

Litzsinger Road Ecology Center

COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER

www.litzsinger.org

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April 2011

Applying for Next Year's Field Labs

by Bob Coulter

As we move into the tail end of this school year, it's time to start thinking about next year. By the time you receive this newsletter, the application forms will be available at www.litzsinger.org. You'll also be receiving a note from your partnership coordinator (Eddie, Leslie, or me) with our thoughts on what might make a good next step for your project. You, of course, are welcome to propose whatever project makes the most sense for your students.

As before, the overall focus of the Field Lab program is to use targeted work at LREC to support what you are doing with your students on the school grounds or in the community. The best proposals start with ambitious, but age-appropriate, learning goals which you are pursuing through a sustained project at school. From there, think about what the best use of 2-3 visits to LREC might be to enhance that project, and how we can support your efforts by being on site with you at your school occasionally. If you are fishing for ideas, note that there are four opportunities this summer to work closely with LREC staff in designing projects. Whether you are relatively new to LREC or a veteran, I'd strongly suggest that you join us for one. For more information go to www.litzsinger.org/profdev.html.

Finally, for now we are going to delay scheduling the Field Labs this year until the week of August 1. This allows participants in our summer workshops to have a chance to apply before the schedule fills up. Please be sure that we have a summer phone number and e-mail address in your application which can be used to reach you then.

If you have any questions about this, please don't hesitate to contact me at bob.coulter@mobot.org or 314-368-7489. ✎

Students from Confluence Preparatory Academy measure tree trunk diameter. Read more about the students' studies at LREC on page 2. Photo by Eddie Jones.



You Can See the Forest for the Trees!

by Eddie Jones

Good things happen when ecological restoration and outdoor education meet. Such was the case recently at Litzsinger Road Ecology Center.

The riparian woodland at LREC is in need of some ecological assessment. Tenth-grade biology students from Confluence Preparatory Academy need to hone their science process skills in a real-world setting. Shauna Stapleton, the Confluence biology teacher, seized the opportunity and engaged her students in a tree inventory.

The students' first visit to Litzsinger Road Ecology Center gave them the opportunity to become familiar with ecosystems typical of the St. Louis region: streams, prairies, and woodlands. The students then designed investigations to determine the impact of various abiotic factors on prairie plant diversity. After making predictions, the students looked at soil moisture, sunlight exposure, direction of slope, and whether the plants were in the interior or edge of the prairie.

During a follow-up visit, the students took their plant diversity studies into the woods. Using homemade clinometers (made with protractor, straw, string, and paper



Tenth-grade biology students from Confluence Preparatory Academy identify a tree in the LREC woodlands. Photo by Eddie Jones.

clip), students determined tree height. By measuring tree trunk diameter, and with a crash course in tree identification, the students were able to determine relative tree mass and the frequency of six riparian species. The data that they collected constitutes the first step in assessing the woodland community at LREC. The students' work will prove useful as a monitoring protocol is established for ongoing ecological assessment.

These learning activities are good examples of place-based education; promoting student achievement, community vitality, and ecological integrity. Both literally and

figuratively, you *can* see the forest for the trees.

Visit the Promise of Place web site at www.promiseofplace.org for more information about place-based education. 🌿

Confluence Preparatory Academy

Location:
310 N. 15th Street,
St. Louis, MO 63103

Grade Levels: 9–11

Number of Students: about 230

Classrooms Working with LREC: 1

Website:
<http://www.confluenceacademy.com/Home.aspx?ContentID=1272>



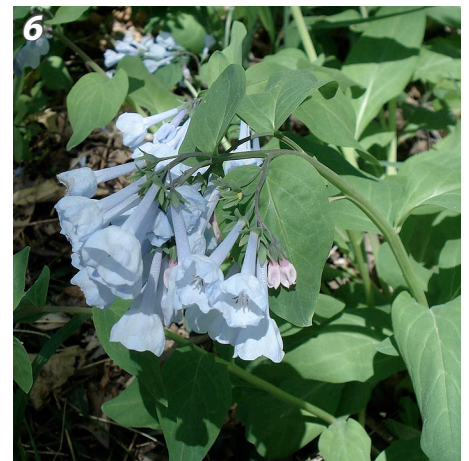
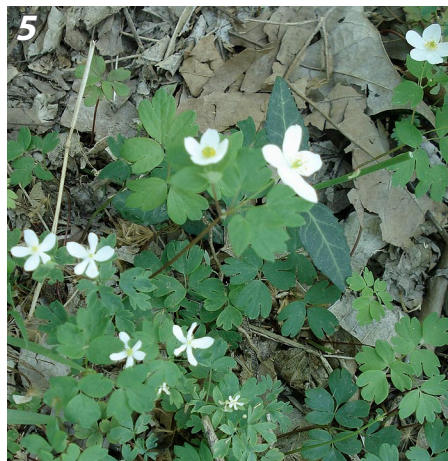
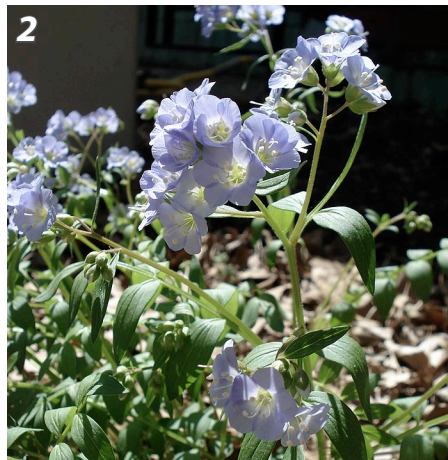
Glass House Quiz: Ephemeral Beauty

by Deanna Lawlor

Spring is my favorite time of year, and walking through the woods looking for early spring ephemerals is something I try to never miss. Spring woodland ephemerals take advantage of the lack of tree foliage and bloom early in the spring before the forest canopy blocks the sunlight. Ephemerals have a short above-ground growth period often lasting just a few weeks, during which time they bloom, go to seed, die back, and go dormant until the following spring.

Pictured here are some ephemerals found in Missouri, many of which are found right here at LREC. Using your identification skills, see if you can name a few and then take the time to get out and see them before they disappear for another year.

All photos by Deanna Lawlor.



See **Quiz**, page 4

From **Quiz**, page 3

Answers:

1. Dutchman's breeches
(*Dicentra cucullaria*)
2. Jacob's ladder
(*Polemonium reptans*)
3. Purple trillium
(*Trillium recurvatum*)
4. Blue-eyed Mary
(*Collinsia verna*)
5. False rue anemone
(*Isopyrum biternatum*)
6. Virginia bluebells
(*Mertensia virginica*) 🌸

LREC Announcements



April 7

Macroinvertebrate Monitoring

Meet at 9 am at Glass House. Alternate day in case of stormy weather is April 13. RSVP to Danelle Haake (314-961-4410 or danelle@litzsinger.org).

April 28

Stream Sampling

Meet at 9 am at Glass House. Contact Danelle Haake (314-961-4410 or danelle@litzsinger.org) with questions.

April 26

Volunteer Enrichment: Children & Nature Design—Bridging the Gap Between Play and Learning

12:30 to 2:30 pm. What does outdoor learning look like for elementary students? Teacher-educator David Sobel suggests it looks a lot like play: adventure, fantasy and imagination, animal allies, maps and paths, special places, small worlds, hunting and gathering. We will relate these strategies to outdoor learning at LREC. Join us for lunch on the deck at noon. RSVP to Martha at 314-540-4068 or martha@litzsinger.org.

Local Events



The Missouri Botanical Garden is celebrating the International Year of Forests with a TREEmendous year of activities highlighting the real value of trees and the critical role they play in our lives.

For more information, go to www.mobot.org/treemendous.

Events and activities include:

Arbor Day Tree Giveaway

April 1, 2011

Great St. Louis Tree Hunt

April 1–September 30, 2011

Interactive Discovery Center

April 1, 2011–January 3, 2012

Forest Festival

April 30–May 1, 2011

Extreme Tree Houses Exhibition

April 30–August 21, 2011

April 14

Science Café: "Climate Change—What We Really Know"

7 to 9 pm at Herbie's Restaurant, 405 N. Euclid Ave. Free. Explore the facts and the challenges of climate change with Jim Kramper, Warning Coordination Meteorologist for the National Weather Service. Learn more at <http://www.slsc.org/AdultProgrammings/ScienceCafe.aspx>.

April 16

BioBlitz in Creve Coeur Park

10 am to 4 pm at Creve Coeur Park. Assist experts in identification of birds, plants, insects, and other living things. Register at <http://academyofsciencestl.org/events/>.

April 17

St. Louis Earth Day Festival

11 am to 6 pm at the Muny Grounds in Forest Park. Enjoy live music, cultural performances, local food, recycling opportunities, 300 vendors, and hands-on activities for the whole family! More information at <http://www.stlouisearthday.org/events/>.