

The ABCs of groups protecting GL

by Thomas L. Eddy

As a botanist I recognize the confusion when applying common names to plants.

Consider this — Wisconsin is home to five species of native trilliums, some of which have two or more common names.

Confusing? Indeed!

Thankfully, their scientific names are unique — while they all share the same genus name, “trillium,” their specific epithets are as different as secondhand buttons in a button jar.

For example, the recurved trillium also goes by the colloquial names: “wake robin,” “reflexed trillium,” “bloody butcher,” “bloody noses,” “prairie trillium” and “toadshade.”

The plant’s scientific name, however, is “trillium recurvatum.”

This name is unchangeable and goes by “T. recurvatum” wherever one happens to live in the world.

For plant people, the species name, “recurvatum,” describes the sepals that curve downward away from the deep maroon or dark red petals. (See the accompanying photo.)

Like wild trilliums, the same holds true for lake partnerships — similar names

can lead to confusion about what lake partner “species” is which, the methods they employ to protect the watershed, and no less important, how that lake partner is funded.

The Green Lake Conservancy (GLC) is a 501(c)3 not-for-profit land trust that exists to assist landowners protect their environmentally sensitive properties.

The GLC’s efforts target watershed protection through land acquisition by purchase or gift, or conservation easement whereby the landowners retain title to their property, but gain tax advantages by waiving certain development rights.

The GLC is one of about 50 committed land trusts in Wisconsin, most of which operate on a shoestring budget and rely solely on donations and dedicated volunteers.

The major part of monetary gifts made to the GLC is applied directly toward land acquisition — not paper clips, paid office staff or mailings. Contributions of any kind to the GLC such as money, stock portfolio or land are tax-deductible.

What about the GLC’s lake partners with like-sounding names and related missions? The Green Lake Association (GLA) is charged “to promote the conservation of Big Green



RECURVED TRILLIUM, *TRILLIUM recurvatum*, is designated as a Wisconsin “special concern” species that is known from one site in Green Lake County.

T. L. Eddy photo

Lake and its watershed.”

Like the Green Lake Conservancy, the GLA is a not-for-profit organization, however it offers assorted programs that target lake and watershed protection, excluding land acquisition.

Funding for the GLA is achieved through annual membership dues and contributions.

The Green Lake Sanitary District (GLSD), another lake partner, engages “in activities that preserve, improve and protect the natural resources of Big Green Lake and its Watershed.”

As a taxing entity, the GLSD’s operating budget and watershed protection programs are funded through modest taxes and state grants, such as Wisconsin’s Lake Protection grants program and Knowles-Nelson Stewardship funds.

In fact, to date, the GLSD is the Green Lake Conser-

vancy’s closest partner when it comes to watershed protection through land acquisition.

Special places like Mitchell Glen, Norwegian Bay Wetlands, Sugar Island, Sunnyside Conservancy and Winnebago Trail Nature Preserve to name a few, would not be possible without the partnership forged between the Green Lake Conservancy and the GLSD.

Other vital lake partners that contribute technical expertise, implementation of best management practices and funding toward Green Lake watershed protection include the Green Lake County Land Conservation Office and the Wisconsin DNR.

Case in point — presently all of the aforementioned lake partners have recently embarked on preparation and implementation of a comprehensive lake management plan for Green Lake and the surrounding watershed.

Each lake partner offers a distinctive lake perspective, experiences and skill sets that bode well for sustaining Green Lake waters and its watershed well into the next century.

While the GLC, GLA, GLSD and other lake partners may have similar sounding names, each is exclusive in how they carry out their work.

As a land trust, the Green Lake Conservancy stands apart from its other lake partners. Lake and watershed protection through land acquisition and conservation easement by the Green Lake Conservancy is wholly dependent on tax-deductible donations.

Contributors understand that land acquisition is the surest means of investing in natural capital and bequeathing a land legacy to future generations.

A few years ago the Green Lake Conservancy, through a generous land donation by neighbors, acquired, restored and now manages the Forest Avenue oak savanna in the city of Green Lake.

A relict population of the rare trillium, *trillium recurvatum*, was discovered growing at the site. Fortunately this state-designated “special concern” species and its habitat are protected forever.

Even now, after nearly two decades of community service, the Green Lake Conservancy continues to hold steadfast, protecting land and waters in and around Green Lake.

Thomas L. Eddy is a founding member of the Green Lake Conservancy. He is a recently retired public educator of 35 years and is an adjunct professor of biology for Marian University and Ripon College. For more information about the work of the GLC, visit them online at: www.greenlakeconservancy.org or email Thomas@teddy@centurytel.net

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