



# The Leaflet



Summer 2021



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## Old railroad lines deliver new opportunities

*By: Mark Halpin, Forest ReLeaf of Missouri*

Railroads have been a crucial part of our nation's transportation infrastructure since the 1820's to present day, with thousands of miles of track laid from coast to coast over the years. By the second half of the twentieth century however, many of the old lines had become redundant and uneconomical to operate. Abandoning them would mean prohibitively expensive restoration costs if they were needed again in the future, yet maintaining them was not worth the money either. Out-right abandonment was typically the most attractive option, a shame considering the huge cost of establishing these lines to begin with.

In 1968, Congress passed the National Trails System Act, meant to encourage the establishment of public use trails throughout the nation. Railroad companies and legislators saw this as an opportunity to preserve the out-of-service rail lines, and in 1983 Congress passed the Rail Banking Act, an amendment to the National Trails System Act allowing railroad companies to turn unused tracks over to parks departments, conservancies and others to operate them as trails, under the agreement that the railroads could be reactivated in the future if needed. This would save the railroad companies the cost of restoring abandoned lines, and save agencies the cost of establishing new trail systems for outdoor recreation. As a result, "rail trails" have proliferated in the USA.

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# Woods Updates



## Fruitful Harvest

Summer in Missouri is an excellent time to find edible fruits growing wild. Our native Pawpaw *Asimina triloba* is found nearly statewide growing in shady areas. The fruit, with a flavor reminiscent of bananas and pineapple, ripens in late summer and if you can beat the wildlife to them are a delightful treat.

## Ephemeral beauty gives way to sturdy summer flowers

Jack-in-the-Pulpit, one of the latest blooming wildflowers in Missouri ends its subdued but lovely display in June as the heat arrives. It gives way to more sturdy recognizable summer favorites such as coneflowers and touch-me-nots, but you can find the Jack-in-the-pulpit still in leaf and making its brilliant red fruits if you look closely. Don't touch as the fruits can be irritating to skin, but these hidden gems are a reminder of spring.



## The Downy Woodpecker

The Downy Woodpecker is our smallest native woodpecker and found throughout the state year round. Look for them in backyards and woodlands alike, while they are small birds they are quite noisy and you can listen for their shrill calls and drumming.

## Old railroad lines deliver new opportunities (continued)

The longest in the nation at 237 miles is Missouri's own Katy Trail, built along a portion of the Missouri-Kansas-Texas railway, or 'Katy' as it was colloquially known. The first section opened in 1990 in Rocheport, and over the next two decades Katy Trail State Park expanded all the way from Machens to Clinton, MO. Dan Burkhardt of Magnificent Missouri, whose mission is to conserve and increase appreciation of the Katy Trail and the last 100 miles of the Missouri River Valley, has been a long time proponent; as Burkhardt says, "there are few places in rural Missouri that hundreds of thousands of visitors see every year. Fewer still that welcome them not in large groups for a day or two of activity but where one, two or three visitors come at a time."

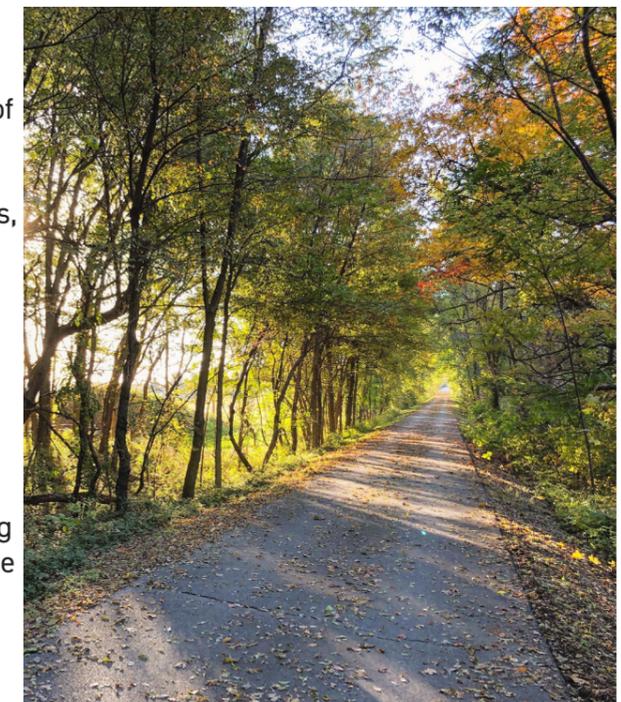
Railroad lines have little use for tree canopy; trees within a railroad easement present little more than a potential hazard. A recreational trail needs as many as it can get. Burkhardt, along with Magnificent Missouri co-founder John McPheeters, began much-needed efforts to promote tree planting along the Katy Trail. Working in partnership with Missouri State Parks, they began to reforest the railroad easement that had been largely cleared of vegetation. Last spring Forest ReLeaf of Missouri, with grant assistance from the Trulaske Foundation, also joined Magnificent Missouri and Katy Trail State Park in a project to plant 200 trees along the trail over the next two years. "By partnering with Forest ReLeaf and Missouri State Parks we want to make the Katy a place where visitors can not only get outdoor recreation but also some conservation education," Burkhardt says.

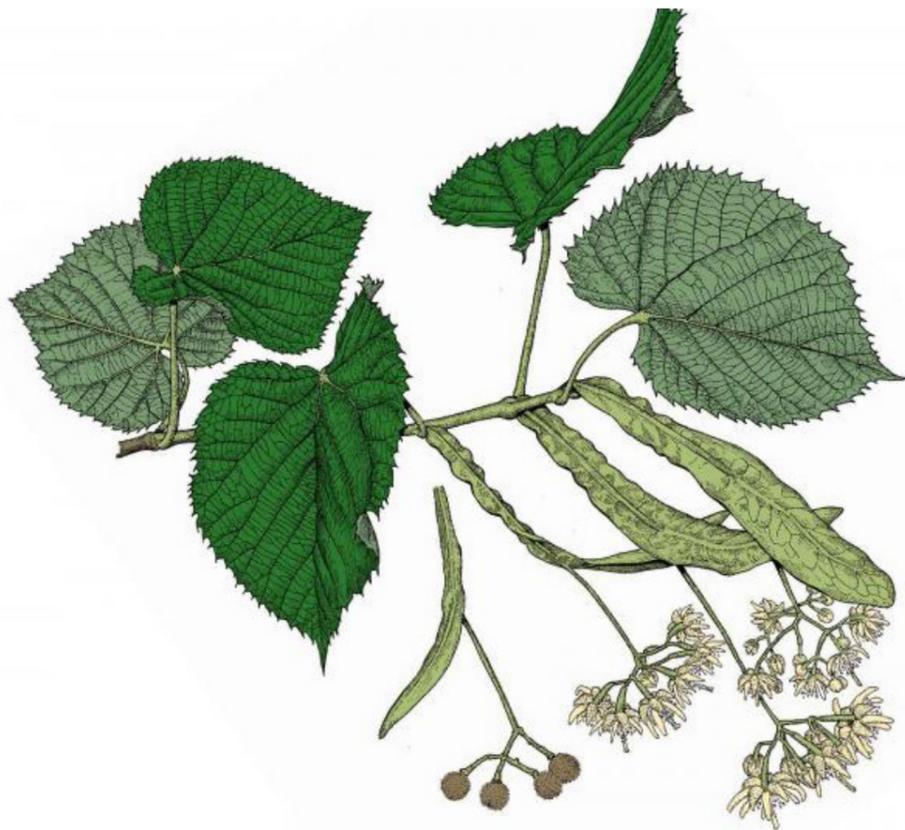
Although its establishment was not without controversy - many landowners were rightly concerned about strangers passing through their land - the Katy Trail has become an important part of both the local economy and the community. As Burkhardt says, "when the Trail was created by Ted and Pat Jones in the 1980's it was about many things —providing a way for people to enjoy the Missouri countryside from a vantage point they didn't have in the past, a way to get close to the Missouri River, cornfields and small railroad towns along the route. But it was also meant to provide new life for those old railroad towns." It appears the Katy Trail is doing just that.

Further south near Springfield, Ozark Greenways converted the Frisco Highline into a rail trail in 1994, eventually expanding the trail to join Springfield and Bolivar. By salvaging and selling the metal components of the old rail line, Ozark Greenways was able to raise the funds to convert it into the multi-use Frisco Highline Trail (FHT). The project has been a boon for the Ozark ecosystems surrounding the trail - for example a streambank stabilization project at the Coates Branch stream has significantly reduced runoff pollution to the Little Sac Watershed.

Ecosystem health isn't the only benefit of the trail; medical professionals are increasingly stressing the importance of outdoor recreation to both physical and mental health. As John Montgomery, Frisco Highline Trail Manager, says "the importance of having an outdoor outlet for folks which also connects several communities has become vital, even more so in the last 15months." Time spent along the trail also helps promote the cause of conservation as people witness careful stewardship of the land first-hand. "The trail winds through pastures, woods, and prairies with "The 16 Bridges of Polk County" making a safe traverse over several streams and creeks", Montgomery continues, showcasing the biodiversity of the region. "The FHT offers something for those wanting a quiet, peaceful slow roll on bike or foot to those seeking a multi-day, out-door adventure."

Rail trails have proven to be a win-win for not only the railroad companies but for land managers, people seeking outdoor recreation opportunities, for our local history and for the cause of conservation. They offer a valuable resource to connect big cities and small towns alike with the countryside, and an avenue to bring people face to face with conservation projects that might otherwise go unseen. If our own health is a reflection of the health of our surroundings, rail trails are a great way to promote both.





## Featured Species

# American Basswood

*Tilia americana*

American basswood is a medium-sized tree with small, horizontal, often drooping branches forming a broad, rounded head. Leaves are alternate, simple, 5–6 inches long, 3–5 inches wide, broadest near the base; margin coarsely toothed; tip pointed, base unequal, rounded; upper surface dark green, shiny; lower surface paler, with tufts of hair in the vein axils.

Bark is light brown to gray, with deep furrows and narrow, flat-topped, long ridges that shed small, thin scales. Often with sprouts around the base of older trees. Twigs are slender, smooth, green to brown turning gray with age; pores numerous; winter buds dark red, egg-shaped, ¼ inch long.

Blooms late May–July; 6–15 flowers on a drooping, slender, smooth stalk; stalk attached to a strap-shaped, reduced leaf, 2–5 inches long, ¾–1½ inches wide, smooth, strongly veined; flowers pale yellow to whitish, fragrant, ½ inch in diameter.

Fruits August–October; dry, persistent, nearly round, ¼ inch long, covered with dense brown hairs.

Similar species: White basswood (*T. heterophylla*) has a more limited distribution in Missouri, occurring mainly along rocky woods and bluffs bordering streams. Its leaves are densely but not coarsely toothed, and the lower surfaces are covered with white or brown matted, woolly hairs.

Height: Up to 60 feet

Source: Missouri Department of Conservation

## Q&A

### Why is my swamp white oak leaking dark fluid?

This can be difficult to determine from a photograph alone but the answer is either slime flux or alcohol flux - “Bacterial wetwood” is the more technical term. It is particularly common in certain species and genera, oaks *Quercus* being one of them, while elms *Ulmus* and ash *Fraxinus* are also susceptible. Bacteria can infect tree wounds, causing the sap inside to ferment and leak out, resulting in a dark and somewhat foul-smelling ooze.

The severity of bacterial wetwood is highly dependent on the nature of the wound - small wounds are easily compartmentalized by the tree, larger wounds can allow the infection to spread. In neither case can you do much of anything but clean the fermented slime off of the tree to prevent insects and secondary infections. Keeping your trees healthy is the best defense! Bacterial wetwood itself should be thought of as a symptom of a problem - a wound - and not the problem itself.

(Source: Mark Halpin, Forest ReLeaf of Missouri)

# FOREST BULLETIN



## Open Space Council introduces the Community Stewardship Alliance

By: Mark Halpin, Forest ReLeaf of Missouri

This spring, the Community Stewardship Alliance (CSA) program held its inaugural series of volunteer work events, which included tree planting, invasive species control and pollinator garden maintenance. CSA is an exciting new conservation program intended to provide focused, trained, volunteer leadership to restore and maintain the natural areas within our St. Louis County Parks. The goal is to adapt successful local and national stewardship models to develop a coordinated program for the St. Louis region to achieve standardization of restoration techniques, management plans, reporting, monitoring and communication. Although CSA currently operates within three pilot locations in St. Louis County Parks only, the goal is to expand the program throughout the region.

The Community Stewardship Alliance's efforts are spearheaded by Site Ambassadors. These are dedicated and trained volunteers who serve as the backbone of the Community Stewardship Alliance. They build a community of stewardship around the county parks' natural areas to safeguard their future. These individuals commit to stewarding a specific park in collaboration with the CSA partners. Site Ambassadors oversee the management of a natural area, working with the CSA partners and parks staff to meet the goals of their restoration management plans. They also recruit local volunteers and schedule workdays to help achieve those goals and are provided ongoing support through CSA partners and the ability to network with other CSA Site Ambassadors.

As invasive species and ecological degradation continue to spread throughout the natural areas of our state, the agencies managing our public lands increasingly find themselves up against a problem they cannot contain. This land belongs to all of us, and without our help the problems will continue to multiply until it is too late to reverse the damage. Programs like the Missouri ForestKeepers Network and CSA are giving concerned citizens the tools, training and assistance they need to help address these problems and keep our natural areas beautiful and healthy. Hopefully such efforts can serve as a model for community stewardship throughout our state and nation, to preserve our precious natural resources for future generations.

The Community Stewardship Alliance is a collaborative partnership led by the Open Space Council for the St. Louis region. Participating partners include Forest ReLeaf of Missouri, Great Rivers Greenway District, Missouri Botanical Garden, Missouri Department of Conservation, Missouri Master Naturalists Great Rivers Chapter, St. Louis Audubon Society, St. Louis County Parks, and St. Louis County Parks Foundation. To learn more about the program or volunteer visit [openspacestl.org/programs/the-community-stewardship-alliance/](https://openspacestl.org/programs/the-community-stewardship-alliance/).

# Take a Hike!



## Woodson K. Woods Memorial Conservation Area

*History, scenery and outdoor recreation abound!*

**Acreage:** 5,658  
**County:** Crawford & Phelps  
**Owner:** MO Dept. of Conservation  
**Region:** Southeast  
**Address:** Southeast of St. James on Highway 8

Woodson K. Woods Memorial Conservation Area, located off Highway 8, near St. James, is one of the most beautiful state-owned properties in Missouri. The area consists of 5,658 acres in Crawford and Phelps counties. The Meramec River and Dry Fork Creek and their tributaries have cut scenic valleys through the area's rugged Ozark hills.

Fishing opportunities abound at Woodson K. Woods. Rainbow and brown trout lurk in the cool waters of the Meramec River and bluegill, catfish, largemouth bass and other warm-water species can be caught from the slow, murky waters of Dry Fork Creek.

Deer, turkey, squirrel, rabbit, quail, great blue herons, eagles, ruffed grouse and many other wildlife species frequent the area, 80 percent of which is forested. The forest is managed to provide food, cover, and water for wildlife and to maintain a healthy forest.

Much of the history of Woodson K. Woods Memorial Conservation Area is tied directly to the Maramec Spring Ironwork. The area borders the James Foundation Maramec Spring Park, which houses the relics of a once-thriving community of Shawnee Indians. Those Native Americans collected hematite, a red-colored iron ore, for cosmetics, ornaments and trade. In the early 1800s, European settlers started mining the iron ore, cutting away much of the timber around Maramec Spring to fuel the smelters.

*Retraction: In the last issue of the Leaflet, Little Sac Woods Conservation Area was featured in the 'Take a Hike' section. Unfortunately the accompanying photo was in fact of the Frisco Highline. The editorial staff apologize for this error and any confusion it may have caused.*

## Featured Events

### Discover Nature: Conservation Sampler Mini Camp

**Date:** Friday, July 30, 2021 | 10:00am - 2:00pm

**RSVP:** 1(888) 283-0364 or [mdc.mo.gov](http://mdc.mo.gov)

**Location:** Powder Valley Conservation Nature Center, Kirkwood, MO

*Is there a better way to spend a summer day than spending time outdoors? Sample different ways you can enjoy conservation right in your own backyard and spend time learning about the different plants and animals of Missouri, practicing mini archery and other activities in the nature center and the surrounding woods. This minicamp will take place at Powder Valley Conservation Nature Center. Attendees should bring a water bottle, a lunch, and any other supplies that they might need for the duration of the camp. Registration ends July 23rd.*

### Bellefontaine Cemetery Tour

**Date:** Thursday, September 2, 2021 | 5:00pm

**RSVP:** 1(573) 808-7007 or [outreach@moprairie.org](mailto:outreach@moprairie.org)

**Location:** Bellefontaine Cemetery, St. Louis, MO

*This mile-long guided tour will wind through Bellefontaine cemetery and arboretum, and is organized by the Missouri Prairie Foundation. The tour is free and will be led on foot by a Bellefontaine Master Guide. Registration is limited.*



## Missouri Forestry Summit to Be Held August 10-11, 2021

There are many threats to our forests and woodlands. The online Forestry Summit held in August of 2020 by the Forest and Woodland Association of Missouri (FWAM) detailed an aging forest lacking diversity, a lack of white oak regeneration to replace aging and harvested trees, concerns about tree mortality and how forests will respond to a changing climate.

The next iteration of the Forestry Summit is scheduled for August 10 and 11 at the Hilton Garden Inn in Columbia. These issues will be discussed further but more importantly, we will explore ongoing management initiatives to combat the many issues and threats to our forests. Breakout sessions will be held to gather ideas for what FWAM, and partners can do to keep our forests healthy.

Natural resource professionals, educators, consultants, landowners and anyone concerned about Missouri forests and trees and with an interest to promote, teach and encourage their management are welcome to attend and will find this event valuable. You can also view the 2020 presentations at [forestandwoodland.org/forestry-summit](http://forestandwoodland.org/forestry-summit). More details will be available soon on the FWAM website at [forestandwoodland.org](http://forestandwoodland.org). This event is a great opportunity to be involved and speak for the trees of Missouri.

## Welcome Members!

Deanna Cost  
Brian Dufrenne  
Cynthia Dunning  
Anna Gilmore  
Tracy Gorman  
Allan & Jane Haslag  
Caitlin Martines  
Malcolm McCance  
Joseph Miller  
William Oden  
Cathysue Smick  
Kate Strembicki  
Deborah Waggener  
Ashleigh Wallen  
Zachary Walter  
Christine Warner

The Leaflet is produced by the Forest and Woodland Association of Missouri and the Missouri Forestkeepers Network in partnership with the Missouri Department of Conservation and Forest ReLeaf.

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## Join us at the 2021 Forestkeepers Conference on October 8

This years conference will take place at Klondike Park in St. Charles County. Events will include a tour of Klondike Park, and a recent reforestation project along the nearby Katy Trail. An additional tree planting at this project site will take place the following morning, October 9. Members of the Missouri Forestkeepers Network are welcome to join!

## *Save The Date*

**The Missouri Tree Farm Conference to be held September 24-25 in Ava, MO.  
More details and registration will be available soon on the Forest and  
Woodland Association of Missouri website by visiting**