

Weeding promotes biodiversity



**Michele
Kading**
COMMUNITY
CORRESPONDENT

ST. VITAL

On May 30, a team of keen volunteers answered a call to remove weeds along Winnipeg's popular South Trail.

The event was hosted by Wilma, a dedicated Save Our Seine volunteer who has been removing weeds along the trail for several years with the help of neighbours and friends. The impact of these past efforts was clear. Volunteers moved quickly through areas that had been weeded in the past to "hot spots" that needed attention.

We tackled dandelions, thistle, vetch, and leafy spurge. We finished at a large patch of burdock behind the Hindu Temple and Vic Wyatt House. We decided that we would need another day with garden forks and hoes to dig out the roots of this prolific biennial.

You know the plant. Burdock has giant leaves resembling rhubarb. It produces round burrs that cling to anything that brushes by — deer, dogs and you. When you try to untangle the burrs, they crumble and release tiny seeds. If left unchecked, burdock will spread from the trail edges into the for-

est. It will crowd out native plants — reducing plant diversity, which in turn reduces insect diversity.

Why did we "give up" a Saturday morning to remove weeds in a public park?

There were many rewards. Fresh air. Camaraderie. A feeling of peace that can only be found by close observation and interaction with nature. Accomplishment. We could see that our effort made a difference.

We discovered wildflowers that had been overshadowed by the larger, fast-growing weeds. There was a carpet of tiny yellow violets, wild columbine, false Solomon's seal, sarsaparilla, and Canada anemone (pronounced "a-nem-uh-nee"). There was milkweed that would soon be host to monarch caterpillars and golden Alexander for black swallowtails. There were plants we could not identify so we discussed organizing a guided walk with a botanist.

On Sat., June 20 please join us for Weed Eradication - Part 2. Everyone is welcome.

On Tues., July 14, SOS and Nature Manitoba have arranged for botanist Charles Burchill to share his knowledge of identification, edibility, traditional uses, conservation, and "whatever comes to mind" about the plants along the South Trail.

For those who prefer less weeding and more exercise, a bicycle tour of the parks, rivers, and trails of St. Vital is being planned



Photo by Michele Kading

A swallowtail butterfly alights on a golden Alexander plant. Removing weeds from Winnipeg's natural parks will enhance biodiversity.

for Sun., July 12 (to be repeated on Sun., Aug. 16). The circle route will include Henteleff Park, St. Vital Park, Bishop Grandin Greenway and Bois-des-Esprits.

Michele Kading is a community correspondent for St. Vital and the executive director of Save Our Seine. Go to www.saveourseine.com for details of these and other 25th anniversary events.