



CHICAGO BOTANIC GARDEN

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**For Immediate Release**

**Garden's Ecological Restoration Projects Receive Four Honors**

*Efforts to restore native species to the Lakeshores and McDonald Woods receive recognition from three diverse groups.*

**GLENCOE, Ill. (November 7, 2013)** Multiyear efforts to restore native species to two natural areas at the Chicago Botanic Garden—the Garden Lakes and McDonald Woods—have received four honors from three diverse organizations.

Chicago Wilderness, a regional alliance of more than 300 groups working to restore native habitats in a four-state area, last night presented the Garden with a Conservation and Native Landscaping Award and an Excellence in Ecological Restoration accreditation. The honors were announced at the alliance's Celebrating Nature benefit held at the Loyola University Institute for Environmental Sustainability. Arnold Randall, chair of Chicago Wilderness and general superintendent of the Forest Preserves of Cook County, said, "The Garden's 225 acres of natural areas are truly remarkable assets for our region, and its team of restoration ecologists are to be commended for their exemplary leadership to restore and protect them."

The Garden's shoreline restoration project, which has taken place in six phases over the last 14 years, has also received recognition from the North American Lake Management Society and the Landscape Architecture Foundation. The effort, led by Bob Kirschner, director of restoration ecology and curator of aquatic plant and urban lake studies, has restored more than three-fourths of the shoreline along the Garden's 60 acres of lakes. With support from federal, state and local agencies, and private donors, the Garden has bioengineered and replanted 4.5 miles of degraded shoreline, installing nearly 500,000 native plants. The natural landscaping has stabilized shoreline soils, increased

resilience to flooding, improved water quality, and provided habitat for native frogs, turtles, fish, mussels, aquatic insects, and birds.

Most recently, the Garden partnered with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and Living Habitats to restore 1.25 miles of shoreline along the Garden's North Lake. Aquatic planting "shelves" were created that extend up to 35 feet into the lake, bolstered by custom-fabricated mesh and specialized webbing materials to help support and protect the new plants. In the largest perennial planting effort over the Garden's 40-year history, workers installed 120,000 native shoreline plants along with 1,000 native shrubs. Representing 244 different species, the plants were chosen for their ability to anchor soil at the water's edge and withstand the environmental stresses of urban waterways. Visitors to the North Lake can now enjoy drifts of native plants along the shore, which create seasonal interest, support year-round wildlife, and attract migratory birds. Chicago Wilderness bestowed its Conservation and Native Landscaping Award to the North Lake shoreline project at yesterday evening's event.

Last month, the North American Lake Management Society awarded the Garden a Technical Merit Award at its annual meeting in San Diego. Linda Green from the University of Rhode Island, who nominated the Garden's project, said, "The Chicago Botanic Garden's lakeshore restorations demonstrate perfectly how native landscapes along urban waterways can be both ecologically beneficial and visually beautiful—and foster a sustainable relationship between nature and society."

The Landscape Architecture Foundation in October published a [case study](#) of the Garden's lakeshore projects in its online Landscape Performance Series. The database documents exemplary landscape projects providing environmental and social benefits. The case study's analyses confirmed that most people consider carefully designed native plantings along the water's edge to be more visually attractive than conventional manicured-turf edges.

A quarter-century of restoration to the 100-acre McDonald Woods has transformed degraded oak woodland into a natural treasure providing habitat for a dozen rare and endangered species. The effort has taken place under the meticulous stewardship of Senior Ecologist Jim Steffen, manager of McDonald Woods, who received a "Gold Accreditation" from the Chicago Wilderness Excellence in Environmental Restoration

Program's (EERP) at yesterday evening's event. The newly-launched EERP, sponsored by ArcelorMittal, was developed to recognize high-quality restoration sites and the organizations that manage them. Controlled burns, invasive species removal, and reintroduction of native plants are key components to the ongoing restoration project.

McDonald Woods, which encompasses five distinct woodland community types, also provides research opportunities for Garden scientists and graduate students affiliated with the Daniel F. and Ada L. Rice Plant Conservation Science Center. Most recently, Steffen co-authored a [paper](#) on increased carbon sequestration in restored oak woodlands. Steffen and his team of scientists, students and volunteers have also developed more efficient ways to remove invasive species. For example, they found that by simply removing the green seed pods of the garlic mustard, it became unnecessary to physically pull the plant out of the ground—a process that disturbs the soil and uproots native seedlings.

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**Editors, please note:** The Chicago Botanic Garden's newsroom is online at [www.chicagobotanic.org/pr](http://www.chicagobotanic.org/pr). For digital images, contact Adriana Reyneri at (847) 835-6829 or at [areyneri@chicagobotanic.org](mailto:areyneri@chicagobotanic.org).

*The Chicago Botanic Garden, one of the treasures of the Forest Preserves of Cook County, is a 385-acre living plant museum featuring 26 distinct gardens and four natural areas. With events,*

*programs and activities for all ages, the Garden is open every day of the year. Admission is free; select event fees apply. Parking is \$25 per car; free for Garden members. Located at 1000 Lake Cook Road in Glencoe, IL, the Garden is smoke free. Opened to the public in 1972, the Garden is managed by the Chicago Horticultural Society, accredited by the American Association of Museums and a member of the American Public Gardens Association (APGA). The Chicago Botanic Garden is the 12th largest tourist attraction in Chicago and is the area's sixth largest cultural institution. Visit [www.chicagobotanic.org](http://www.chicagobotanic.org), or call (847) 835-5440 for seasonal hours, images of the Garden and commuter transportation information.*

*The Chicago Botanic Garden offers classes for students from ages preK through adulthood through the Joseph Regenstein, Jr. School. The hands-on learning programs are for people of all ages, abilities, interests, and backgrounds. Adult education classes include horticulture, garden design, nature studies, and botanical arts for all levels of interest. Other programs bring the wonder of nature and plants to children, teens, and teachers. The Garden's community gardening programs provide access to fresh produce in Chicago's food desert communities and training in sustainable urban agriculture for youth and adults. The Daniel F. and Ada L. Rice Plant Conservation Science Center provides laboratories and teaching facilities for more than 200 Ph.D. scientists, land managers, students, and interns whose research is critical to fulfilling the Garden's efforts to save our planet by saving our plants. The Science Career Continuum serves minority students from Chicago Public Schools and throughout the region, mentoring them as they prepare for science studies in college and beyond. In conjunction with Northwestern University, the Garden offers a graduate program in plant biology and conservation with Northwestern University. The Garden is host to Botanic Gardens Conservation International-U.S., and a member of the Center for Plant Conservation.*

*Chicago Wilderness is a regional alliance that connects people and nature. More than 300 organizations work together to restore local nature and improve the quality of life for all who live here, by protecting the lands and waters on which we all depend. The four key initiatives of Chicago Wilderness—to restore the health of local nature, promote green infrastructure, take climate action, and to leave no child inside—reflect the alliance's commitment to using science and emerging knowledge, as well as a collaborative approach to conservation, to benefit all the region's residents. For more information, visit [www.chicagowilderness.org](http://www.chicagowilderness.org).*