2022 Tree Planting

Saturday, April 30, turned out to be a very seasonal day. We met at 9:30-10AM at Veteran's Memorial Park in Waynesburg in 50 F temperatures and partly sunny skies. A near perfect morning for some heavy gardening work made much lighter because of Greene County Commissioner Chair Mike Belding. More on that later.

The involvement of the Harry Enstrom Chapter/IWLA in this project started with an anniversary. Ours. In addition to the national IWLA celebrating a 100 year anniversary this year, the Harry Enstrom Chapter was celebrating the 80th anniversary of it's founding. So, we decided to plant a small grove of native trees in honor of our namesake. Question was, where? After we made the decision to go ahead with a tree planting, we contacted Commissioner Belding to see if there was a county park or facility that might welcome this small grove. Paraphrasing his response, he said, "yes we have just the spot in the Veteran's Memorial Park on Rolling Meadows Road. It's next to the tennis & pickle ball courts & gets a lot of visitors". So, on a blustery November morning we met Mike Belding there to see what 'spot' he had in mind. I was taking some general measurements of the veterans memorial site to see what kind of planting space we might have when Mike said, "you can plant right there, behind the flagpole". Wow, I thought, that's a place of honor. We have to do this space right. We wanted to put up a planting that would draw the viewers eye while providing as much seasonal interest to the human viewer and food for wildlife as possible.

For background, in rear left of the flag we planted a Red Oak and in rear right a Red Maple. They would provide the tall background and very good Fall color. Maples are also one of the very earliest bloomers. They don't look significant to our eye but they are food for the early pollinators. Oaks, of course, produce acorns which are late season & winter food for a variety of wildlife. Just as important though, native oaks are one of the most productive trees for the number & species of larval insect forms (caterpillars) they will support. Soft bodied insects, like caterpillars, are 98-99% of the food of songbird hatchlings. I've read that it can take about 7000+ caterpillars to raise a clutch of 3 chickadees ( a small songbird) to fledge & leave the nest. That's a lot of crawly things. Can't imagine the work it takes for the adults to gather that many while feeding themselves too.

To the immediate left & right rear of the flag we planted a pair of White Hawthorne. A half sized step down from the oak & maple they'll frame the flag in profuse white flowers in late Spring. The flowers will ripen into bright red berries which will persist well into the Winter before they're eaten by birds & whatever else can reach them.

In the mid-ground to the left & right of the above trees we planted an Eastern Red Bud and a Serviceberry. Both flower in early Spring, for the pollinators, with the Serviceberry adding a Summer ripening fruit for the birds.

To the trees which bring early to late Spring flowers, we plan to add, later, naturalized plantings of tall native Summer to Fall blooming flowers behind there plantings.

None of this would have happened as smoothly as it did if we didn't have partners the whole way. Because we weren't familiar with local nurseries we asked Mike Belding who we might contact. Turns out, Fred Clark of Clark's Nursery, has been supporting this project from the beginning. Fred not only located excellent 7'-10' stock but also supported their acquisition. Some of the area had been built up with rough fill so Fred bought a load of prime soil for the plantings. Saturday morning he delivered the trees & worked with us until the last tree was planted

Nevertheless, we might still be there digging in some rough, rocky, ground if not for Mike Belding’s help. He not only brought his wife & some others from the veterans committee to help, he brought some "power tools". Mike brought & drove the tractor which hauled the trees & soil around on the front loader. The 12' diameter power auger mounted on the rear made short work of digging through the roughest fill areas.

We finished the day with some naturalized tree plantings on the far left of the flag area. Every site has that place where the cut brush & trees are piled leaving an empty, muddy space around it. We just needed to jump start that area to recovery. Our member, Ken Dufalla, dug up 5 @ 6'-8' Silver Maple saplings on his property. I added 2 @ 4' White Hawthorne seedlings that started out as 6" twigs from Arbor Day three seasons back. It doesn't look like much yet, but give it a season or so to leaf out & these trees can provide a good natural background to the park. We always welcome new members. Come join us in our work, and, just as importantly, bring your ideas about outdoor projects we might do next.