

Read More: Two New Native Plant Gardens for Loda Lake Entrance!

“We would never have been able to engage in a project like this without help. We are deeply grateful for the Michigan Garden Club members, YouthWork and Healthy Kidz participants and coworkers who have made this project possible! Loda Lake is an incredibly special place and I’m glad we have the opportunity to make it even better,” said Huron-Manistee National Forest Zone Botanist Carolyn Henne. Carolyn and her team are based out of Baldwin and Wellston and are responsible for 500,000 acres of land in the Huron Manistee National Forest. They are very knowledgeable and passionate about the work that they do!

The entire project spanned three days with a needed boost provided by the YouthWork Conservation Group and Idlewild Healthy Kidz group. Michigan Garden Clubs gladly provided lunch and plenty of water in return for endless energy and strong backs!

Native plants are crucial for a healthy and balanced ecosystem, providing essential resources for wildlife, improving soil health and promoting biodiversity. They also offer numerous benefits for homeowners and gardeners, including water conservation, reduced maintenance and attracting beneficial insects.

To reach the sanctuary, travel North from White Cloud on M-37 for about seven miles. Turn left onto West 5 Mile Road at the Loda Lake Sign, continue west about one mile and turn right onto North Felch Avenue. Travel until you see the USFS Wildflower Sanctuary sign. The Day Use Area contains a pavilion with picnic tables, another earlier Michigan Garden Club project, a vault toilet and an interpretive trail and boat launch. A Day Use Fee can be paid on site through a fee tube.



Signs have been placed throughout the garden to identify the plants, explain their growing condition preferences, and list their host species. Larger signs have been placed in the garden to explain the benefits of planting native wildflowers. ***(Photo courtesy of the USDA Forest Service)***



Seedlings received some water before they were planted to keep them from wilting. When mature, native plants need less water but still need regular watering for the first year or two to help them survive. ***(Photo courtesy of the USDA Forest Service)***



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Working alongside YouthWork Conservation Corp., a unique program designed to strengthen young people and their communities by engaging teens in conservation and skilled trade projects for local agencies and organizations, the Michigan Gardens Clubs, Inc. and the US Forest Service was able to convert two blank canvasses into a more diverse collection of prairie and savanna flora for forest visitors to enjoy next to the pavilion. ***(Photo courtesy of the USDA Forest Service)***



Michigan Garden Club members work on spacing plants to ensure there is adequate air flow between the plants, prevent them from competing for sunlight and give them room to grow. Some of the plants will stay 6-8 inches tall while others will grow to be 4-6 feet, so it's important to plan accordingly. ***(Photo courtesy of the USDA Forest Service)***



Huron-Manistee National Forest Zone Botanist Carolyn Henne and Former President of the Michigan Garden Clubs, Inc., Nancy Ryan take time out for a quick picture while they coordinate the tasks necessary to finish out the day's planting. The history of the collaboration of the garden club and governmental agency has been the foundation of the success of the sanctuary and the conservation education that the sanctuary offers. ***(Photo courtesy of the USDA Forest Service)***



People power is what it takes to shape a garden! A work team of 28 people engaged in converting this drab and dirty pallet into a future vibrant, living canvas of native plants found in the sanctuary. The collaboration of many hands helps to promote the preservation of Michigan wildflowers in their natural habitat. ***(Photo courtesy of the USDA Forest Service)***



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