

# Litzsinger Road Ecology Center

## COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER

www.litzsinger.org

February 2012

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Participants kept vigilant watch over the prescribed burn that took place at Litzsinger Road Ecology Center on January 5. View more photos from the burn on page 4. Photo by Carol Boeckmann.

## Tending Your Professional Garden

by Bob Coulter

Before long, spring will be upon us, and our dormant plants will be blooming once again. It's time to begin thinking about professional renewal as well. In the book *Gardens of Democracy*, the authors—former Clinton speechwriter and policy advisor Eric Liu and Nick Hanauer—suggest that we need to periodically “seed, feed, and weed” our economy. Perhaps the same can be said for *our* professional practice. Looking ahead, ask yourself, What new ventures should my colleagues and I be seeding? How can we feed what is already growing? And—perhaps the hardest part—how can we weed out what just isn't working in our curriculum?

To help you in this process, we are offering three professional development workshops at Litzsinger Road Ecology Center this summer. They

are described in more detail on page 7, but here's the short version: If you are looking to build up a native plant garden on your school grounds, consider *Sustainable Schoolyards*. To learn strategies to connect to your community more deeply, check out *Questing to Learn*. And if you just want some time to think about your field studies and plan some new adventures, sign up for *Effective Outdoor Inquiry*. Each of these offers chances for you to reflect on your practice and design resources that will seed new areas or feed existing programs. ✨



# Getting Started

by Leslie Memula

For some reason, I've had a difficult time getting inspired to write a newsletter piece this month. Although I knew what I wanted to write about, it seemed that time just kept ticking away and I found myself getting nowhere. Then it dawned on me... all I needed was to start typing.

A month into the New Year, a lot of us begin to realize that we are already behind in the goals that we have set for ourselves. So we begin to reassess things and break down our goals into more manageable chunks. By completing these smaller—and less daunting tasks—we will begin to move forward.

If you are a teacher partnering with us this year then you know one of our goals is to see you and your students engaging with your schoolyard and your community on a regular basis. Perhaps you and your students have been inside a lot lately planning the perfect native habitat to construct on your campus. Or maybe you just haven't made time to take your students outside much at all this school year. Whatever the reason, I want to encourage you to move beyond the walls of your classroom.

By bringing your class to Litzsinger Road Ecology Center you have already begun to study native habitats and ecosystems, not to mention the rich diversity of plant and animal species found in Missouri. Now it is time to move forward, to investigate your very own outdoor spaces. You may not think there is much for your students to learn outside on your school campus but try taking them outside just one time—I'm certain you will be amazed.

If you are stumped and not sure how to begin, please ask us—we are here to help. LREC has a variety of preK–12 curriculum materials that can enable you to weave outdoor learning activities into creative arts, social studies, math, and language arts in addition to science, so that your school districts and administrators will be pleased.

By helping your students develop a sense of wonder and a sense of place in their local environment, you will be encouraging them along the path of life-long stewardship of the natural world. ✨




Now in bloom: Ozark witch hazel (*Hamamelis vernalis*). Photo by Danelle Haake.

## Prairie Garden Grant

Gardening groups, parks, schools, and other entities are invited to submit proposals to the Missouri Prairie Foundation's *Prairie Gardens Small Grants Program*. Five hundred dollars will be awarded to help fund the establishment of a prairie garden or planting. Gardens must be open to the public and must incorporate native prairie species. Matching funds are not required, but proposals with secured matching funds may be evaluated higher than those without. (Note: LREC offers the value of our time as matching funds.)

Proposals should include: explanation of purpose; budget and time frame for completion; design, maintenance, and interpretation plans; and contact information. Limit proposals to two typewritten pages (including diagrams or other graphics). Submit proposals to [info@moprairie.com](mailto:info@moprairie.com) by March 1, 2012. Award will be announced April 2. Questions? Call 888-843-6739.



# In Her Own Words: From Outdoor Learner to Outdoor Educator

*Litzsinger Road Ecology Center staff are committed to assisting teachers in developing outdoor teaching strategies that enhance the curriculum, improve natural habitat, and promote community connections. To support this commitment, we seek opportunities to engage students enrolled in teacher education programs at some of our local universities. We have visited some of these classes, encouraging the students to include the outdoors in their future lesson plans.*

*The following is a narrative submitted by **Amber Peroutka**, a student that we met in an UMSL classroom about three years ago. She now teaches second grade at Carondelet Leadership Academy, a charter school in south St. Louis.*

—Eddie Jones

I have always had a passion for nature. As a child everything I did was outdoors. Carving out new jungle trails (I lived in the middle of a rainforest in Indonesia) and tree climbing were some of my favorite activities. My elementary teachers at the time were well aware of my interests and did everything they could to foster my curiosity into meaningful learning experiences. I was lucky to be able to have a “learning garden” in my backyard and dedicated teachers to guide me.

When I moved to St. Louis I found that not everyone was quite so lucky. I knew I wanted to be a teacher but I didn’t know how I was going to give children a piece of my experiences as a child. When I was introduced to Eddie Jones

from Litzsinger Road Ecology Center (LREC), through a science class I was taking at UMSL, that all changed. He emphasized using our own environment to develop children’s curiosity and learning. I knew this was something I had to be involved in as it paralleled what my childhood teachers did for me.

Luck was on my side again the following semester when, as a student teacher at Monroe eMINTS Academy, I had a chance to take my class to LREC. I was excited and I had an idea of what was going to take place, but my experience there completely surpassed my expectations. The students were able to explore many habitats and the life forms that were present. They were able to learn about native plant

species and how they impact animals and humans, all while being a part of it. Not only did the staff and volunteers provide valuable lessons to the students but they also educated me as a developing teacher.

Since then I’ve been back to LREC three more times with my own classroom now, and I have definite plans to go in the future. Every time I take my students, they have the best time and they learn more than they ever could in the classroom. The staff at LREC has offered to come to our school and support us in building our own on-site learning garden.

I have also been involved in the professional development that LREC has to offer. They introduced me to the site and showed me how to best take advantage of the resources LREC provides as well as the resources present in my school community. Next summer I plan on attending more LREC workshops.

I would strongly encourage student teachers, experienced teachers, and any other educators to get involved with LREC. With a partnership with such fabulous people, I have felt completely supported. They keep in touch and provide me with valuable resources. My students and I have benefited more from this partnership than I ever could have imagined. 🌿

## A Note of Thanks...

*Thank you to all of the staff and volunteers who made our prairie and woodland burns on January 5, 2012 a success. By all accounts, these were among the most successful and complete burns yet at LREC, thanks to perfect burn weather and plenty of nice, dry fuel.*

*I have heard from several of you that you were interested in helping with the burn, but that you did not receive notification. I am terribly sorry for this miscommunication. If your name was left off of the e-mail list, please contact me at [danelle@litzsinger.org](mailto:danelle@litzsinger.org) or 314-961-4410 to make sure that you are on our list for next year's burn.*

*In the meantime, please enjoy these wonderful photos taken by volunteer Carol Boeckmann.*

—Danelle Haake 🍷



# Glass House Quiz: Evergreens

by Danelle Haake and Deanna English

We have reached the point in winter at which we are more than ready to see more green in our surroundings. While we still have time to wait before spring, there is a way to get some green in our line of sight—evergreens! Let's see what we know about these lovely winter oases.

- 1. How can Missouri's native shortleaf pine (*Pinus echinata*) be distinguished fairly quickly from non-native pines?**
  - a) The long, cylindrical cones fall off each winter.
  - b) The majority of the needles are in bundles of two.
  - c) Most of the needles are shorter than 2.5 inches.
  - d) Both b and c.
- 2. Some trees and shrubs have needle-like leaves; some trees and shrubs are evergreen. Though there is overlap between these two groups, they are not exclusively matched. Match the following four species with the appropriate characteristics.**

a) Baldcypress.	1) Evergreen with needle-like leaves.
b) American holly.	2) Evergreen with broad leaves.
c) Eastern redcedar.	3) Deciduous with needle-like leaves.
d) Green haw.	4) Deciduous with broad leaves.
- 3. Of the following evergreens, which species is/are native to Missouri?**
  - a) Eastern white pine.
  - b) Eastern redcedar.
  - c) Virginia pine.
  - d) Ashe juniper.
  - e) Both b and d.
- 4. Which of the following evergreens may be found here at LREC? (Hint: there is more than one correct answer.)**
  - a) Shortleaf pine.
  - b) Eastern redcedar.
  - c) Eastern white pine.
  - d) American holly.



Evergreens add welcome color to a winter landscape. Photo by Danelle Haake.



Ashe juniper (*Juniperus ashei*). Photo by E. Denison.

## VALENTINE

by Martha M. Schermann

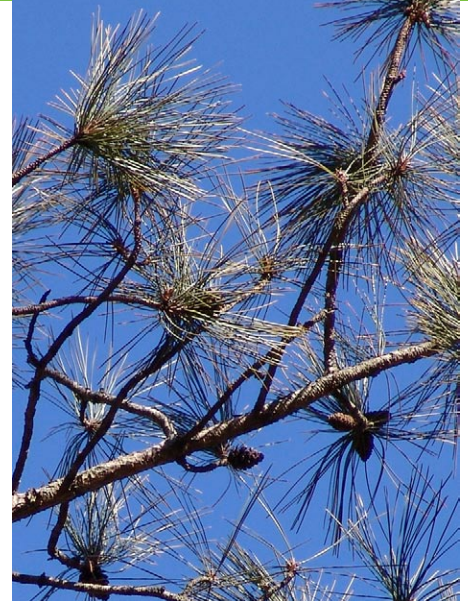
Volunteers  
Actively  
Leading  
Eager  
Novices  
To  
Inspire  
New  
Expectations

See **Quiz**, page 6

From **Quiz**, page 5

Answers:

1. **b) The majority of the needles are in bundles of 2.** Shortleaf pine needles typically are found in bundles of 2 (sometimes 3). The cones are small and egg-shaped and generally stay on the tree for several years. Needles of the shortleaf pine are 3–5 inches long: shorter than those of the loblolly pine, approximately the same length as the eastern white pine, and longer than those of the scrub pine.
2. a) Bald cypress: 3) deciduous with needle-like leaves.  
b) American holly: 2) evergreen with broad leaves.  
c) Eastern redcedar: 1) evergreen with needle-like leaves.  
d) Green haw: 4) deciduous with broad leaves.
3. **Both b and d.** Eastern redcedar are native throughout the state of Missouri. Ashe juniper may be found in parts of four counties in the far southwest corner of the state (south of Springfield). The **only** pine native to Missouri is the shortleaf pine.
4. **All of these are found at LREC!** Shortleaf pine are found near the Glass House parking area. Eastern redcedars are found on the berm. White pine line the truck path between the South Prairie and the Nursery. We have a few American holly in the savannah.



Source:

Don Kurz. "Trees of Missouri".  
Missouri Department of  
Conservation, 2003. 🌲



From top to bottom:  
Shortleaf pine needles and cones;  
American holly; eastern redcedar.  
Photos taken at LREC by Danelle Haake.

Litzsinger Road Ecology Center

Site address: 9711 Litzsinger Road, Ladue, MO 63124

Mailing address: 292 East Ave. Suite 28, Webster Groves, MO 63119-1702

314-540-4068

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

## Summer Workshops

### Sustainable Schoolyards

June 11–15; 9am–4pm

No fee. Two graduate credits available with additional university charge.

Can your students plan and create a schoolyard wildlife habitat while they achieve curriculum objectives?

A growing number of St. Louis area schools and a local nature center say, “Yes!” During this workshop, you will be introduced to methods for analyzing the history and ecology of your school and for developing a schoolyard habitat with your students, all in support of your curriculum. Project mentoring is available during the school year.

**Applications will be accepted from teams of two or more teachers.**

### Questing to Learn

June 18–22; 9am–4pm

No fee. Two graduate credits available with additional university charge.

Discover the remarkable stories and special places in your community as you build quests for your students. Clue-to-clue explorations guide students as they investigate the people and places that make your neighborhood unique. Along the way, they can meet a wide range of curriculum standards, including language, math, science, and social studies. You will have plenty of opportunities to share ideas with colleagues, and leave with a quest developed and ready to try out with your students.

### Effective Outdoor Learning

Offered twice: June 25–27 (M–W) OR July 25–27 (W–F); 9am–4pm

No fee for workshop or follow-up student field experience.

Learn great ways to take your kids outside into the schoolyard and neighborhood while meeting curriculum requirements. Develop a field study project at Litzsinger Road Ecology Center that links to your schoolyard investigations, then bring your students to LREC during the school year—busing is even provided!



## LREC Announcements

February 13

### Volunteer Enrichment: Discover Nature Curriculum from MDC

10:30am–12:30pm, at the barn. David Bruns from MDC will be on hand to give an overview of the *Discover Nature* curriculum that is currently used by City Academy, MRH Middle School, and McGrath Elementary. After the talk join us with your lunch or take a walk. RSVP to Martha at 314-540-4068 or [martha@litzsinger.org](mailto:martha@litzsinger.org).

February 23

### Monthly Water Quality Sampling

12:30pm, meet at the glass house. Questions? Contact Danelle Haake at [danelle@litzsinger.org](mailto:danelle@litzsinger.org) or 314-961-4410.

## Local Events

February 4

### REI Get Involved

11am–2pm at REI (1703 S. Brentwood Blvd.). Meet local conservation and recreation groups and discover volunteer opportunities. Learn more at <http://www.rei.com/event/33341/session/41798> or call 314-918-1004.

February 23

### Rain Water Harvesting

7–9pm at the Missouri Botanical Garden. Local experts explain water use and treatment in St. Louis and introduce simple tools to help conserve water in your yard. More info/registration at <http://www.mobot.org/classes> or call 314-603-8834.

Coming soon: March 31

### No Child Left Inside Conference

9am–4pm at UMSL. Experience best practices, learn about current research, connect with local resources, and much more. Download flyer at [http://www.litzsinger.org/2012\\_No\\_Child.pdf](http://www.litzsinger.org/2012_No_Child.pdf).

Questions? Call 314-540-4068. Download a registration form at [http://www.litzsinger.org/2012\\_lrec\\_tpd-ap.pdf](http://www.litzsinger.org/2012_lrec_tpd-ap.pdf).

The Missouri Botanical Garden offers additional professional development opportunities. Learn more at <http://tinyurl.com/mbg-teacherpd>.