

Natural Resources Management Activities

DeKalb County Forest Preserve District

October 2017

Primary activities for the month of October included:

1. Brush control. October is a transitional month. We are wrapping up the final plantings of the season, we increase seed collection as plants go dormant, we complete a few final herbicide treatments on weedy stuff, and we begin *brush control season*. “Brush” is any small or medium woody plant that is growing somewhere we don’t want it. Most of our brush control is aimed at non-native species such as Honeysuckle, Buckthorn, Multiflora Rose, Autumn Olive and Mulberry: species that grow rapidly, produce lots of seed and crowd out native plants. Sometimes we also control native plants that have these same characteristics - Wild Cherry, Box Elder or Willow. This month we began brush control under the large savanna Oaks in east Swanson Grove and in the sedge meadow at Potawatomi Woods.

2. Seed collection. Our stewards are the group of volunteers that meet each Wednesday morning, 9:00 to noon, to help us gather most of the seed we collect. We gather seed semi-regularly from May to November, but October is the prime month. This month they visited Russell Woods, Afton and the MacQueen preserves to collect woodland, wetland and prairie seeds. On one rainy Wednesday, we met at Afton in the machine shed to sift and winnow several dozen species. We will provide an end-of-season report on species and amounts later this year.

3. Tree planting. October is a good time to plant trees, and, again this year *for the 9th season in a row*, friends and family of the late Jeff Arnold planted trees in a DeKalb Forest Preserve, this year at Swanson Grove. With rain threatening to make egress a muddy challenge, about 4 dozen adults and children planted 68 trees and shrubs, thirteen species total, in record time. Our staff had cleared brush and pre-dug holes in the tough sod, expediting the process.

4. Late season herbicide applications. The continued warm weather in much of October allowed for late season herbicide application in our sedge meadow restoration in Swanson Grove. Grass specific herbicide was used to treat Reed Canary Grass and other cool season grasses that had invaded this fine two-acre sedge meadow remnant. A broad spectrum herbicide was applied to another 5 acres surrounding the site. Multiple applications over a period of years are often necessary to control the toughest of these aggressive non-native invasive species, but the results are well worth the persistence.

5. Interagency coordination, research and community education. (a) We completed the mussel surveys and snake monitoring that we had done in cooperation with NIU, Openlands and the Illinois Natural History Survey. Data is being compiled and interpreted for year-end reports. (b) At the request of Mike Richolson, Conservationist with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, we met with landowners and land managers who are considering Wetland Reserve Projects (WRP) similar to our South Branch Prairie. After describing the planning, implementation and on-going management of a project of this scope, we provided a tour of the plant communities at our site. (c) At the invitation of the Committee for the Preservation of Wildlife, a student organization at NIU, we presented the latest information regarding our research on freshwater mussels in DeKalb County streams.



This is the early October bloom of *Bottle Gentian* that grows at Potawatomi Woods.



Here is the seed cluster and some leaves of *Blue Cohosh*, another uncommon plant, this one at Russell Woods. It is very difficult to grow from seed; it doesn't germinate for a number of years after planting. But we keep trying.