

Summer 2011



The Merry Leaflet

Merry Lea Environmental Learning Center of Goshen College

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Body and Spirit:

Re-Creating Our Spiritual Lives at Merry Lea *by Jennifer Schrock*

Merry Lea has always been a place of intersections: between earth and people, between predator and prey, between Wolf Lake and Goshen. In this issue, we'll explore an intersection that is especially significant for some of our constituency: Merry Lea as a place where God and people meet.

Lee and Mary Jane Rieth first staked out the territory for us when they described Merry Lea as a "Nature and Religious Center." They also suggested a spiritual focus by including "re-creating opportunities that benefit the human body and spirit" in the organization's mission statement.

On pages 2 and 3, Executive Director Luke Gascho explores the way Merry Lea's first decade opened the door to matters of the spirit. In this article, we'll look at what has walked in that door during recent years and describe concrete expressions of the spiritual life at Merry Lea.

Re-creating opportunities

In Merry Lea's vocabulary, "recreation" has a hyphen in it. It is not just a diversion, but a chance to reformat our lives, re-direct what has gone astray and allow new things to emerge. Some guests come seeking this experience through scheduled retreats; others discover it by serendipity.

Merry Lea has several spaces that can serve as retreat space for individuals or groups parts of the year. One local pastor says Rieth Village is his retreat destination of choice because of its remote location and large windows that let in lots of light.

"When I come, I sleep a lot, I read, I journal," he explained. "Often I find that the surroundings help me to be creative in a different way. New places make you think new thoughts."

Assembly Mennonite Church, Goshen, Ind., held its July 3 worship service at Merry Lea. The congregation is in the midst of a series based on Psalm 23, which compares God to a shepherd caring for sheep.

"We thought getting out of town and into nature might be the best way to really know these well-worn words about green pastures and still waters," said Pastor Heidi Siemens-

Rhodes. Her congregation also did some dipping for macroinvertebrates after their worship service. "It's a way to realize how complex creation is," Siemens-Rhodes explained. "Even in the 'still waters' all these little creatures are swimming around."

People who do not bring a churchly set of language and symbols to their experiences at Merry Lea still speak to us on occasion about their encounters with something beyond birds, sky and landscape. They say things like, "Something magical happened," or "I find something here that I don't find elsewhere."

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A June 17 overnight campout at Luckey's Landing is just one of the opportunities for "re-creating" the body and spirit that Merry Lea offers. Attendees canoed on High Lake and shared a sense of community with other paddlers around a campfire. Above, Jonathan and Betty Schrag savor a pancake breakfast. The couple rode a tandem to Merry Lea from their home in New Paris, Ind.



Director's Corner A Vision Emerging

I entered my position as Merry Lea's executive director with a limited understanding of what this place was

about, where it had come from and where it might be going. However, I recall being impressed with Merry Lea's mission. The third concept in the mission statement particularly struck me: "providing a setting for re-creating opportunities that benefit the human body and spirit." Based on this mission, I knew this was a place where I could engage fully—and that has been so true.

The benefit of Merry Lea to the human spirit is a distinctive aspect of this place and its purpose. Recently, I have been drawn to explore our history files to look for artifacts that indicate how and why the spiritual and religious was part of Merry Lea's purpose. It is a fascinating account of emergence. "Emergence" is a term used in fields such as systems theory, science and philosophy to describe the way complex systems and patterns arise out of numerous relatively simple interactions. For example, a snowflake is considered an emergent structure. Water molecules, following a few basic rules of physics, nevertheless generate intricate structures one couldn't have imagined.

In a similar way, the visionary work of Lee and Mary Jane Rieth—along with the early board members—fostered the emergence of the vision that we continue to pursue today. The following are several direct quotes

from letter, minutes and master plans that show the emergence of the "spiritual and religious" strand that is part of Merry Lea. This strand informs the way we approach our work and invigorates our programs.

Lee Reith purchased the first 80 acres of Merry Lea in 1962. During the next few years, a relationship grew with the First Methodist Church in South Bend. The congregation hoped to hold various kinds of retreats at Merry Lea. Two challenges to that vision arose, which pointed the

"Providing a setting for re-creating opportunities that benefit the human body and spirit while not exploiting the land or excessively disturbing its ecosystems."

leadership in a different direction—the geographical distance was too great for regular use and the overall vision for Merry Lea became larger than what a single congregation could support.

On May 3, 1967, Lee wrote a letter to the pastor of First Methodist Church that outlined three options for how the relationship between church and Merry Lea might be better defined. The following quote is from the second option, which was ultimately the direction they chose.

... I invite the Church to join with me in the formation and implementation of a non-profit corporation for the purpose of receiving this property, utilizing and

developing the same in accordance with its religious, spiritual, conservation and educational objectives.

This early statement names the commitment to the religious and spiritual dimensions of the emerging Merry Lea and makes it prominent.

Two months later, Merry Lea became incorporated as Merry Lea Nature and Religious Foundation, Inc. The pastor of First Methodist Church was a signatory on this document

- from Merry Lea's mission statement

along with Lee, Mary Jane and two others. The following purpose statements from the 1967 Articles of Incorporation again illustrate how our founders chose to include faith as they formed Merry Lea.

...to conserve, develop, beautify and improve any and all real estate, and to operate the same as a religious, cultural, nature education and retreat center under religious and spiritual guidance for all members of the public without regard to ethnic, religious or racial background; and

...to establish, promote, conduct, assist and generally operate such real estate and its improvement

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Perspective: How Merry Lea has Shaped My Spirituality

by Paul Steury

"So tell me about your spiritual pilgrimage," Luke said to me during my interview for the K-12 Education Coordinator position in August 1999.

I told him I was disenchanted with Christianity and had looked into Buddhism, Native American religion and pantheism—the belief that the Universe (Nature) and God are identical. I also said that if I returned to Goshen, I would consider returning to my roots: the Anabaptist/pacifist culture of the Mennonites and Church of the Brethren.

Luke invited me to join the Merry Lea team and since then I have become stronger in my faith because of Merry Lea's devotion to creation care. I've realized that Christianity teaches that we are mandated by God to

care for this Earth. To grow in faith with my kids, Dylan (9) and Skye (5) by finding fawns nestled in stinging nettles and banding common yellowthroat warblers is not only rewarding. It also gives us the opportunity to talk about the Golden Rule and about loving your neighbor and showing respect.

Because of the politics of some parts of the Church, I almost left Christianity. Because of Merry Lea, my passion for caring for this Earth has grown. I know God has called me to do that through wading in wetlands, singing "All God's Critters Got a Place in the Choir," and going into churches and Christian Colleges to talk about how we need to be better gardeners of God's green Earth. §



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as to provide a retreat for the advancement of conservation and nature education under religious guidance and as a center of retreat for scientific, educational, cultural and recreational objectives toward and in behalf of the general public who may wish to share in the benefits of such retreat ...

These are amazing statements! The integration of faith (religious) with all of the other purposes is remarkable. While the mission statements of church camps include both the spiritual and the nature setting, very few other nature centers included an integration of religious guidance with conservation, nature education, scientific study and recreational activities.

The board meeting minutes of July 15, 1972, record the ongoing work to ensure program design would include the integration of faith.

[O]ur objectives are not to be just nature study, but our program is to include ecology, man's place in our universe, the building of good people, and helping mankind. The program is to include scientific study, educational program, the arts,

spiritual involvement, and social work. Emphasis must always be on quality of our program and not quantity. The quality and educational value of our program should set us apart from other areas.

The philosophy described in these minutes understands people as a part of ecology and requires that programs at Merry Lea be carried out in light of a holistic set of objectives.

The board continued to establish the framework for the future of Merry Lea by engaging a consulting firm to help them articulate a Master Plan. The following quote is from the 1973 document's statement of goals for Merry Lea.

To supplement conventional learning within a laboratory designed by Nature, reaching beyond formalized intellectual approaches by utilizing recreational (individual and group), aesthetic, cultural, philosophical, and in the broadest sense, the religious potential of a fine natural setting is the primary goal.

The primary objective is to improve attitudes that will lead each individual to accept his or her full responsibility for the preservation

and wise use of property, life, and our cultural and natural inheritance and to appreciate and enjoy life to the fullest extent.

The activities of the following seven years were grounded in these concepts.

In 1980 the "original Merry Lea" was donated to Goshen College. Lee and Mary Jane, along with the board members, believed that the best way to realize their vision for Merry Lea was to involve an institution of higher education. The Rieths built a relationship with President J. Lawrence Burkholder that confirmed for them that a place like Goshen College could foster the ongoing "religious guidance" that is described in the above quotes. We continue today as stewards of this holistic vision which includes faith as its distinctive frame.

I am awed by the emergence of such a strong vision for a nature sanctuary that includes environmental education and the benefit to the human spirit. This is at the heart of what we do today. The Rieths and their colleagues led with cutting edge thinking and created an outstanding legacy for generations to come. What an honor it has been to be part of the Merry Lea mission and vision for the last fourteen years! §

Merry Lea, created with the assistance of The Nature Conservancy and through the generosity of Lee A. and Mary Jane Rieth, is operated by Goshen College. The Center provides a comprehensive program of environmental education and recreation.

ADMINISTRATION AND STAFF

Offices at the Learning Center Building

Executive Director Luke A. Gascho
Director of Graduate Program Dave Ostergren
Director of Land Management Bill F. Minter
Property Supervisor Kerry Goodrich
K-12 Education Coordinator Paul Steury
Environmental Science Educator Carol Good-Elliott
Environmental Educator/Maintenance Jane Litwiller
Admin. Assistant/Volunteer Coordinator Roberta Miller

Offices at Rieth Village

Director of Collegiate Programs Lindsey Fellow
Director of Sustainability Semester Public Programs Coordinator
Program Director Emeritus

Dale Hess
Ryan Sensenig
Lisa Zinn
Jennifer Schrock
Dave Miller

MERRY LEA BOARD OF TRUSTEES

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Luke Gascho, ex officio
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The Merry Leaflet, published in spring, summer, fall and winter, provides news about programs and developments at Merry Lea. Jennifer Halteman Schrock, Editor. Look online at www.goshen.edu/merrylea/latest for the additional news about Merry Lea.



Above, Annalisa Harder and Patrick Maxwell debate the merits of Mark Bredin's book, *Ecology of the New Testament*. Both recent graduates have internships at Merry Lea that allow them to explore faith-based perspectives on the environment.

in general have not done a good job of talking about faith and science, leaving this task to colleges.

- An environmental professional described the theological language he used to help people connect his vocation restoring damaged landscapes with the Christian story.

"I came to faith in a new way because of science," confessed Ryan Sensenig, Merry Lea's Lindsey Fellow during the panel.

Merry Lea is also a sponsor for Mennonite

Creation Care Network (MCCN), the arm of the Mennonite Church USA that encourages churches to claim their biblical and theological heritage as earthkeepers. Two staff members, Luke Gascho and Jennifer Schrock, serve on the organization's Creation Care Council. Recently, the network took a leap forward by partnering with Merry Lea to create a year-long internship position. The intern is shared by the two organizations and works out of Merry Lea's Rieth Village. Annalisa Harder of Bluffton, Ohio, a 2011 graduate of Goshen College, began June 7 in this capacity. Her recent duties included preparing a booth for a Mennonite Convention where both MCCN and Merry Lea will be represented.

Meanwhile, a second intern, Patrick Maxwell, recently spent six weeks at Merry Lea completing a Bible and religion internship for academic credit. He read and reviewed books on eco-theology that can be added to MCCN's resource lists and used in Merry Lea's upcoming Sustainability Semester as well.

To learn more about MCCN, visit its web site at <http://www.mennocreationcare.org>. The web site features stories about congregations, schools, church agencies, workplaces and households that are caring for creation in various ways.

Merry Lea staff members also network with a variety of other

faith-based organizations. Interfaith Power and Light, an organization that promotes energy conservation, energy efficiency, and renewable energy is one example.

New opportunities for theological dialog and research

Two new endeavors begun in 2011 will expand faith-based dialog at Merry Lea. In March, Goshen College launched three institutes, focusing on the college's distinctive academic strengths as they relate to faith. One of these is the Institute for Ecological Regeneration, under the umbrella of Merry Lea. The institute will focus on research and education in three areas and the ways that they intersect: land, environmental education and faith.

At a brainstorming session in early June, Merry Lea faculty listed potential areas for research. How does faith influence behavior toward the land? How have environmental attitudes evolved in the Christian tradition? How do Christians make sense of the fact that God allows environmental disasters? How are peacemaking and care for the earth interrelated? Some of these questions may become research projects in the future.

A winter symposium where theologians and Bible scholars are invited to interact with Merry Lea faculty will be one of the institute's activities. A first attempt was cancelled due to snow this past February.

Merry Lea's new Sustainability Semester in Residence, now due to launch fall of 2012, also has a faith-based component. The program's emphasis on community living will include a weekly vespers service and discussion of how faith practices such as keeping the Sabbath can nourish responsible environmental behavior. In a course entitled, Faith, Ethics and Ecojustice, students will be challenged to see the relevance of religious questions to environmental decision-making and to apply these questions to real-world problems.

Merry Lea's serene landscape has always been a place of spiritual renewal for some. In the future, it looks like it will also spawn theological dialog. §

Cassandra Byler, Millersburg, Ind., works in the public school system with Hispanic youth from migrant worker backgrounds and has brought her group to Merry Lea several times. "My youth are always at their best at Merry Lea," Byler reports. "It is almost a mystical experience for us. Every time we come, something happens." The last time the group visited, they stumbled upon a great horned owl nest.

Creation Care with Churches

A second expression of the life of faith at Merry Lea is in the area of fostering care of creation in congregations. This frequently involves bridging the gap between the scientific community and faith communities. Questions about topics like climate change come up in staff members' congregations or when they are invited to speak in church settings.

Last September during its annual Autumn Hope conference, Merry Lea sponsored a panel entitled, Faith and Science in Dialog. Autumn Hope is a faith-based event that brings together environmental students, seminary students and interested community members, so the group was a lively mix:

- A student described ambivalent reactions from parents and her congregation when she declared an environmental science major.
- A pastor observed that churches

Visit to the Tar Sands Prompts Questions about Environmental Education

by Paul Steury

I recently visited a human-made phenomenon called the Tar Sands, where companies are mining oil from the land in northern Alberta—the place that makes Canada the country that provides the majority of U.S. oil. As I looked out over this gray wasteland, I felt like Frodo, from the J.R.R. Tolkien's fantasy, *The Lord of the Rings*, standing just outside of Mordor, the Black Land that housed evil. "The most destructive project on earth," is a good description of this landscape.

Tar sands (also referred to as oil sands) are a combination of clay, sand, water, and bitumen, a heavy, black viscous oil. Tar sands can be mined and processed to extract the oil-rich bitumen, which is then refined into oil. The bitumen in tar sands cannot be pumped from the ground in its natural state; instead tar sand deposits are mined, usually using strip mining or open pit techniques, or the oil is extracted by underground heating with additional upgrading.

During my visit, I flew over a couple of the larger open pit mines where they scoop out the bitumen, load it in massive trucks and move it closer to the refinery where they remove the toxins, "clean" the oil, and liquify it by heating up the soil concoction. Because the bitumen is so thick, it needs to be thinned. Then Synergy, Suncorp and other mining companies can send hundreds of thousands of barrels of oil to an American refinery in Whiting, Indiana, each day. This refinery is one reason why Indiana citizens should be concerned about the tar sands: one of many.

Mining oil from tar sands creates water quality problems. Once hot water and steam have been used to remove the bitumen from the soil, the waste is stored in huge tailing ponds that need to have loud alarms on the top of the pond to keep birds from landing in the water. If they did land, they would never leave because the ponds are full of mercury, thallium, arsenic and oil residue. Currently,

there are 54 square miles of this toxic soup in Alberta.

During my visit, I met with Dr. John O'Connor, who is a family physician for Fort Chipewyan and Fort McKay First Nations people. O'Connor has seen an increased incidence of cancer among the people he treats. He states that tainted water is the main transmitter of carcinogens to the people living in northern Alberta, and faults the Canadian government for this. When I spoke with him, he asserted that Environment Canada, the arm of the Canadian government responsible for implementing the country's environmental agenda, was not monitoring the water of the nearby Athabasca River for fear of slowing down the economy. David Schindler, a professor of ecology from the University of Alberta, found that levels of cadmium, copper, lead, mercury, nickel, silver and zinc exceeded federal and provincial guidelines for the protection of aquatic life in melted snow or water collected near or downstream from oil sands mining.

While I was in Alberta, I was refused lodging in the house of a family that had worked for Suncorp for 40 years because I was an environmental educator. I witnessed the struggle between industry and those concerned about the land, air and water. Sometimes these conflicts were within the same person.

Winfred GrandJambe, an elder from the Fort McKay community, illustrates the bipolar dilemma that the First Nations people live with. GrandJambe told me about his new truck and house and the positives of having the Tar Sands in his northern Alberta community since it offers salaries in the hundreds of thousands for driving truck or bulldozers. But he also said "there are no more animals nearby and we have to go quite a ways for healing herbs." This 71-year-old had just hunted a bear and a moose, but he had to fly to another part of Alberta to reach hunting areas. His community is surrounded by eight pit

mines devoid of vegetation.

My visit to Canada intersected with a book I have read recently: *The Failure of Environmental Education (and How We Can Fix It)*, by Charles Saylan and Daniel T. Blumstein. The authors argue that environmental educators have failed to provide education that stimulates action on issues such as the tar sands.

Is it enough to simply have interesting experiences in nature if natural places are vanishing? Should Merry Lea's environmental education programs shift to a focus on issue investigation? These are questions I have raised with my colleagues.

I went to Canada because I wanted to see firsthand what I've been reading about in regard to environmental issues. I hope I can use the experience as a motivator when discussing creation care and environmental ethics. I hope I can be a global citizen, working for justice for all peoples. §

Paul Steury is an assistant professor of environmental education in Merry Lea's graduate program. One of his courses focuses on environmental issues.



The map above shows the area in Alberta, Canada, where oil can be mined from tar sands. This area is roughly the size of Florida.

Laura Yoder Joins Merry Lea's Faculty By Annalisa Harder



Laura Meitzner Yoder

In July, Merry Lea welcomed Dr. Laura Meitzner Yoder to its wild and wonderful ecosystems, energetic students and delightful, dedicated staff. Yoder, who most recently was teaching in Chiang Mai, Thailand, will be teaching the research methods course in Merry Lea's Master's in Environmental Education program, as well as spending a quarter of her time on research and preparing a class entitled Sustainability and Regeneration for the undergraduate Sustainability Semester beginning next year.

Early on in her studies, Yoder was interested in the technical side of food production in marginal growing conditions. As a high school student, she wanted to help people by become involved in international agriculture. Throughout her schooling, Yoder found ways to travel and experience learning in different environments—something she has found formative and shaping.

Yoder attended Messiah College near her home area in Pennsylvania, and graduated with a major in biology and minors in peacemaking and Spanish. She spent her senior year studying in Ecuador with Brethren Colleges Abroad.

Following graduation, Yoder interned at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, London, and then at the Educational Concerns for Hunger Organization (ECHO) in Fort Myers,

Fl. At ECHO, she worked with a tropical plants seedbank and also did technical writing. That led her to Cornell University in Ithaca, N.Y., for a master's in International Agriculture and Rural Development, with field work on farmers' highland seed systems in Honduras.

Then, while volunteering with Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) in West Papua, Indonesia, Yoder encountered land access issues that have since been her focus. Previously, she had been working with the technical side of food production in marginal environments, but with MCC, she worked with indigenous people whose access to their long-claimed forest areas was under threat by government conservation zoning and private business interests. During this time, Yoder's technical training was transformed into a focus on ecological anthropology; she began working with the political implications of environmental initiatives.

Yoder attended Yale University's School of Forestry and Environmental

Studies for her Ph.D., and did her dissertation work in the new nation of East Timor, on the interactions between government and traditional groups regarding forest oversight.

After the Indian Ocean tsunami in December 2004, Yoder, her husband Jeff, and their infant son returned to Indonesia to again work with MCC in Aceh, Indonesia. For the past two years, Yoder taught with a field-based experiential environmental education program in Thailand.

So why Merry Lea? As Yoder says repeatedly, her own field experiences were more formative and life-shaping than her time spent in traditional classroom environments. "Those opportunities greatly affected my learning and the teaching that I've done since then," said Yoder. She is also anticipating her role as a project research mentor, and deeply appreciates the mentoring, learning, community-based environment of Merry Lea. "This is the kind of teaching environment that I enjoy most," said Yoder. §



A month in the life of Merry Lea

June was a lively month at Merry Lea on multiple fronts:

- Six agroecology students arrived to spend a growing season studying ways to grow food in harmony with local ecosystems. Above, three of the six head toward a mulching task.

- Another set of solar panels now graces the roof of the Learning Center Building. A majority of the building's

energy now comes from the sun.

- A canoe campout at Luckey's Landing provided relaxation for several families.

- A local farm tour sponsored by Merry Lea introduced 32 food fans to Clay Bottom CSA, Blue Heron Farm and Creekside Farm.

A group of master gardeners toured Rieth Village to learn about eco-friendly building. §

Nature Notes: Tulip Poplars

by Leah Schroeder

If you take a stroll on the property near Merry Lea's Learning Center Building, you will come across a majestic giant of the Eastern hardwood forests: *Liriodendron tulipifera*. We call this tree the tulip poplar, but it is misnamed, for it is actually part of the magnolia family.

The tulip poplar is one of the tallest trees in Indiana. It can grow up to 190 feet in height in the wild, though in urban environments it is usually 75 to 90 feet tall.

When the first Europeans arrived on the North American continent, the tree of choice to ship back to Europe was the tulip poplar. With its tall, straight trunk, its gorgeous foliage for shade and its unusually beautiful flowers, it soon became a very popular tree in Europe. The Native Americans already knew about the benefits of this enormous tree and highly prized its wood to build their canoes. Daniel Boone allegedly built a sixty-foot dugout canoe from the trunk of a tulip poplar.

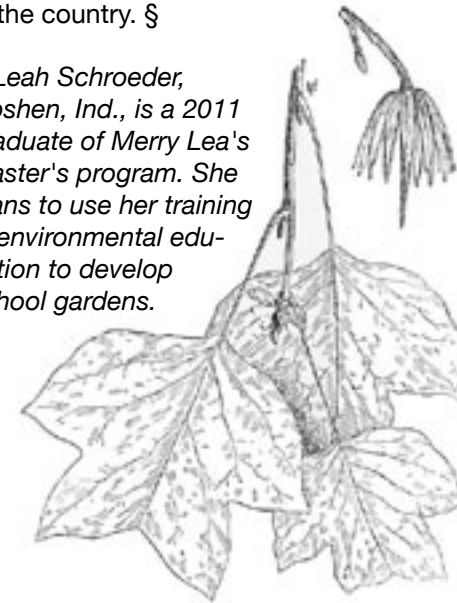
The tulip poplar is a glorious tree that shows off its unusual splendor not only two but three seasons out of the year. In the spring, the tree's flowers brighten the landscape with their yellow-green flowers that blush orange on the inside. These aromatic, tulip-like flowers give off an alluring scent and entice hummingbirds, cardinals, finches and honeybees to collect their nectar.

In the summer, large and handsome lyre-shaped foliage shades July afternoons. In the autumn after most trees have turned brown, the tulip poplar is at its most dazzling. Then, it blinds us with its array of stunning yellow leaves that last all the way through October.

Even though the tulip poplar was named the state tree of Indiana, you won't find it scattered all over Midwestern landscapes. It is a species that requires deep, rich soil that is moist but well-drained. This is why much of the finest tulip poplar timber was cut by pioneers—because it indicated good farmland.

The tulip poplar also needs lots of sunlight, so it is absent from the thick canopies of the older forests. Instead, look for it framing the edges of woods, standing prominently next to more diminutive oaks and maples. Like many Hoosiers, the tulip poplar feels more at home in the country. §

Leah Schroeder, Goshen, Ind., is a 2011 graduate of Merry Lea's master's program. She plans to use her training in environmental education to develop school gardens.



Perspective: I'm learning from the weeds

By Annalisa Harder

I have recently started a yearlong internship at Merry Lea. From my desk I can look out of a window to a waving scape of wild prairie. Sometimes I get up from my desk and stroll over to the perimeter of the prairie—where the mowed lawn meets the beautiful colors and varied heights of these grasses I'm just beginning to learn about.

One time, I was standing in front of the prairie when a tall purple plant caught my eye. I've learned at Merry Lea that my questions are often quickly answered: Dale Hess suddenly came over to me, and I asked about the plant—the Canada thistle. "It's actually a weed," said Dale, and I instantly found it less attractive. However, as Dale and I kept talking, he said something like, "it's impossible to define a weed."

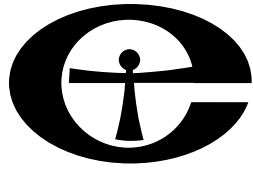
We don't like weeds. I was recently talking with a friend who said she had some neighborhood children helping her weed her garden. Instead, the kids pulled out the potatoes plants and left the weeds. They couldn't tell the difference. Last weekend, when I was walking to a bus stop in Chicago, I saw a dandelion plant taller than me with multiple flowers growing from the stem. I was stunned—I had never seen a dandelion allowed to grow more than several inches.

I still struggle with the concept of a "weed." Do I rid my potted garden of weeds because they're destructive—or because I assume any weed is unwanted? What's my responsibility as a gardener of our creator? Perhaps I'll figure it all out



by next spring, just in time for the new weeds.

Near the end of my conversation with Dale, Larry Yoder passed by and asked us what we were chatting about. "Weeds," we both said. "Oh, what's a weed?" was Larry's response. §



“ Where Earth and People Meet ”

Merry Lea
Environmental Learning Center
of Goshen College

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Summer and Fall Public Programs at Merry Lea

Prairie Flowers Hike

Tuesday, August 9, 9 a.m. to 11 a.m.

Merry Lea's 50 acres of restored prairies are a blaze of yellow in late July and early August. This hike will take you to several prairies in different stages of development. Meet at Rieth Village.

Wilderness First Aid Course

Thursday, Friday, September 1-2, 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

Instructors from the SOLO School of Emergency Medicine and Rescue, Conway, N.H., will teach this 16-hour course. Participants earn a two-year certification recognized by the American Camping Association, U.S. Coast Guard and various guide licensing boards. \$195 includes instruction and lunches.

Natural History of a Golf Course

Saturday, September 10, 9 a.m. until the 18th hole

Have you ever noticed the plants and animals that share a golf course with you? Join Merry Lea's Paul Steury for a game of golf and a new angle on this outdoor pastime. He might even find you some plants you can eat! Cost TBA.

Autumn Hope Conference

Friday, October 7, 6 p.m. to Sunday, October 9, noon

Our annual Autumn Hope conference blends worship, theological reflection and outdoor fieldwork in Merry Lea ecosystems. How might Christian churches respond to climate change? What hope can we glean from the creation and its capacity to regenerate? \$95 includes Friday supper through Sunday brunch.

Nature Photography Workshop

Thursday, October 13, 6 p.m. to Sat., the 15th, 5 p.m.

Dr. Marvin Bartel will lead this opportunity for both beginning and experienced photographers. Bartel was a member of the art faculty at Goshen College from 1970 through 2002. He taught courses in art education, ceramics, photography, drafting and architectural design. Dr. Bartel continues as a workshop and seminar leader in art education and in creativity education. Meals and lodging are provided on site. \$325.

Hydrology Workshop:

**Exploring Northern Indiana's Ground Water Resources
Saturday, October 22, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.**

Northern Indiana and the Great Lakes region can be considered the Saudi Arabia of the world's water supply. This day-long program will introduce participants to the unique hydrology of the region. The workshop includes both slide-illustrated lectures and a field trip. The group will visit a municipal well field, artesian wells, natural springs and a wastewater treatment facility. They'll also see a well-drilling demonstration. Meet at Merry Lea's Farmstead.

Enchanted Forest

Friday and Saturday, October 28 & 29, 7 to 8:30 p.m.

At this Halloween alternative, families take a night hike by lantern light and meet friendly animals who tell about their lives and habits. Especially for children in grades K through 3, but all ages will enjoy the experience. Meet at the Farmstead Barn, \$2.50 per person.