

Litzsinger Road Ecology Center

Community Newsletter

9711 Litzsinger Road • Ladue, MO 63124 • Phone (314) 540-4068 • www.litzsinger.org

Welcome Back—We Missed You

By Bob Coulter

As we gear up for a new school year, I'd like to fill you in on highlights of what has been happening at LREC. We had a busy summer with youth programs, teacher workshops, and research and restoration projects.

In addition to a second offering of our Sustainable Schoolyards workshop that supports your efforts to add native plants to your school grounds, we kicked off a new Community Science Investigators program in collaboration with the teacher education program at MIT. Middle schools here and in Boston will be using handheld computer games, computer mapping tools, and service learning projects to understand and improve their neighborhoods.

We also had a range of youth programs this summer, including a computer game design camp where we worked with pre-teens to explore the learning benefits of kids being game designers. Building on this work, I hope to work with kids in the coming year to develop game-like environmental simulations. Please let me know if you and your students would like to be involved in this effort.

On a less positive note, the ongoing economic challenges have caught up with us, and we will have a smaller staff for a while. Malinda Slagle has relocated to Texas with her family, and we won't be filling that restoration ecologist position. Also, we have reduced our team by one school partnership coordinator due to our current budget constraints. Sean Fears has moved on to new opportunities. We wish him the best.

While we're smaller, we're no less focused on helping you to engage your kids with the natural community. Please keep us posted on how we can help you. ☞

Inside this issue:

Photo Report: What Are Sustainable Schoolyards?.....	2
Summer ERC Program	3
Don't Overlook the Overlooks.....	4
Glasshouse Quiz.....	5

Upcoming LREC Events:

New Volunteer Educator Training
Mondays beginning September 14, 9am–3pm. See page 3 for details.

Upcoming Opportunities:

Native Plant School Open House
September 4, native plant sale 4–6pm; demonstrations 6–8pm. Shaw Nature Reserve. \$5 admission (\$3 for members). RSVP required: call (636) 451-3512 ext. 6075.

Japanese Festival
September 5, 6, and 7. At Missouri Botanical Garden. Featuring taiko drumming, traditional tea ceremonies, martial arts, and more. Details and ticket info at www.mobot.org.

Green Homes Festival
September 26, 10am–6pm. At Grandel Square in Midtown St. Louis. Featuring exhibits, workshops, food, crafts and children's activities all centered around sustainability. Details at www.greenhomesSTL.org.

Plastic Pot Recycling

Through September 30. At the Garden's Monsanto Center and other locations. Close the gardening loop! Recycle plastic garden pots, cell packs, and trays. Hours, acceptable plastics, and a list of satellite collection centers at www.mobot.org/plasticpotrecycling or call (314)577-9440.



What Are Sustainable Schoolyards?

By Eddie Jones

Answer: Schoolyards that sustain native plants and wildlife along with the interest and fascination of students, teachers, and the entire school community. For example:



*Sustainable schoolyards at:
A) Spoede Elementary School;
B) The Freedom School;
C) Our Lady of Providence Catholic School;
D) McGrath Elementary School;
E) The College School;
F) Southview School.*

Summer ERC Program

By Leslie Memula

This summer LREC welcomed eleven ERC (Ecological Restoration Corps) students representing seven different area high schools. The program ran June 22 through July 2, 2009. Despite the heat—yes the first week was the hottest of the summer—the students helped us remove Japanese Hops near the Horse Trail creek access and *Euonymus* from the old boardwalk area. They learned about the Deer Creek Watershed and sampled creek critters with the help of Danelle. We toured Calvary Cemetery, the only original prairie remnant in St. Louis, and visited Shaw Nature Reserve. While at SNR, we hiked from the Trail House to the Meramec River and back. Students helped collect sedge seed from one of the prairies and spiderwort from the Wetland Trail with Malinda and the upland gang. They had a chance to get to know each other better and practice their interview skills by working with the video camera. This came in handy when talking with horticulture and education volunteer Ray Potter, who provided the students with a unique perspective on growing up near LREC. We look forward to seeing the ERC students back on site to help out with our continued restoration efforts. ☞

Glasshouse Quiz Answers, from page 5

1. dodder (scientific genus is *Cuscuta*)
2. a) yellow
b) purple
c) red
d) yellow
e) purple
f) white
g) red
h) yellow
i) white
3. a) seedbox (*Ludwigia alternifolia*)
b) Illinois bundle flower (*Desmanthus illinoensis*)



Spread the Word: **VOLUNTEER EDUCATOR Training Starts September 14, 2009**

Monday training sessions begin September 14, 2009 and continue for ten consecutive weeks through November 16, 2009. Training will run 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. During these Monday training sessions, new volunteers will become familiar with the site, learn inquiry-based, outdoor teaching strategies, and gain an understanding of basic ecology. Trainees will also have many opportunities to observe school groups and practice teaching.

For more information on becoming a Volunteer Educator at LREC, call Jackie Juras, Manager of Volunteer Programs, at (314) 577-5187 or visit www.litzsinger.org. ☞



Don't Overlook the Overlooks

By Leslie Memula



Photo by Leslie Memula.

With the continued erosion and occasional flooding of Deer Creek, many of our creek overlooks were washed away. Thanks to our Friday volunteer



Great blue heron.

Photo courtesy of PDPhoto.org.

crew, new overlooks have been created in both the north and south woods.

Since there is so much to do and see when at LREC, the overlooks often get...well, overlooked. Would you believe that the overlook just across from the gravel parking area is an exceptional spot for observing wildlife?

Over the last few months we have seen many different turtle species including the Eastern spiny softshell (more than five at a time on some days), two common snapping turtles, a red-eared slider, and a Western painted turtle.

In late spring and early summer a very active pair of muskrats were seen collecting grasses and then

returning to their den. We think they were building a nest but we haven't seen any babies yet.

On a particularly good day in May, we saw a mink work tirelessly to transport her young, one by one, from the Pasture Prairie to the other side of Deer Creek. She swam across the creek, one baby in her mouth at a time. She did this at least seven times, slowing a little with each round.

This stretch of creek has also been a favorite spot for a great blue heron. He has been seen patiently walking up and down the creek catching and eating fish.

So the next time you visit us, take a moment to stop at one of our overlooks and let us know what you find! 🐾

Check out the LREC Community Blog at www.litzsinger.org/weblog/

Think you know LREC? Go to our Community Blog and scrutinize the Mystery Image. Do you recognize it? If so, leave a comment. The Mystery Image will be updated every few days.

LREC teachers and volunteers are invited to submit photos, documents, links, and other items of community interest to the LREC Community Blog. Email eddie@litzsinger.org to request login rights.

Glass House Quiz

By Danelle Haake and Deanna Lawlor

This first issue of the LREC newsletter for the new school year offers a second opportunity for us to provide a little quiz. Last issue, we focused on trees and aquatic invertebrates. This month, we thought we would learn about prairie plants. Enjoy!



1. What is the name of the leafless orange vine that can be seen on the western edge of the South Prairie (and pictured at right)? This vine is a parasite that gets its nutrients from the plants around it.
2. Flower color: Match the plant names below with one of the following flower colors: red, purple, yellow, white (each color may be used more than once).

a) Cup plant (*Silphium perfoliatum*)

b) Meadow phlox (*Phlox maculate*)

c) Royal catchfly (*Silene regia*)

d) Rosinweed (*Silphium integrifolium*)

e) Iron weed (*Vernonia altissima*)

f) Hairy mountain mint (*Pycnanthemum pilosum*)

g) Cardinal flower (*Lobelia cardinalis*)

h) Sweet coneflower (*Rudbeckia subtomentosa*)

i) Water Parsnip (*Sium suave*)

3. This time of year you will see the ecologists at LREC searching for plants that are ready for seed collection. Several of the prairie plants have common names that reflect the unusual shaped capsules that hold the seeds. Two of those are seedbox (*Ludwigia alternifolia*) and Illinois bundle flower (*Desmanthus illinoensis*). Can you tell which is which?

a)



b)



See **Glass House Quiz Answers**, page 3