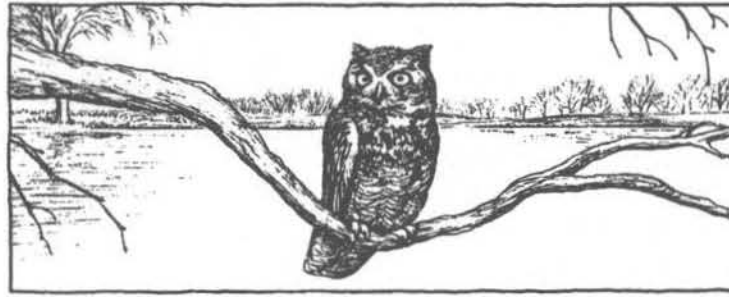


# STILLMAN NEWSLETTER



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## THE DEVIL & ST. ANNE

-- Mark Spreyer

My father, bless his heart, chose to let a wild meadow grow in our sizable backyard. It was just mowed once a year in the fall. So in the summer, I had the opportunity to wander through the field and chew on a sweet timothy stem or watch the assortment of insects attracted to milkweeds.

One of the best meadow color combinations was the blue of chicory combined with the white of Queen Anne's lace. Since I've written about chicory previously, let's investigate Queen Anne's lace (*Daucus carota*).

A quick look at the illustration and I'm sure you'll recognize this lacy flat-topped flower, also known as wild carrot. It can be found growing from the Atlantic to the Pacific in old fields, pastures, and along roadsides.

The "blossoms" are composed of hundreds of tiny five-petal florets, called an umbel, which can be up to five inches across. Most of them are all white. Some, though, have a single burgundy floret in the center of the white multitude.

### Which Queen Anne?

As the story goes, Queen Anne was busy stitching lace when she pricked her finger and a single drop of blood landed in the center of the white flower cluster. The question is, which Queen Anne?

If we agree that the plant name originated in England, the general consensus is Queen Anne of Great Britain and Ireland who was reported to be plain but with a "harmonious voice."

Others have suggested it could have been Anne Boleyn, Anne of Cleves or even Anne of Denmark, the wife of James I of England, who used to decorate her hair with wild carrot.

If not an English Anne, things get even more interesting. My favorite is the religious conspiracy theory.

Jesus' grandmother, St. Anne, was the patron saint of lacemakers and sometimes called the "queen of heaven."

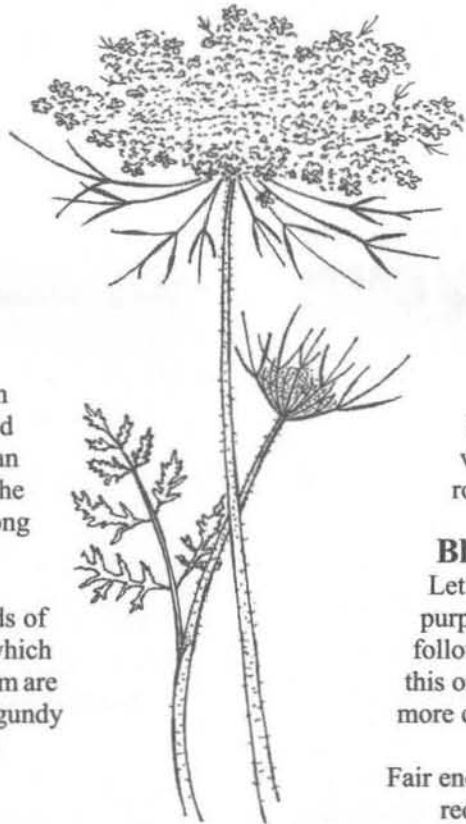
During the Reformation, Martin Luther was especially unhappy with Anne's veneration. So, according to this theory, the Protestants came up with a non-Catholic version of how the wild carrot came by its royal heritage.

### Blood Sample

Let's get back to the red floret, does it have a purpose? Charles Darwin weighed in with the following comment, "it cannot be supposed that this one flower makes the large white umbel at all more conspicuous to insects."

Fair enough, what then can we suppose of this one red floret? Research suggests that those blossoms with the tiny purple accessory enjoy a greater degree of pollination success. Why?

It is thought that predatory insects, such as ambush and assassin bugs, mistake the dark floret for an ant or juicy aphid. So they stalk their prey across the white umbel, pollinating the florets with each stealthy step.



*Queen Anne's lace blooms from May to October reaching a height of 2-3 feet.*

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## Colonist or "Invader?"

Different reasons have been offered for why the Virginia colonists brought Queen Anne's lace to the new country. Some say for food, others say as a medicinal herb, while still others claim it was used to decorate the settlers' flowerbeds, sort of a botanical reminder of home.

Perhaps the correct answer is all of the above. You'd have to be pretty hungry, though, to find the fibrous, white root of wild carrot to be anything other than a food of last resort.

The term colonist applies not only to the folks who delivered Queen Anne's lace to North America but to the plant itself. As one British biologist explains, colonists "are species whose ecological style is to keep moving to fresh territory...." Weeds, he continues, "are simply organisms somebody would like removed."

And boy, did some farmers want to be rid of Queen Anne's lace. After cows ate it, their milk took on a bitter taste. Wild carrot, they learned, is one tough plant surviving repeated grazings, mowings, and various attempts at removing.

Queen Anne's lace was so disliked that some farmers dubbed it "devil's plague," quite a fall for a plant possibly named after Saint Anne.

Nowadays, disliked plant colonists are called "invaders" by some environmental zealots. When you see this word being used to describe naturalized plants and animals, be on the alert.

As ecologist Mark Davis wrote in 2009:  
*I have never liked the term 'invasion' ... along with its accompanying military metaphors. Although the usage of military language may help to attract a group of highly motivated supporters, this same language may help foment a strongly confrontational approach...*

To build on Davis' point, picture a Canada goose defending its nest. It is one thing to observe that a goose is aggressively protecting its eggs, a natural behavior, and entirely another thing to label the goose as an aggressor.

A weed taking root in a new territory illustrates a natural adaptation. Calling this sprout an "invader" suggests hostile intent which plants are, of course, incapable of.

Bringing our discussion back to wild carrot, it is a plant colonist transported to North America by human colonists. It did not invade, it was invited.

## For You Plant Inviters

The simplest way to grow Queen Anne's lace is to gather the seeds in late summer and plant them in autumn.

You could also transplant them. If you choose this method, dig the young, first-year plants and make sure to get the entire root.

One of the benefits of having wild carrot in your garden is that its leaves are a favorite food for black swallowtail (*Papilio polyxenes*) caterpillars. These native butterflies would add a beautiful accent to anyone's yard.

Since Queen Anne's lace is a biennial, you should transplant or sow seeds for two years in a row. Then, you can look forward to seeing this delicate flower, supported by a tough plant, each and every summer.

## Back Across the Pond

If you'd rather curse naturalized plants than grow them, I'll leave you with one last thought. The following was written nearly a hundred years ago by W. Barbellion, a short-lived but insightful British naturalist:

*In the enfranchised mind of the scientific naturalist, the usual feelings of repugnance simply do not exist. Curiosity conquers prejudice.*

## GARDEN WALK & MODEL RAILROADS

Stillman staff will be on hand to help raise money for the Harvey M. Silets Memorial Scholarship Fund at the Interlochen Center for the Arts. The event takes place at *Wandering Tree*, 125 Arrowhead Lane, N. Barrington. The Silets' garden railroads are something you won't soon forget. **For more information, go to [www.trainlady.com](http://www.trainlady.com)**

Date: Saturday, June 23

Time: 10:00 - 4:00 PM

Fee: \$10/person, children under 16 free



Stillman Nature Center is available, by reservation, during the week to school classes, Audubon chapters, scouts, and other organized groups. You can visit Stillman or we can bring our raptors to your meeting place. For more information about group programs and fees, either call (847) 428-OWLS(6957), check our website: [stillmann.org](http://stillmann.org), or email us at: [stillnc@wildblue.net](mailto:stillnc@wildblue.net)

## 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 five people have called two days prior to a program, the activity could 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.

### BIRD BANDING

Watch Mark Spreyer, a licensed bird bander, measure, weigh and record data about our resident and migratory birds. Birds are not caught in a predictable manner, so come prepared to hike the trails. With luck, you'll see a bird in the hand and two in the bush. If it is raining the banding open house will be cancelled.



Dates: Sundays, June 3, July 1, Aug. 5  
Time: 9:00AM to Noon  
Fee: None

### THURSDAY TREKKERS

Tired of circling the same track? Join us outside for a healthy hour-long walk around a lake, through the woods and who knows where else? Why not add Stillman to your list of exercise options? Come prepared to hike the trails with shoes you don't mind getting a little wet.



Dates: Thursdays, June 7, July 5, Aug. 2  
Time: 9:30AM  
Fee: None

### SUNDAY MORNING BIRD WALKS

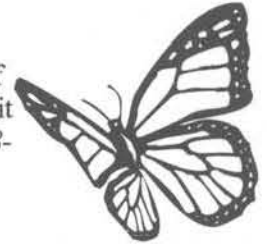
Mark Spreyer will lead a morning bird walk. Binoculars and field guides are a must. If you don't have any, don't worry, Stillman does. If it's raining, the activity will be cancelled. *Please call (847) 428-OWLS to let us know if you plan to attend.*



Date: Sundays, June 10 & August 26  
Time: 8:00AM  
Fee: None  
Age: 10 years and up

### BUGS & BUTTERFLIES

Join Stillman's naturalist and search the nature center's fields for butterflies, beetles and other bugs. If you've got a bug net at home, bring it along! *Don't forget to call (847) 428-OWLS to make reservations.*



Date: Saturday, July 15  
Time: 2:00 PM  
Fee: None

### RAPTORS for PHOTOGRAPHERS

Now's your chance to get an unimpeded close-up of great horned, barn, and screech owls plus a peregrine falcon and broad-winged hawk. We will bring the birds out in the morning light to increase your chances of getting that perfect image. Drop by anytime between 8:30 and 10:30 AM. Keep in mind that all the birds may not be available at the same moment.

Date: Saturday, July 21  
Time: 8:30 - 10:30AM  
Fee: \$10/person

### PRAIRIE RAMBLE

Our volunteers, under the leadership of Daria Sapp, have been working hard to get prairie plants growing in Stillman's "south forty." This is your chance to join Daria on a tour of this colorful site. *Please call (847) 428-OWLS to let us know if you plan to attend.*



Date: Sunday, July 29  
Time: 10:00AM  
Fee: None

### POND STUDY

This afternoon, with the help of long-handled dip nets, families will scoop into our pond in hopes of catching crayfish, dragonfly larvae, tadpoles and other rarely seen pond creatures. Dress in clothes and shoes you don't mind getting muddy.



Date: Sunday, August 12  
Time: 2:00PM  
Fee: None

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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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