

## **Memorandum**

To: Genesee Foundation Board

From: Angie Betker & Tony Simon, co-chairs, Seedheads

Date: June 8, 2008

Subject: Future of the Seedheads

Current status of the Seedheads: Over the four years that we have been the Seedhead co-chairs, and for some time before that, the Seedheads have been shrinking. Members have left the neighborhood, or have gone on to other interests, and attempts to recruit new members have not been successful enough to sustain the group. At our meeting in May, we announced that we are resigning as co-chairs. The decision was made to put off until our meeting/party in August any final decisions about the future, but the sense of the discussion was that this might be the end of the group. No one stepped forward to chair the group.

The largest activity by far is the annual native plant sale. Even this has been shrinking. The number of customers is down, and we have scaled back the number of plants we order to match. We did sell all our plants at this year's sale, in part because for the last ½ hour we sold them at ½ price, and because some volunteers took plants to plant in barrels at the swimming pools.

Although this is well before our August meeting, there have been enough discussions about the demise of the Seedheads, that we felt it appropriate to inform the board while these discussions are still ongoing. If the board sees value in the Seedheads activities, then perhaps they can be absorbed into some other group. For example, some of the initiatives of the Genesee Vision Committee may be a natural fit. Another thought is that a larger sale with a Genesee environment theme could absorb the native plant sale.

What is really needed is for someone to take charge and manage the Native Plant sale, making sure that the appropriate things happen at the right time. These things would include making sure that the seeds get to the propagator at the appropriate time, ordering the plants, making sure that they will be delivered, and other related sale activities.

Seedheads roles in Genesee:

1. Annual Native Plant Sale – We collect seed from wildflowers in Genesee, take them to a propagator, buy the seedlings, and sell them to the community. This provides a rare opportunity for residents to buy native plants. Our native wildflowers are generally more well adapted and water-wise than cultivated varieties from nurseries. This is our primary activity.
2. Wildflower walks – We lead 4 wildflower walks per year as an educational opportunity for Genesee residents. Blooming native wildflowers are identified, and noxious weeds are pointed out. When the flowers have gone to seed, the seeds are also identified, so that an interested resident could collect the seeds like we do.
3. (lapsed) Vista Garden – in days when there were more and younger members, some attempts were made to maintain the wildflower garden at Vista. This has already become impossible due to lack of volunteers.

4. Additional other events – for example, last year we put on a Wildflower/Nature themed art show, wine and cheese social at Vista in an attempt to generate interest in wildflowers.

Commitments: Some of our larger plants (typically small shrubs) take 2 years to grow into a sellable size at the nursery. This means that some of our 2009 sale order has already been placed. Although these plants are not enough for a plant sale, we feel it is important to honor this commitment, whether there is a sale next year or not. If there is no sale, we would get the plants, and offer them to anyone who wished to purchase them via a more low key approach, like an article in the Genescene.

Remaining Capacity: Although the Seedheads are dwindling in number, there is some remaining capability for some of our activities to continue, if there were some organization that wanted to absorb them.

- Seed collection: Many volunteers collect seeds, but the primary seed collector is Duane Williams. He pretty much collects all the seeds, either as primary or backup collector. In addition to this, he organizes all the collected seed. As long as Duane is willing to do this, a plant sale with Genesee native plants is possible. Without Duane, the rest of us together do not collect enough seeds for a plant sale.
- Wildflower walks: Duane leads two of the wildflower walks, and we lead the remaining two. These primarily attract folks from within the Seedheads, but occasionally another resident does show up.

Finally, we feel that the Seedheads are a great group and are one of the most significant positive organizations in the neighborhood. Many people look forward to the annual plant sale and would like to see it continue.