



## Beyond the Garden Wall

By Mike Hoey

**O**n August 9, 1851 Jean Baptiste Lamy entered Santa Fe, New Mexico, to assume his role as bishop of this newly formed American diocese. As a French missionary who began his pastoral duties in central Ohio, Santa Fe must have seemed an arid and barren landscape. A black and white photo made about this time shows flat-topped adobes flanking San Francisco Street, ending with the twin tower church of St. Francis. There are few trees and nothing escapes the pitiless gaze of the hot New Mexico sun.

But this landscape offered plenty of life to those accustomed to its austere beauty. The mountains surrounding Santa Fe provided cool relief from the sun; pines and even spruce grew at higher elevations. But Lamy wanted more foliage within the town. Behind the cathedral he created a beautiful garden walled in by native granite. Paul Horgan describes it in his biography, “Lamy of Santa Fe”:

“Among his shade trees he cultivated elm, maple,

cottonwood, locust and both weeping and osier willow. There were red and white currants, plums as large as hens’ eggs and flawless Catawba grapes.”

The garden was a place of refreshment that renewed the bishop before his long journeys on horseback over deserts and mountains to visit his flock. We all need secret places and it is only natural that we cultivate things of beauty close to home. In “The Education of a Gardener,” Russell Page recalls how people in the Middle Ages showered attention on small flower gardens sheltered within castle walls.

“These restricted closes, perhaps only a few feet square, were made for growing herbs and flowers – roses and pinks and columbines – not perhaps very showy by modern standards, but one can see how much they were cherished and appreciated from a hundred paintings and tapestries of the period.”

Bishop Lamy, though, shared his love of plants with others. He personally planted willow saplings from his

garden in the Santa Fe plaza. He gave away trees and, in time, thousands of fruit trees graced the little streets and alleys of Santa Fe. In giving away fruit and saplings, Lamy was doing what gardeners have always done. Some are even more ambitious.

In “The Man Who Planted Trees” (1953), French writer Jean Giono offers a tale about a young man who meets a shepherd planting acorns in some desolate foothills of the French Alps. After the trench warfare of World War I, the young man returns and is surprised to see the land teeming with life. Oak saplings are everywhere and streams run through the land, due to the shepherd channeling water from higher up in the mountains. In this peaceful place, the young man is able to recover from the horrors of war and find new hope.

In his encyclical *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis observes: “We were not meant to be inundated by cement, asphalt, glass and metal, and deprived of physical contact with nature.” (par. 44) Yet the Holy Father is keenly aware that many, especially the poor, are surrounded by environments that are chaotic, noisy, ugly and dangerous. (*Laudato Si'* par. 147) Moving beyond our own garden walls to create places of beauty and safety for others is one way to care for our common home, and many are taking on this challenge.

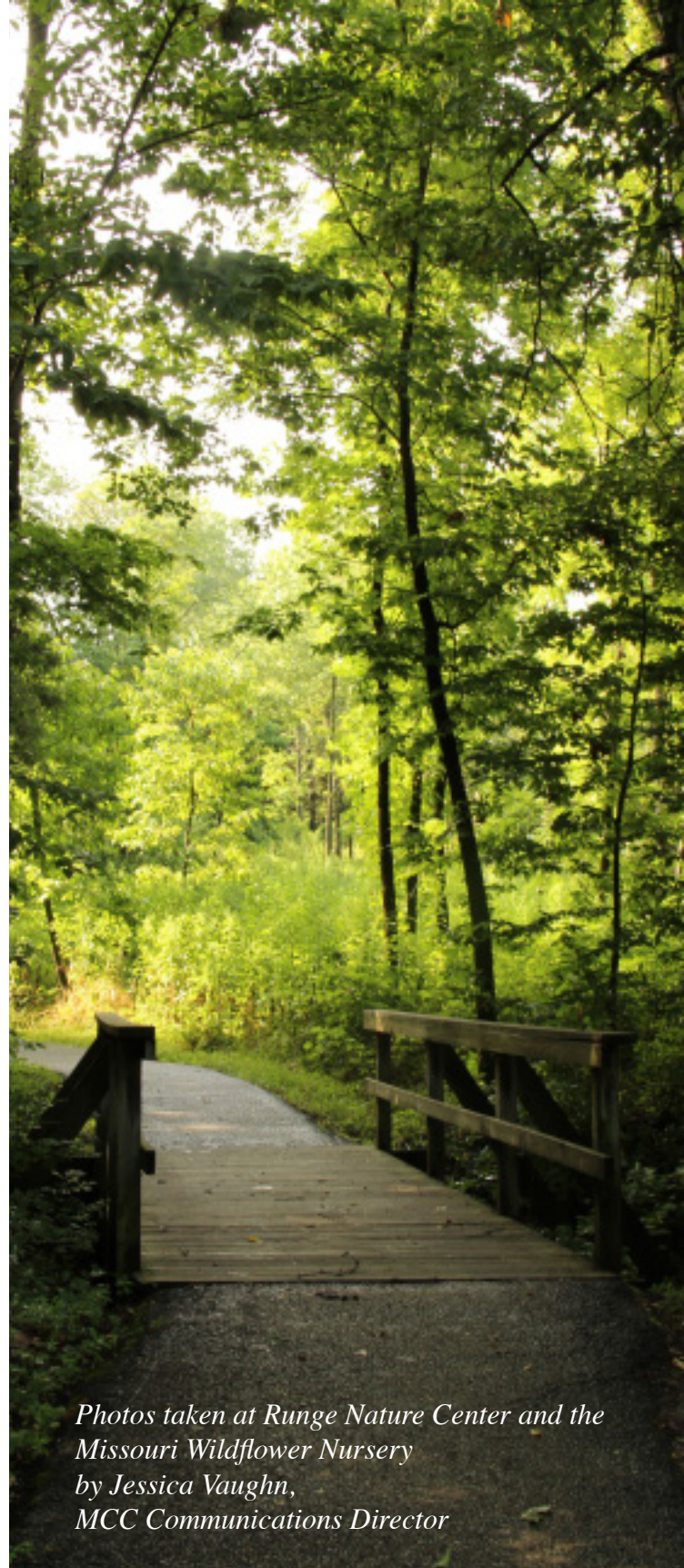
Large cities are recognizing the value of converting urban space to natural areas open to the public. The High Line in New York is a natural pathway developed on an old elevated train track. In Chicago, the Lurie Garden grows over an underground parking garage. New green space is being developed for the St. Louis Arch project right over the top of I-70. Urban gardens in St. Louis, Kansas City, Columbia and other Missouri communities offer places where the poor can grow their own food.

The Missouri Prairie Foundation is reclaiming land for native grasslands, and in suburban settings gardeners are planting native grasses and flowers. There is a growing awareness of the value of native plants in preserving habitat for monarch butterflies and other species. People are conserving water and collecting it in rain barrels.

On a more global scale, the Missouri Botanical Garden works to reclaim degraded places to protect biodiversity and save species of animals and plant groups from extinction. Our own health and survival are tied to this continued biodiversity. In *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis warns that we cannot set ourselves apart from nature (par. 139) and commends those who seek to protect critical natural areas, calling the Amazon and Congo basins “those richly biodiverse lungs of our planet.” (par. 38)

In many ways, however, this work of good stewardship and care for the earth must start with a rediscovery of God’s creation and a desire to pass something of beauty over the garden wall to others, just as Bishop Lamy did so many years ago.

*Mike Hoey is the executive director for the MCC*



*Photos taken at Runge Nature Center and the Missouri Wildflower Nursery  
by Jessica Vaughn,  
MCC Communications Director*

*Bullfrogs, wild turkeys, deer, dragonflies and more live in safe refuge at the Runge Nature Center in Jefferson City. The Runge Center is open for walking and hiking seven days a week, its educational center is open T,W,F,S 8 a.m.-5 p.m., TH 8 a.m.-8 p.m.*

# RECOVER



Many people have a love of nature and sense God's handiwork in its design, but they might not be able to express it in words; or their words of adoration are halting, leaving the rest to imagination. I knew a man of few words who was steeped in knowledge of the natural world, but he wouldn't talk about it very much. He would sometimes offer cryptic observations when fishing, like, "There's something about the water."

In summoning us to a greater love for God's creation, Pope Francis suggests we take St. Francis of Assisi as our model, but this mystic can seem strange. Birds don't alight on our shoulders and we may not praise God by invoking Sister Moon or Brother Sun. Most of us don't invite the animals to burst into song with us, but we know that God's grace is flowing through and around us; we have only to recover the sense of wonder we naturally had in childhood.

As children we are drawn to the woods, streams, the play of sunshine and shadow. I remember Saturday mornings when I would meet with friends under an ancient oak tree to plan the day. Saturday was a special day that could stretch into eternity with never ending adventures. As we grow older, a somber side of nature reveals itself; there is birth but there is also death, a necessary part of the cycle of life. In "Hardwood Groves" (1913) Robert Frost puts it this way:

Before the leaves can mount again  
To fill the trees with another shade,  
They must go down past things coming up  
They must go down into the dark decayed.

When someone dear to us dies, our sense of wonder of the strangeness of the world can return to us and it can be unsettling. Life goes on, seemingly unconcerned with our grief; the birds continue to sing, the sun to rise. Yet God's creation possesses great healing powers.

In "The Lantern Out of Doors" (1918), the Jesuit priest and poet Gerard Manley Hopkins speaks of a lantern "that moves along the night" and ponders the fate of all carriers of lanterns, of all people. "Death or distance soon consumes them," he writes. Yet the poem ends with the realization that though the lantern carrier will soon disappear, Christ sees things differently. He is, he writes, "Their ransom, their rescue, and first, fast, last friend."

Hopkins struggled with depression. He even burned some of his poems. Through it all, though, he recovered some sense of peace in nature. In "Pied Beauty" (1918) the poet declares, "Glory be to God for dappled things/For skies of couple-colour as a brindled cow;/For rose-moles all in stipple upon trout that swim." He ends the poem with a strong affirmation of the goodness of God's creation:

All things counter, original, spare, strange;  
Whatever is fickle, freckled (who knows how?)  
With swift, slow; sweet, sour; adazzle, dim;  
He fathers-forth whose beauty is past change:  
Praise him.

# Missouri's Proud and Enduring Tradition of Conservation

Just over a year ago, Pope Francis issued his encyclical *Laudato Si'*, inviting all people to join in a great effort to protect and restore our common home, Earth. The pope's global call for environmental responsibility calls for action throughout the world, but much of this response must be local in nature.

Missouri has a long tradition of promoting conservation. A review of this history reveals the great work that has been done in our state to bring back a thriving wildlife population and to restore degraded landscapes. Much of that tradition goes back to the night of September 10, 1935 when about 100 sportsmen met at the Tiger Hotel in Columbia to consider what could be done to restore wildlife and wild places in Missouri.

The Great Depression was in full swing and Missouri was in the grip of a terrible drought. Since the late 1800's, big tracts of forest in the Ozarks had been cut down to make charcoal and later railroad ties. Wildlife was low due to lost habitat and years of commercial hunting that sent wagonloads of game to the city markets.

The sportsmen organized the Conservation Federation of Missouri and spearheaded a petition drive which asked voters to adopt a constitutional amendment that would take the politics out of conservation management and improve the regulation of wildlife. Voters approved Amendment 4 with 71 percent of the vote in 1936 and in 1937 the Missouri Conservation Commission was established.

The newly minted commission and its implementing arm, the Missouri Department of Conservation, immediately set to work to restore depleted wildlife populations. In 1944, Missouri had its first deer-hunting season since 1937. In the years that followed, the deer population exploded. Today deer are a nuisance in many areas, giving the Department a new management challenge. The turkey population was down to an estimated 2,500 birds by 1952, but the Department used a variety of management techniques to restore their numbers.

The Department also saw the wisdom of educating the public on the need for conservation. The first issue of the Missouri Conservationist was issued on July 1, 1938. These educational





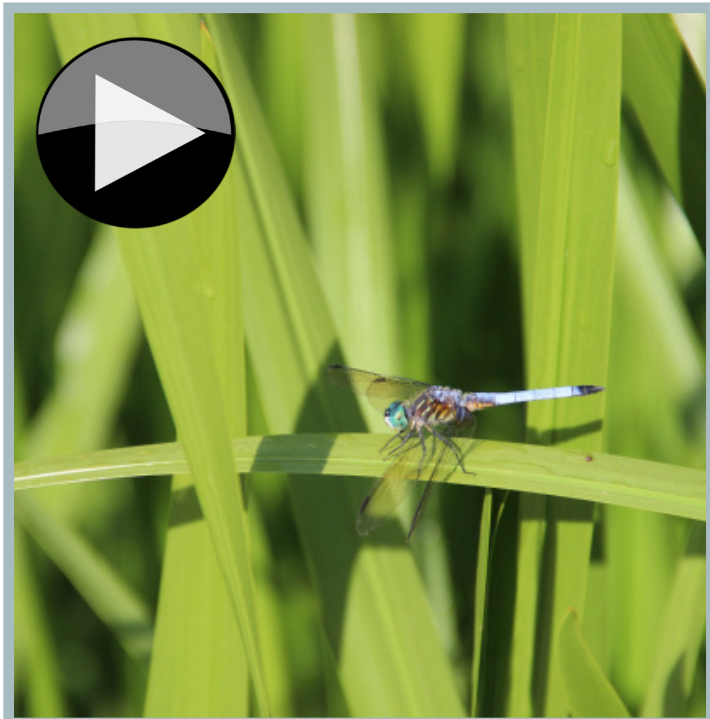
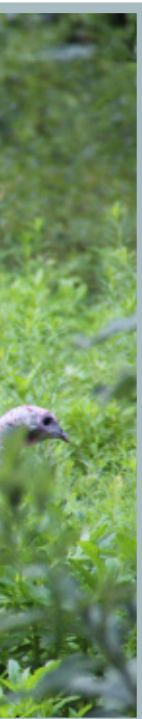
efforts bore fruit, as more Missourians became supporters of conservation efforts, approving a conservation sales tax in 1976 that remains in the Department's funding.

Today, the Missouri Department of Conservation serves the needs of over 600,000 hunters and 1.1 million anglers. Over 900,000 people visit the Department's Nature and Conservation Education Centers every year. (See the accompanying video about the Jefferson City Runge Nature Center). In order to create suitable habitat for quail and rabbit, the Department seeks to restore prairies and meadows to Missouri. These conservation efforts are followed by over 500,000 Missouri households that receive the Missouri Conservationist. And, school teachers can access classroom resources for their students at the Department's website.

As vigorous as the work of the Missouri Department of Conservation has been, private initiatives have also been an essential part of the state's successful conservation story. In 1966, in an effort to protect the declining population of prairie chickens, Missouri citizens formed the Missouri Prairie Foundation. Since its inception, the foundation has acquired nearly 3,000 acres of land to restore to native prairie. On its website, [moprairie.org](http://moprairie.org), landowners can learn how they can establish wild meadows and grasslands.

The Missouri Chapter of the Nature Conservancy partners with the Missouri Prairie Foundation, the Missouri Department of Conservation and other groups to restore wildlife and the habitat they need to survive. At the Dunn Ranch Prairie in northwest Missouri, prairie chicken and bison are being re-introduced to the Grand River Grasslands.

Missouri is also home to the world-renowned Missouri Botanical Garden, first opened in 1859 by Henry Shaw, an Englishman who came to St. Louis in 1819 and fell in love with the natural surroundings. Today, the Botanical Garden includes top-notch researchers who study plant life throughout the world and explore ways to restore forests and other native flora. These efforts are taking on special urgency as the Garden works with other groups to mitigate the harmful effects of climate change. Through its Flora of Missouri project, the Garden is compiling information about the flora in Missouri, adding about 5,000 specimens to its holdings each year.



## Bringing Nature Home One Garden at a Time

Bradford Pear or Serviceberry? The planting choices gardeners make can affect the vitality and health of our natural world. As wild habitat shrinks, a growing number of gardeners are choosing plants based not just on their aesthetic value, but on whether they can provide food and shelter for wildlife.

In “Bringing Nature Home,” entomologist Douglas Tallamy observes that insects appear to prefer feeding on native rather than non-native plants. Fortunately, the demand for native plants is on the rise. Even commercial nurseries now offer some native grasses and flowers. The Missouri Wildflowers Nursery, located just south of Jefferson City, specializes solely in developing and selling native plants.

One example of how important native plants can be is the survival of butterflies. Tallamy argues that gardeners should plant natives like milkweed instead of aliens like butterfly bush:

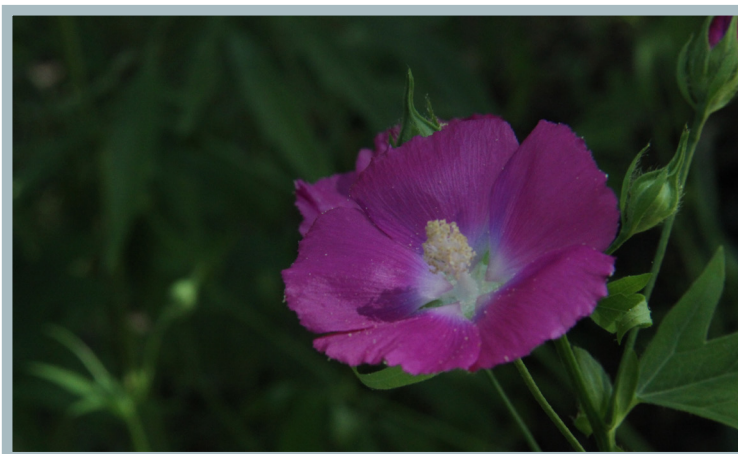
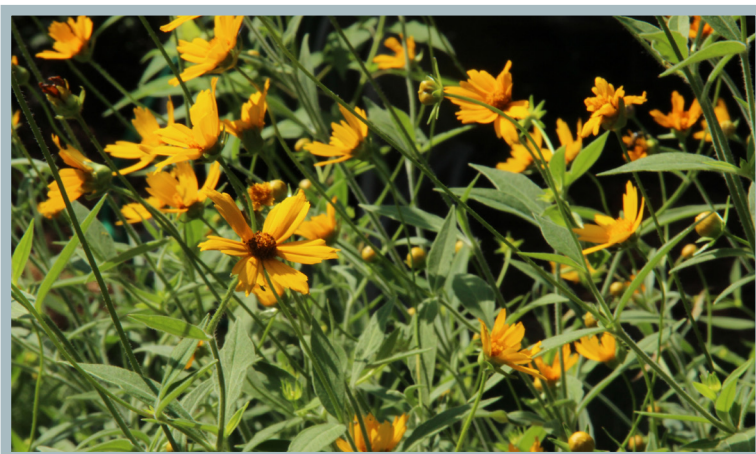
“Planting butterfly bush in your garden will provide attractive nectar for adult butterflies, but not one species of butterfly in North America can use buddleias as larval host plants,” he writes. “To have butterflies, we need to make butterflies. Butterflies used to reproduce on the native plants that grew in our yards before the plants were bulldozed and replaced with lawn. To have butterflies in our future, we need to replace those lost host plants...”

The native plant movement has also gained adherents as people see how aggressive some non-natives have become, spreading into the wild and displacing native flora. Bradford Pear has spread to open areas, and Japanese Honeysuckle covers much of Missouri’s forest understory. The honeysuckle is especially troublesome, as it can creep into yards and thoroughly cover and choke out other garden plants.

Not everyone, however, is convinced that native plants should be the sole focus in gardening. Most non-natives are not aggressive and these plants can offer shelter to wildlife. Spruce trees are not native to Missouri, but in winter birds appreciate their dense protection from wind and snow. In “Planting: A New Perspective,” Piet Oudolf and Noel Kingsbury



*Milkweed, a native Missouri plant, is essential for Monarch butterfly feeding and breeding; it is the only plant that sustains the butterfly at all stages of life. Learn more about the importance of milkweed from Missouri Wildflowers Nursery owner Mervin Wallace (pictured top of page 7) in the Messenger videos.*



argue for a creative synthesis of native and non-native plants. Both advocate for the generous incorporation of native plants into landscape designs and gardens, but they also see a role for non-natives, especially in ensuring that plantings are visually pleasing and thus able to attract public support and protection.

The native versus non-native debate among gardeners is far from over, but nearly everyone can agree that Americans rely far too much on big lawns that are not wildlife friendly. Planting bigger beds of native flowers can help, as can introducing native grasses, such as

Prairie Dropseed and Little Blue Stem. Landowners can also support wildlife by not just planting big shade trees but including some understory partners, like Serviceberry, Dogwood and Redbud.

As wild habitat continues to shrink, both farmers and gardeners can offer new refuge for wildlife. This work can be as expansive as creating a large native grassland on a farm, down to cultivating a small patch of ground in the city. We all have a role to play in restoring the health of our common home, Earth.