, cisterns or rain barrels, green roofs and permeable paving. Photographs and brief explanations highlighted the exhibit panels while a model green roof featuring live common roof plants, and a sample of permeable paving with flowing water animated the display. The team also created a brochure explaining the principles and techniques of low impact development.

An electronic version of this award-winning exhibit, as well as the brochure, is available on the GCA website under the heading “Conservation Committee.” If your club is looking for an interesting new conservation exhibit, check out this one. Low Impact Development is a valuable tool for improving our water quality, creating beautiful and sustainable landscapes and providing important urban wildlife habitat. Please educate your club and community about its many benefits.

*Claire Caudill, G.C. of Houston (TX) – Zone IX
Former GCA Conservation Committee Chair, 2007-2009*

“Summer Shorts” - Short Subjects, Long on Impact

The “Other” Redwood

There are three types of redwood trees in the world. We’re all familiar with the famous and majestic coast redwood, of which GCA owns a grove many of us have visited. Some may be familiar with the deciduous dawn redwood whose native habitat is in a remote valley in China. Last, and definitely not least, is the **giant sequoia**, also known as the sierra redwood. Unlike their coastal cousins that thrive in the fog, these trees are located in the snow packed southern Sierra Nevada Mountains where the climate is extremely dry in the summer. These groves are being studied closely as the snow pack shrinks and the inland summer temperatures rise. One tree in particular is worth a trip – the General Sherman. More than 2000 years ago, a seed the size of an oatmeal flake began to sprout and eventually grew to reach 275 feet (the height of a 27 story building) with a trunk wider than a three-lane highway! Today, this giant sequoia is the world’s largest tree with



enough wood to make a two-foot wide path of inch thick planks 60 miles long! Every year this tree produces enough new wood equivalent to that of a tree 50 feet tall and one foot in diameter. Located south of Yosemite and only a few hours drive from Los Angeles, these magnificent trees are not to be missed!

[Sources: *Via Magazine*, May, '09 and *Save the Redwood League Newsletter*, Spring, '09]

[Also, see **The Redwood Forest: History, Ecology, and Conservation of the Coast Redwoods** by Reed Noss.]

*Ann Lyman, Piedmont (CA) G.C. – Zone XII
1st Vice Chair, GCA NAL Committee*

Los Angeles –

Where Hundreds of the 11,000 Billboards are Going Digital!

This city is perhaps the worst in the nation when it comes to billboards and billboard control. Los Angeles, California has surrendered its built environment to advertising and sign companies. New technologies have allowed the outdoor advertising companies to create giant digital displays and vinyl wraps on buildings. The city is now home to “supergraphics” - gigantic advertisements that completely drape buildings. There are about 11,000 billboards in the city, of which perhaps one-third are illegal. The



outdoor advertising companies, with the aid of willfully blind or inept public officials, have allowed the industry to simply take over the streets and put up signs wherever it chooses. The difference between Los Angeles and many other cities is that other places have taken enforcement seriously. And, this is an enforcement issue. It's about having strict codes, and it's about banning new signs. In the meantime, cities that are serious, like Houston, Texas and Jacksonville, Florida, have banned all new signs in order to get a handle on their problem. It is a battle for control of the public realm - a battle between the outdoor advertising companies and those of us who would prefer that our cities remain places where we can enjoy the cityscape, the streetscape, and the life of the city without the continual bombardment of commercial messages. The states of **Vermont, Maine, Rhode Island, Alaska, and Hawaii** have made the decision to preserve, protect, and defend their fundamental character as scenic and visually pleasing places. The ban in Vermont is celebrating its 40th birthday. The philosophy there is that the

visual integrity of a place matters in long-term development. The way each municipality or state regulates and enforces billboards varies. What happens in your community?

*Jane Herrmann, Diggers G.C. (CA) - Zone XII
GCA NAL Committee, Vice-Chair – Transportation Corridors*

[Sources: *NPR All Things Considered*, Nov. 11, 2008 and *Scenic America Newsletter*, March, 2009.]

Scenic America is the national nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving and enhancing the visual character of America's communities and countryside. Established in part by members of The Garden Club of America, Scenic America often leads the charge in stopping billboards. A unique situation is found in the State of Florida regarding the fight against billboards. If someone from that state donates to Scenic America for the first time, Scenic Florida will match the donation up to \$5000. Then the doubled donation will again be doubled by an anonymous donor. As a result, Scenic America receives four times the original donation! Florida residents should send their donation to Scenic America at 1250 I St. NW, Washington, D.C. 20005 and mention that the donation is available for a Scenic Florida match. Is there a state affiliate of Scenic America in your state? Consider joining in their efforts and see if a similar giving program exists in your state.

*Leslie Pierpont, Late Bloomers G.C. (FL) - Zone VIII
Vice-President - Board of Directors, Scenic Florida*

New York City Going Green!

MillionTreesNYC is an ambitious plan to plant and care for one million new trees across the city's five boroughs over the next decade. Increasing New York City's urban forest by 20%, the plan includes plantings in parks, along streets, public, private and commercial lands. Under the leadership of Mayor Bloomberg, the city will be responsible for 60% of trees being planted in public spaces. The remaining 40% will be planted and paid for by private community organizations and homeowners. The mayor has initiated a very aggressive "green" plan for NYC and wants to make sure that, as the city expands, trees are in place to help clean the air, reduce pollutants and cool the city in the summer.

[See: www.milliontreesnyc.org]



*Ann Lyman, Piedmont (CA) G.C. – Zone XII
1st Vice Chair, GCA NAL Committee*

Home Energy Monitors – A Way to Reduce Home Electricity Costs

Have your summer electricity costs skyrocketed? Do you want to find a way to reduce your costs and reduce your home energy use? Home Energy Monitors are now readily available and reasonably priced. These devices were recently featured on the television program, "Ask This Old House." The monitors provide prompt, convenient feedback on electrical usage, rather than waiting for the electricity bill "surprise." A monitor, a home energy "speedometer," will help you learn more about saving energy and help save the environment. You can monitor total home energy consumption and some even trend the power consumption of individual appliances and estimate greenhouse gas emissions. Homeowners can then change their energy using behavior. To find out more and to order a monitor, Google "home energy monitors." Models start at around \$150.00.

Editor

Coming Attractions!

PBS TV Production:

THE NATIONAL PARKS: AMERICA'S BEST IDEA by Ken Burns



Six years in the making, this highly acclaimed documentary, to be released this fall, has been much anticipated. The six-part, 12-hour production tells the story of how the National Park System, our “common treasure” came to be. The film celebrates the beauty of the parks and the vision of those who worked for their preservation, as well as exploring the challenges they face. Don’t miss it!

*Carole Hunter, Lake Minnetonka G.C. (MN) - Zone XI
Former NAL Committee Vice-Chair - National Parks/Public Land*

Filming in Yosemite National Park” (Source: PBS Website)

[Note: The series will begin on Sept. 27 in most TV markets. A companion book to the series, with the same name, will be released on Sept. 8, 2009.]

Club News

St. George’s Garden Club Celebrates a Day of Conservation



The St. George’s Garden Club held a flower show titled “Conservation at its Best” on April 2, 2009. The show was spearheaded by Anne Hawkins, Artistic Committee Chair, and celebrated a Day of Conservation in Maryland. The categories for the show included “Use It or Lose It,” which featured recycled materials. One of the most imaginative and beautiful of the arrangements included a clothes washer exhaust tube duct-taped to its base (pictured here). Other categories were “Go Green” and “Wind, Water, Warmth,” which included energetic arrangements depicting motion. GCA judges pegged many of the entries as winners.

The day concluded with a presentation by Don Young, Executive Vice President of Ducks Unlimited. Member and guest arrangers provided centerpieces for the dinner tables, coordinating the arrangements with Mr. Young’s presentation with themes such as “Scenes from the Bay” and “Bay Beginnings,” both highlighting the Chesapeake Bay. Attending the dinner were William Baker, Chesapeake Bay Foundation President, and former U.S. Senator Joseph Tydings, both of whom have been forces in the fight for conservation legislation in Maryland. St. George’s members developed an appreciation for the massive scale on which Ducks Unlimited works in restoring and conserving North America’s wetlands, transforming parched ground into lush wetlands that become host, not only to ducks, but also to 900 species of animals - and of course, people - across the U.S, Canada and Mexico.

“First place winning arrangement by Rebecca Waters.”

*Sheila Riggs, St. George’s G.C. (MD) – Zone V
Conservation Committee Chair*

[Author's Note: Ducks Unlimited (DU), founded in 1937, has conserved and restored 13 million acres of wetlands in North America. DU forms partnerships with private landowners, the federal government, and other entities to organize large conservation projects that not only create and protect flyways for ducks and host areas to many other species of wildlife. There are 780,000 members of DU in the U.S.]

If It Was Good Enough for Grandma

In **this** gloved hand, a bottle of ethylene glycol monobutyl ether, a known carcinogen which causes blood and bone marrow damage, and whose use requires safety glasses and gloves, (according to the Material Safety Data Sheet), OR in **this** hand a bottle of drinkable liquid. Which would you choose to clean the countertops where your children eat lunch? Look at the cleaning aisle in your grocery store – think of all that in the waste stream. Check the labels. Many products for different purposes are just the same chemical with different labels. Do we know what these chemicals do to our bodies? Our homes? Our environment? What about the impact caused by the factories that make these chemicals? And, finally, do they REALLY clean as advertised?



In our homes, we can often find products that may be making our interior and exterior environments unhealthy. We have many reasons to rethink how we are cleaning our homes. What if instead of ethylene glycol monobutyl ether, known as Formula 409, we use the old tried and true cleaning method of Grandma's day - vinegar and water! To explore these new/old solutions, The Loveland Garden Club of Nebraska conducted two workshops on using safer cleaning and gardening products. At the "Make-it and Take-it Workshop," participants used a few basic ingredients including vinegar, borax, plant-based castile soap, and baking soda to fill refillable spray bottles and glass jars with cleaning solutions. Members discussed green cleaning ideas, such as using rags, not paper towels! And often soap and water is sufficient! Members also received the booklet of recipes pictured here, with many cleaning recipes and tips.

These self-made cleaning mixtures cost pennies, but more importantly they lessen our environmental impact. Ingredients like bleach and phosphates are no longer washed down the sink and into the waterways and oceans, or left in the atmosphere of our homes or on our home's surfaces. No need to call Poison Control if Junior decides to lick the Cheerios off the counter!

Here are a couple of the suggestions included in the booklet:

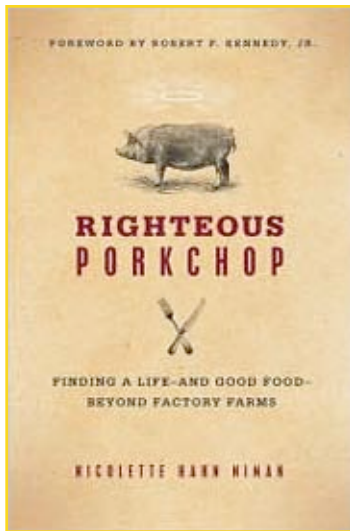
All Purpose Cleaner: 1 tsp. borax or castile soap added to 2 cups hot water – add 1 tsp vinegar or lemon juice to cut grease.

All Purpose Scrub: Baking soda and enough castile soap to make a creamy paste. Spread on cut lemon, use as a sink/tub scrubber. Damp cloth to rinse.

Perhaps your club would like to help spread the word. For more information about the program and its accompanying booklet, contact me at sblackb@yahoo.com.

Sharon Blackburn, Loveland (NE) G.C.
GCA Conservation/NAL Representative – Zone XI

Media Reviews



Righteous Porkchop by Nicolette Hahn Niman

This fascinating book examines America's factory farming world and its alternative - sustainable, family animal farming. As an attorney working for Waterkeeper Alliance, Ms Niman traveled to Missouri and North Carolina to educate herself on hog farming. Her travels are documented in the book. Her horror at industrialized hog farming is palpable. While on a tour in Missouri led by farmers, she visited a farm with 75 "large windowless metal warehouses," each holding 1000 hogs on slatted cement floors. She was appalled at the unnatural manner in which the hogs were raised. The Waterkeeper Alliance eventually brought suit against hog farmers in North Carolina for the water pollution caused by factory farm effluent.

The second half of the book looks at traditional farms where animals are allowed to graze outdoors, mate with each other, raise their young on their own milk, and spend their lives the way we'd all like to see our food animals live. Ms. Niman completes her book with chapters on

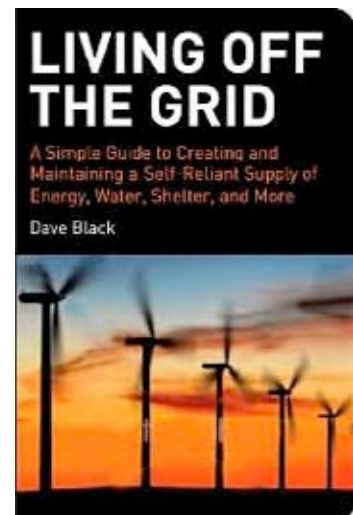
locating sustainably raised food and making sure the "certification" many of them claim is authentic. She recommends seeking out individual farmers that raise eggs, vegetables and meat, whether on location or at local farmers' markets. This well-written book gives the reader a personal glimpse into our American way of farming. Ms. Niman's concern for the animals we eat is well expressed and contagious.

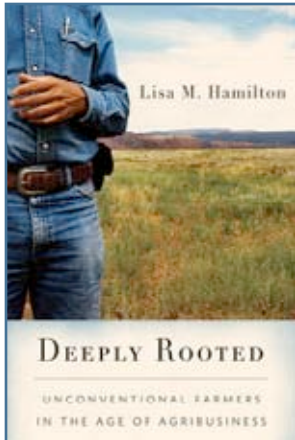
*Susie Wilmerding, G.C. of Philadelphia (PA) – Zone V
GCA Conservation Committee Chair*

Living Off the Grid by Dave Black

More and more Americans are now opting to disconnect from the grid, which usually delivers increasingly expensive fossil fuel based power. And, as many learned during the Northeast blackout of 2003, power is not always certain. Why are they living off the grid? Some want to minimize their impact on the environment, some want to ensure they have service if there's an outage, and some just want to be more "green." This practical, non-technical guide teaches us how to wean ourselves off the electrical milk of modern life. The author sees living off the grid as the path to self-sufficiency in reducing our dependence on resources from outside our country. He first admonishes the reader to follow the advice of *conserve, conserve, conserve* in our daily lives and teaches us how to do that.

Editor





Deeply Rooted: Unconventional Farmers in the Age of Agribusiness

By Lisa M. Hamilton

The author follows the daily lives of three farmers – a dairy farmer in Texas, a rancher in New Mexico, and a family of grain farmers in North Dakota – who run their farms and ranches according to their own principles and opt out of today's large agribusiness. Ms. Hamilton favors small, diverse, organic and sustainable farms and concentrates on the ways these farms and ranches can work. These stories cause the reader to re-think what our agricultural and food system looks like, or should look like. Without attacking agribusiness or focusing on politics or policy, the author asks, "Why not look to the people who grow our food locally for the answers?"

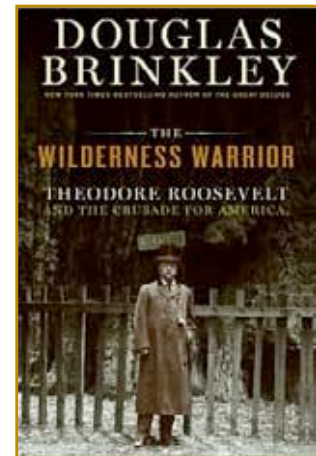
Editor

The Wilderness Warrior: Theodore Roosevelt and the Crusade for America

by Douglas Brinkley

This new book chronicles the conservation efforts of President Theodore Roosevelt. He established five new national parks, two game preserves, and saved from exploitation the Grand Canyon, the Florida Keys, the Olympic Mountains of Washington State, and the Petrified Forest in Arizona. The bold scrawl of his signature set aside some 230 million acres for posterity, almost the size of the Atlantic coast from Maine to Georgia – one out of every ten acres in the U.S., including Alaska. Roosevelt felt these lands should be preserved by the U.S. government and were as much a birthright of all Americans as the Declaration of Independence and the Bill of Rights. Roosevelt considered the Grand Canyon **the** natural wonder of America. His success in saving the canyon from zinc and copper mining is considered by many to be the crowning achievement of his administration.

(Book released June, 2009.)



Conservation Quote for Summer:

"... (Theodore) Roosevelt, from the beginning to the end of his Presidency in March, 1909, did far more for the long term protection of wilderness than all of his White House successors combined."

Douglas Brinkley in *The Wilderness Warrior*

*Carole Hunter, Lake Minnetonka G.C. (MN) - Zone XI
Former NAL Committee Vice-Chair, National Parks/Public Lands*



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Elva Busch, Editor

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