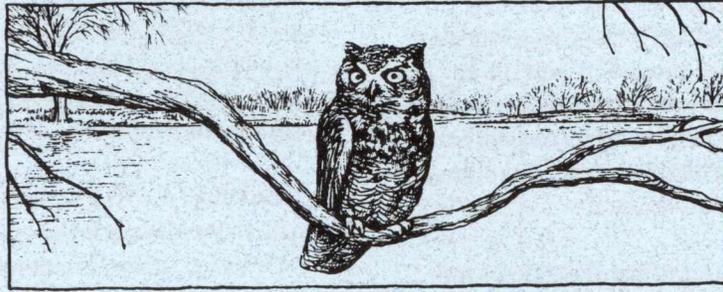


STILLMAN NEWSLETTER



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TELLING DOGWOODS BY THEIR BARK

-- Mark Spreyer

Hedgerows and clumps of shrubs can be attractive natural fences, screening your yard from the neighbors or the road. Of course, when the leaves fall, their value as a screen will decrease but some, such as our native dogwoods, can add a rare red accent to the winter landscape.

Dogwoods can quickly be separated from many other woody plants by the way their leaves are arranged. They grow in pairs or opposite one another (see illustration). Also, the leaves have a graceful arcuate vein pattern. That is, they start at the center vein and gradually arc, paralleling each other as they go, towards the tip of the leaf.

The two dogwoods on our agenda, silky and red-osier, have reddish twigs and can grow with their feet wet.

Silky or Swamp Dogwood (*Cornus amomum*)

This dogwood lives up to both of its common names. Look closely for fine silk hairs on the tips of its distinctive maroon twigs. In the fall, its berries are pale blue which adds to its ornamental value. Check for these shrubs growing along the banks of streams, ponds, and lakes.

Some years ago, while working in the northwoods, I remember passing some swamp dogwood on my way to canoe through a bay of wild rice. I was trying my hand at harvesting rice like Native Americans did. Suffice it to say, it's hard work. In any event, I noticed the dogwood because I had recently been reading about kinnikinnik.

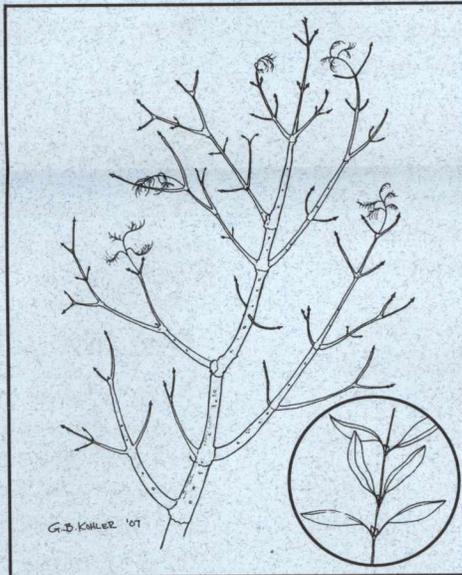
Kinnikinnik is an Algonquin Indian word for a botanical mixture used in rituals and in ceremonial offerings. Often made with bearberry, Great Lakes Algonquin and Iroquois tribes made kinnikinnik out of a combination of plants including bark shavings from swamp dogwood.

Perhaps the Native Americans had alerted early herbalists to the qualities of dogwood bark. These botanical healers would use it as a substitute for quinine.

Now, I'm not suggesting you grind up some dogwood and mix it with vodka for your New Year's party. But, if you are looking for a decorative plant to keep a muddy shoreline from eroding, silky dogwood is for you.

Red-osier or Redtwig Dogwood (*Cornus sericea*)

Here we have the showiest and most widespread of the common dogwoods. The twigs have been described as brilliant, wine, or blood red. I say all of the above.



Renewal Reminder

If you see a 7 after your name, this will be your last newsletter until you renew. If you didn't receive our annual membership letter, just use the form on the back of this newsletter. Please remember, in order to keep Stillman a viable and diverse natural area, we need your support. Thank you.

STILLMAN NATURE CENTER

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Interestingly, the twigs aren't intensely red year round. In summer, the twigs lean towards being green.

The word lean is chosen for a purpose, This sprawling plant, which can reach a height of ten feet, often has its lower branches growing along the ground. If you lift up these branches, you might notice some white roots connecting the branches to the soil. Trailing branches that sprout roots are called stolons and explain the former scientific name for this dogwood, *Cornus stolonifera*.

There are many cultivated varieties of red-osier dogwood available to landscapers including one with yellow twigs. Occasionally, you will see a yellowtwig dogwood along Stillman's trails. No doubt, these are escapees from formal plantings.

Besides being a colorful component to a hedgerow, red-osier dogwood can also be used to hold a streambank in place. Although this shrub can be grown in some shade, its red stems will be brighter when grown in the sun.

Dogwoods Set the Stage

Stillman, which has many wet areas, was once farmed. If you look carefully, you can see where water had been encouraged to move along.

Over the years, drain tiles have ceased functioning and the raindrops and runoff have returned to their former gathering areas. Not surprisingly, our recovering landscape has been colonized by dogwoods, sumacs and other colorful woody plants.

Imagine these thickets of maroon and red-stemmed dogwoods as velvet curtains drawn across a stage. In early spring, the stage will host the entertaining nuptial sky dance of the American woodcock, an inland sandpiper.

Famed conservationist Aldo Leopold wrote, "An ideal woodcock range consists of a springy alder or dogwood swamp adjoining spotty thickets of hazelbrush, blackberry, young popples [aspens and cottonwood], and young oaks."

As you might expect, Stillman with its dogwoods, cottonwoods, and blackberries has always hosted a marvelous woodcock display.

If you can't join us for tree identification (see below) when we will visit some dogwoods, please stop by in spring for the woodcock's sky dance (see spring newsletter).



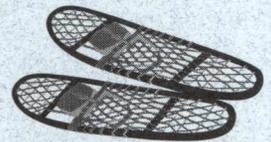
PROGRAMS

Program Basics: PLEASE CALL OR FAX US AT 428-OWLS(6957), OR EMAIL STILLMAN AT: stillnc@wildblue.net TO MAKE RESERVATIONS for programs. Remember to include your name, phone number, and the number of people that will be attending.

If less than 5 - 10 people (varying with the activity) have called two days prior to a program, the program could well be cancelled. So, don't forget to call the nature center in advance. If you discover that you are unable to attend, please call to cancel your reservations. This courtesy will be greatly appreciated.

SNOWSHOE SUNDAYS

Fresh snow can add a peaceful hush to the landscape and a surface that glitters in the bright winter sun. In order to help you sample the winter scenery in a novel way, we have 20 pairs of snowshoes. So, bring your own snowshoes or use ours and join us on a winter walk. **Please, don't forget to call (847)428-OWLS to make reservations.** If there isn't a thick layer of snow, the activity will be cancelled. Of course, if you have your own equipment, cross-country skiers and snowshoers are welcome on any snow-covered Sunday.

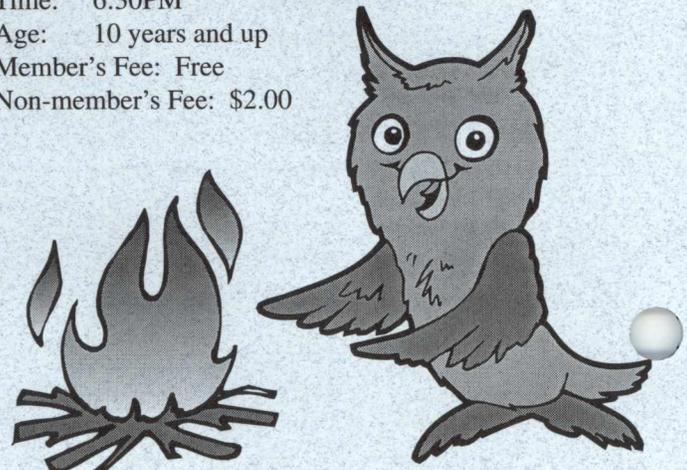


Date: Sundays, Jan. 13 & 20
Time: 2:00PM
Fee: None

OWL WALK & CAMPFIRE

After an indoor program on owls, we will walk the trails in search of Stillman's Great Horned Owls. Then, assuming the winds aren't howling, we'll listen for hooting owls as we warm ourselves by a campfire. Space is limited so call (847) 428-OWLS to make reservations. Don't forget to dress warmly.

Date: Friday, Jan. 25
Time: 6:30PM
Age: 10 years and up
Member's Fee: Free
Non-member's Fee: \$2.00



MAKING TRACKS

Join Susan Allman as she shows you how to recognize the different types of tracks made by winter's active animals. After an indoor introduction, explore Stillman's trails for signs of rabbit, squirrel, deer and fox. If there is no snow on the 27th, we'll try again on Feb. 3. Snowshoes are also an option on these days.

Remember to call (847) 428-OWLS to make reservations.

Date: Sundays Jan. 27 & Feb. 3

Time: 2:00PM

Fee: None

TREE IDENTIFICATION OR BARKING UP THE RIGHT TREE

Learn how to identify common trees such as cherry, maple, spruce and, of course, dogwood. Easy to remember tips and simple hand-outs will help you bore into tree I.D. Come prepared for the weather and bring your questions.

Date: Sunday, Feb. 10

Time: 2:00PM

Age: 10 years and up

Fee: None

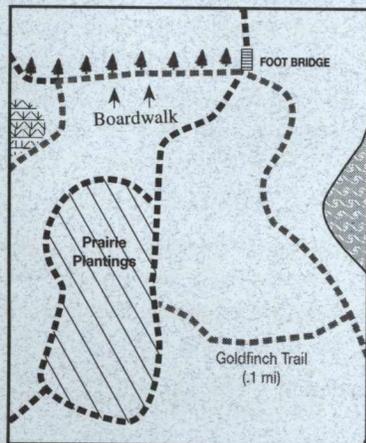


Please note that the Stillman Nature Center is also available during the week, by reservation, to school classes. For a brochure that describes the programs and fees, just call or check our website at: www.stillmanncc.org

KUDOS & THANK YOU

PALATINE EAGLE SCOUTS SOAR AT STILLMAN

Geoff Tchon, with Troop 209 worked very hard last summer to complete the new goldfinch trail. This path crossed many old furrows and so posed a hazard unless improved. Geoff had a load of soil donated and used it to fill in these ruts and to raise the level of the trail through a particularly wet stretch.



He had to use wheelbarrows to do this. Should you hike the goldfinch trail, you'll see that he and the other scouts were kept busy! In addition, Geoff updated all the other "you are here" trail signs, a benefit to all of our visitors.

Elsewhere on the trails, **Eric Rodriguez** of **Troop 182** lengthened a raised walkway (see map) by 30 feet. Spring visitors will appreciate his efforts to keep them above the

mud. For his project, Eric was assisted by fellow scouts **Warren Savich, Michael Soderstrom, Tyler Baier, Justin Olson, and Kevin Kadowaki.**

BACOA RECOGNITION FOR ROGER LAEGELER

Last year, I was proud to be on hand when Roger Laegeler was inducted into the Barrington Area Council on Aging's Hall of Fame.



I often say that Roger runs the Nature Center and I work for him. Since 1990, Roger Laegeler has spent over 6,000 hours cutting buckthorn, planting trees and flowers, clearing the fence line, helping with burns plus much more. Cutting, hauling and burning buckthorn is extremely labor-intensive work. I can't help but notice that many of our neighbors, with much smaller properties than ours, hire services to do what Roger volunteers to do.

Roger is not content to simply remove brush. He likes to look after "the good stuff," as he calls our native trees. With that in mind, he has planted and watered an untold number of donated saplings. On an 80-acre nature center, watering involves hundreds of feet of hose. Much of this hose Roger has purchased and donated to Stillman.

In 1998, we were considering some new people to join Stillman's Board of Directors. Roger said, "Maybe I should come to those meetings." As you might expect, he was enthusiastically welcomed to our volunteer Board where his thoughts and observations are highly valued.

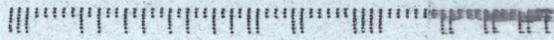
Speaking of observations, when I need to learn about what's happening here at Stillman, all I have to do is ask Roger. Spending as much time as he does cutting buckthorn, he knows where a coyote killed a goose or where a goldfinch has built her nest. Roger calls these discoveries the "fringe benefits" of his job. Simply put, we would have less nature at the Stillman Nature Center were it not for the tireless efforts of Roger Laegeler.

COLLEGE INTERN FUND

A long overdue thank you goes to the **Countryside Garden Class** for donating \$250 to help pay for Helen, our summer intern.

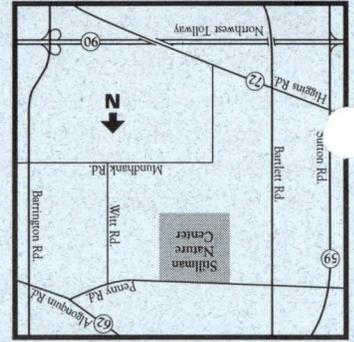
Inspired by such thoughtfulness, we have decided to establish a college intern fund. The plan is to pay college interns with the interest earned by this fund. Our goal is \$50,000.

Thanks to the generosity of an anonymous donor, we now have \$15,000 in the new account. So, if you haven't made your 2008 donation, consider earmarking it for the student intern fund, just make a note on your check's memo line. Thank you.



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Barrington IL 60010-3399



Website: www.stillmann.org
Email: stillnc@wildblue.net
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If you aren't already a member, please consider joining us.

- Yes, I'd like to become or continue as a member of the Stillman Nature Center.
I enclose my tax deductible contribution of \$_____.
 - I'd like to help as a volunteer with programs or land management at the Stillman Nature Center, please call me.
 - Please send a gift membership from _____ to the name and address listed below.
- | | |
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