

A Hard Lesson Learned (Again) about Plant Selection

About 20 years ago, I planted a ground cover that was all the rage at the time. I decided that glossy, dark-green *euonymus fortunei*, a native of Asia, would be ideal to fill in prettily around shrubs and to block weeds. As years went by, a patch in Red Fox Garden succumbed to scale, and the euonymus at my house had a rude habit of climbing up the garage siding and suckering in until pulled down. However, its dense cover did block weeds, and I liked the look of it.

So, I was not prepared when Cousin David, who has spent years clearing invasive shrubs and vines from the Quarry Farm nature preserve, reported an unfamiliar branching vine climbing in a cluster of trees deep in the woods, well beyond my house and garden. It was neither poison ivy nor wild grape vine, and its leaves looked a little like myrtle, only larger. I made a discomfiting discovery: The invader was *euonymus fortunei*, my pretty ground cover gone rogue. Looking it up on the internet, I was shocked to learn that euonymus is now generally considered an invasive species, a landscaping no-no.

Horticultural websites discuss the aggressive nature of *euonymus fortunei*. One example is this from North Carolina State University Extension: "Some cultivars may be more of a vine and others more of a small shrub, but the vining cultivars and some shrubs can both be invasive... Climbing euonymus readily escapes into native forests and has no trouble dominating medium-sized trees. [It] is listed as invasive in North Carolina and in other states of the southeast and northeast. When used as ground cover for the showy leaves, it tends to climb if given support. . . . When this vine climbs trees it produces aerial rootlets along its branches. [Its small white berries] are eaten by some birds which is how the plant is spread and often how it becomes more invasive." This is surely how euonymus flew from my garden into the woods of the preserve.



The approach and base of the "Hand Tree" is now free of *euonymus fortunei*, thanks to David Seitz (who also named the old locust for its four-fingers-and-a-thumb structure.)

My experience with *euonymus fortunei* has been another hard lesson learned about plant selection over the years. When perusing catalogs and nurseries, I should try harder to temper my feverish impulses with some cautionary reminders: Choose natives to the area, more likely to settle companionably into the landscape. Don't make impulsive purchases based solely on glowing descriptions, especially if a plant is an introduction, sometimes even a "new, improved" cultivar. Know soil (sand, loam, and/or clay), moisture and light preferences. Know how a plant propagates and spreads, so it can be contained if it sends out runners or produces thousands of seeds per plant. In general, know how it interacts with other plants and wildlife.

Better knowledge about such issues might have prevented invasions of bush honeysuckle and multiflora rose, and too many others, which were thought decades ago to have beneficial uses as wildlife food and cover and as living fencing, but became scourges to field and forest, including The Quarry Farm.

—The Gardener at the Quarry Farm

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Paul Nusbaum showed his finely-crafted arifacts at Family Day.

Under One Big Sky

(continued from inside cover)

Sean the Virginia Opossum and Tyree the Cornsnake were the stars of the Wildlife station at the 49th Annual 5th Grade Conservation Tour, sponsored by the Putnam County Conservation District. Because the 2020 tour was cancelled due to the pandemic, some schools bussed their 6th grade students along.

A troop of Ottawa-Glandorf area Girl Scouts rounded out September 26 with a study of animal habitats in the nature preserve and the farm animal sanctuary. As they discovered habitats in the floodplain they spotted a turtle enjoying fall sunshine in the quarry wetland. Leader Sarah caught a photo. Can you see its red ear?



Questions? Email thequarryfarm@gmail.com, visit us online at www.thequarryfarm.org or call 419-384-7195. Donations to The Quarry Farm Nature Preserve & Conservation Farm, a 501(c)(3) public charity, are tax deductible.

Fall 2021 Programs & Events

Follow us on Facebook to find out about pop-up events like night-time Star Walks.

The Quarry Farm 2021 5K

Saturday, October 2, 10 a.m. (check-in opens 8:45 a.m.)
Meet outside the Seitz Family Pavilion, 1/8 mile north of 14321 Road 7L, Pandora

We love The Quarry Farm 5K for many reasons. It allows us to celebrate this beautiful neighborhood and it raises funds for The Quarry Farm's educational programs and helps with the care and feeding of the residents in the farm animal sanctuary. Walkers and runners will start at the Seitz Family Pavilion. Check-in is from 8:45 to 9:30 a.m. in the Seitz Family Pavilion, 1/8 mile north of 14321 Road 7L, Pandora. Please present ID to receive participation packet. The 5K run/walk will start at 10 a.m. (line-up at 9:50 a.m.) The race will be held rain or shine (unless there is lightning) so please dress appropriately and wear layers if necessary. There will be water along the route and refreshments at the finish line. **Registration is \$25.00 and may be presented the day of the race or download a registration form with mailing instructions at www.thequarryfarm.org.**



October Big Day

Saturday, October 17, 10 to 11 a.m.

Meet outside the Seitz Family Pavilion, 1/8 mile north of 14321 Road 7L, Pandora

Everyone, wherever you live, is welcome to take part in Global Bird Weekend, especially those for whom birding is a relatively new hobby or interest. October 9 is the first day of this international effort. Join birders Deb Weston and David Smith here to record the species they see in the nature preserve. We will submit the list to ebird.org to join others from across the globe. Admission is free but donations are appreciated.



October Big Day 2020





Mission Statement

It is our goal and mission to provide the opportunity for people of all ages to increase their understanding of the natural environment of Northwest Ohio and to interact with their fellow inhabitants in a sustainable manner.



A Gray Catbird forages for rose hips in the nature preserve. (Photo by Deb Weston)

The Quarry Farm Newsletter is a quarterly publication for supporters of The Quarry Farm Nature Preserve & Conservation Farm, a nonprofit organization in Pandora, Ohio.

On the cover: Two female Black-throated Green Warblers perch in a Hackberry during their fall stopover. (Photo by Deb Weston)

All photographs printed in this newsletter were taken on The Quarry Farm Nature Preserve & Conservation Farm.

www.thequarryfarm.org

Printed on recycled, recyclable paper

Under One Big Sky

Despite storms, the 2021 Quarry Farm Fridays with the Bluffton Public Library were (mostly) live from June 11 through July 30, with a July 2 holiday break, Facebook users met Jimmy Toskr the Eastern Fox Squirrel, Gerald the Rooster, Nemo the Big Sweet Pig, the donkeys and goats.

We experienced an incredible morning of artistic demonstration on July 16 with the 2021 Putnam County Educational Service Center Migrant Education Program students and their teachers. The previous night's storms provided Oak, Black Walnut, Silver Maple, Sycamore, and Hackberry leaves. Board Member Rita supplied leaves from her garden and woods. The kids supplied the talent. The sky kept dry just long enough for them to put that talent to glorious use.

Saturday, July 31, was gorgeous: light clouds, a breeze to move them slowly across the sky, and cooler, drier temperatures. If the scheduled "Create a Floor Cloth for Your 'Cabin'" workshop had happened earlier in the week, the acrylic paint applied by 10 textile artists to rug-worthy canvas would have puddled in the humidity. As it was, it didn't and there was a full house of textile artists.

The Village of Ottawa's Cultural Committee held their first Kids Fest at Memorial Park on August 14. Board Member Rita was on her feet the entire time, helping kids and adults create hiking sticks out of bush honeysuckle removed from the nature preserve by David Seitz. Speaking of Dave, he's been here at least two times a week this summer, rain or shine, hot or hotter, clearing invasive plants, combatting poison ivy, engineering and re-engineering bridges and boulder crossings, and mowing paths.

Summer Family Day was held on Saturday, August 21. Visitors walked the gardens, took a hike around the quarry wetland, met some of the farm animal sanctuary residents and learned about Native American tools and artifacts through the display designed and curated by Paul Nusbaum.

The 7th Annual Quarry Farm Jam jammed on September 11, with four musicians sharing their instrumental and vocal talents with a gathering of outdoor music fans who sang along well after the late summer sunset.



Young artists painted artistic shirts on July 16.



The July 31 "Create a Floor Cloth for Your 'Cabin'" workshop resulted in artistic home textiles.



Sean the Virginia Opossum was a star at the Wildlife station at the 49th Annual 5th Grade Conservation Tour in September.

Resident Spotlight: Sean

Every now and then someone tells us about the Virginia Opossum that has lived under their porch for years. If there is one thing that we learned while volunteering with Nature's Nursery Center for Wildlife Rehabilitation and during the years following is that these individuals are probably not the same Virginia Opossum. While getting to know educational ambassadors for this fascinating species, we have discovered that they are nomadic creatures, moving from place to place to eat whatever they find in their path and sleeping in the most convenient dry spot when they need to. Combined with the fact that Virginia Opossums only live for two or (maybe, if we're lucky) three years, the animal that people see around their porch from year to year is actually a parade of several of North America's only member of the marsupial class of mammals.

Did you notice that I said "if we're lucky"? There are a lot of reasons that it's a great thing to have Virginia Opossums around. These free-ranging omnivores consume a varied diet that includes plant material, grasses and leaves, grains, fruits, carrion, snails, slugs, worms, insects, rats, mice, snakes, amphibians, eggs, crayfish, and fish. They are nature's garbage collectors. We would be up to our eyeballs in offal without these animals coming and going. We would also be dealing with more biting, disease-transmitting ticks. Research on captive Virginia Opossums at Illinois' Eureka College estimates that they eat, on average, 5,500 larval ticks per week. That's nearly 95% of ticks that cross their path.

The best reason that we are lucky to have Virginia Opossums is that we just are...lucky, that is. They have been around for a very long time—at least 70 million years—as one of Earth's oldest surviving mammals. Because they eat almost everything, they are disease-resistant. In fact, they will do just about anything to avoid direct contact. To appear threatening, a Virginia Opossum will first bare its 50 teeth, snap its jaw, hiss, drool, poo and stand its fur on end to look bigger. If this does not work, the Virginia opossum is noted for feigning death (passing out) in response to extreme fear.

Here on The Quarry Farm, we are so lucky to have known a few non-releasable Virginia Opossums. Sean is the current onsite educational ambassador of his kind. Sean was born without eyes so can't properly protect himself from predators. He is also agreeable to human contact, which is why we have a State of Ohio education permit that allows us to house him and introduce him to people who want to know more about him and the world around all of us.

If you or someone that you know finds an injured wild animal, please surrender him or her to someone who is trained to help. Here are a few resources:

- Ohio Wildlife Rehabilitators Association: www.owra.org/find
- Nature's Nursery: PO Box 2395, Whitehouse, OH 43571 • (419) 877-0060

Thank you...

- ...to Brad Brooks for mowing the tall grass prairie
- ...to Girl Scouts for apples and celery for the animals
- ...to Paula Harper for apples and cookies and for helping out at the Floor Cloth Workshop
- ...to Dave and Jane Hilty for corn and green beans for the animals
- ...to Paul Nusbaum for sharing and presenting Native American artifacts and skills at Family Day
- ...to the Putnam County Master Gardeners for devoting their Thursday time to pollinator garden maintenance
- ...to David Seitz for honeysuckle removal, trail clearing and hydrological engineering
- ...to Phil and Phyllis Seitz for helping with the Floor Cloth Workshop
- ...to Rita Seitz for working the booth at Ottawa Kids Fest, t-shirt-making at Putnam County Migrant Summer Program, and cookies
- ...to Bill and Joan Utendorf for apples for the animals



Garter Snake on trail (Photo by David Seitz)

Monetary Donations:

Bruce Coburn in memory of Bert Coburn
 Laura Gretzinger
 Karen Meyer
 Deb Weston