

# Lake Lansing Park North Stewardship Profile: Christopher Reidy



**The Stewardship Network**  
Pulling together for nature



# Who is this guy, and what's he up to??

You'll find him on the trails and off, every week of the growing season.

Chris Reidy has devoted more than 1000 hours to North Park as a volunteer, seeking and recording its plant species, both native and exotic, wet and dry.

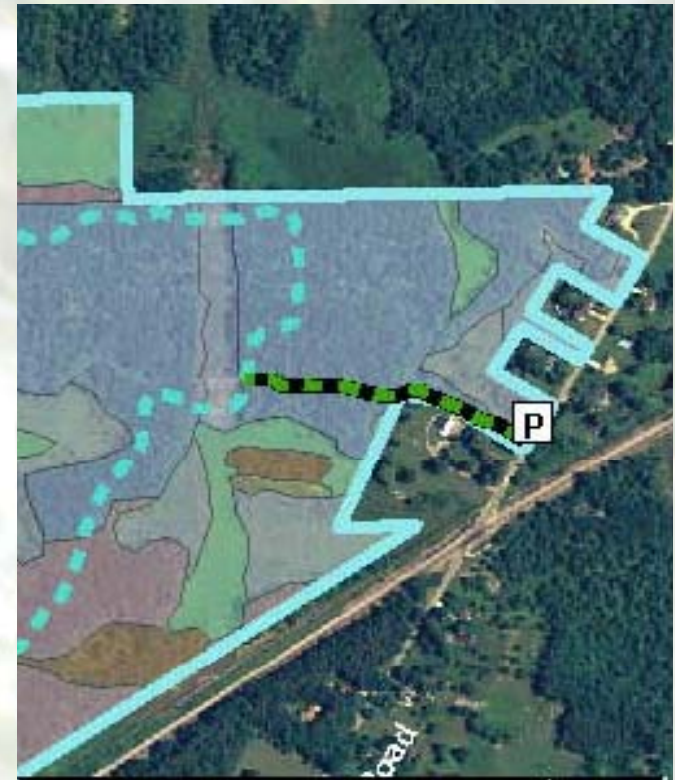
Professionally, Chris is the State Biologist for the Natural Resources Conservation Service, where he guides habitat restoration projects across Michigan.



# Why inventory North Park's plants?

To conserve our natural areas and provide high quality habitat, we need to:

- identify areas with high plant diversity or rare species
- define the natural communities (groups of plants that create a special habitat, such as Southern Wet Meadow), to monitor their health
- determine any threats, such as:
  - aggressive, non-native plants
  - unnatural changes in water levels



| Community                 | Acres |
|---------------------------|-------|
| Dry Southern Forest       | 161   |
| Southern Wet Meadow       | 81    |
| Southern Shrub-Carr       | 72    |
| Cultural-Plantation       | 63    |
| Southern Hardwood Swamp   | 41    |
| Cultural-Landfill         | 39    |
| Dry-Mesic Southern Forest | 18    |

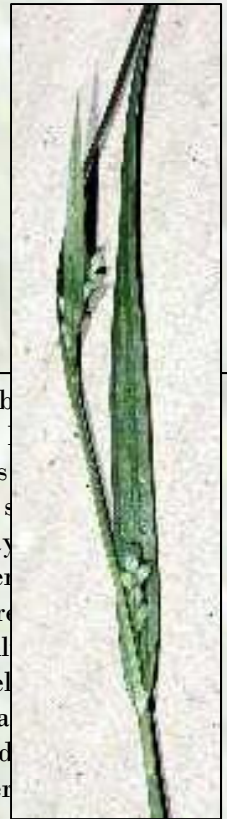
Courtesy of Chris Reidy

Chris knows the identity of hundreds of plant species by eye.

He identifies others by observing them in flower or fruit, and comparing their minute structural details to those in scholarly references.

Chris notes the GPS location of each plant, the soil type, slope, and associated species, and deposits a specimen in the MSU Herbarium to aid future research.

## How does Chris do it?



**Carex leptonervia.** Stems: Retrosely scab almost smooth. Fertile culms 1.5-7 dm. leaves 0.5-1 cm wide, and cauline leaves short the widest 2.5-6 mm. Outer basal s purplish brown but soon withering away erose-scabrous angles. Inflorescence: Ter staminate, with upper spikes often aggre Staminate spike not large, often partiall pistillate spike of 1-3 cm long, alternatel densely flowered, the rachis smooth, sca with color. Pistillate spikes linear-cylind flowered, 1-2.5 cm long, the 2 or 3 upper at the base of the staminate spike. The pistillate scales are occasionally obtuse, with some short-awned. The second pistillate bract often extending over all the spikes. Edges of bract sheaths are usually strongly but minutely serrulate. Perigynia: Obscurely 15-21 nerved, ellipsoidal, 2.5-4 mm long, 2-ribbed, thin and fragile walled, apex slender, acute or beak- like. Roots: Short or slightly elongate, fibrous, with occasional short rhizomes.

Text: <http://www.state.nj.us/dep/parksandforests/natural/heritage/textfiles/carexlep.txt>

Photo: Robert H. Mohlenbrock @ USDA-NRCS PLANTS Database / USDA NRCS. 1995. *Northeast wetland flora: Field office guide to plant species.*

| Family    | Species                      | Authority             | Locality   | Northing    |
|-----------|------------------------------|-----------------------|--|-------------|
| Violaceae | <i>Viola odorata</i>         | L.                    | Growing in lawn near Oak Knoll Shelter.  | 42°46'00.3" |
| Lauraceae | <i>Lindera benzoin</i>       | (L.) Blume            | Growing on east side of ephemeral pool approximately 75 meters south of Blue Trail near SW | 42°45'35.4" |
| Araceae   | <i>Symplocarpus foetidus</i> | (L.) Salisb. ex Nutt. | South of trail approximately 100 m west of baseball diamond.                               | 42°46'07.1" |

# What has Chris seen?



Photos  
courtesy of  
Chris Reidy



# What have we learned?

Through August 2011, Chris has documented more than 630 plant species in the wetlands and woodlands of North Park!

Its plant communities include dry Southern forest; Southern wet meadow, shrub-carr, and hardwood swamp; rich tamarack swamp, inundated shrub swamp, and submergent marsh.



Photos courtesy of Leslie Kuhn

## What Chris had to say at the end of his first year of inventorying (530 species):

“Sites with a Floristic Quality Index  $>50$  [a measure of the plant diversity of the site, depending on the species observed and their rarity] are extremely rare and are of significant importance statewide. Looking only at the native species, Lake Lansing Park North has an FQI of 87!! ... Owing to the mosaic of uplands, wetlands, woodlands and open habitats it contains, Lake Lansing Park North has an astounding diversity of species. This biodiversity warrants continued management and protection to ensure future generations have the opportunity to experience this unique slice of our natural heritage.”

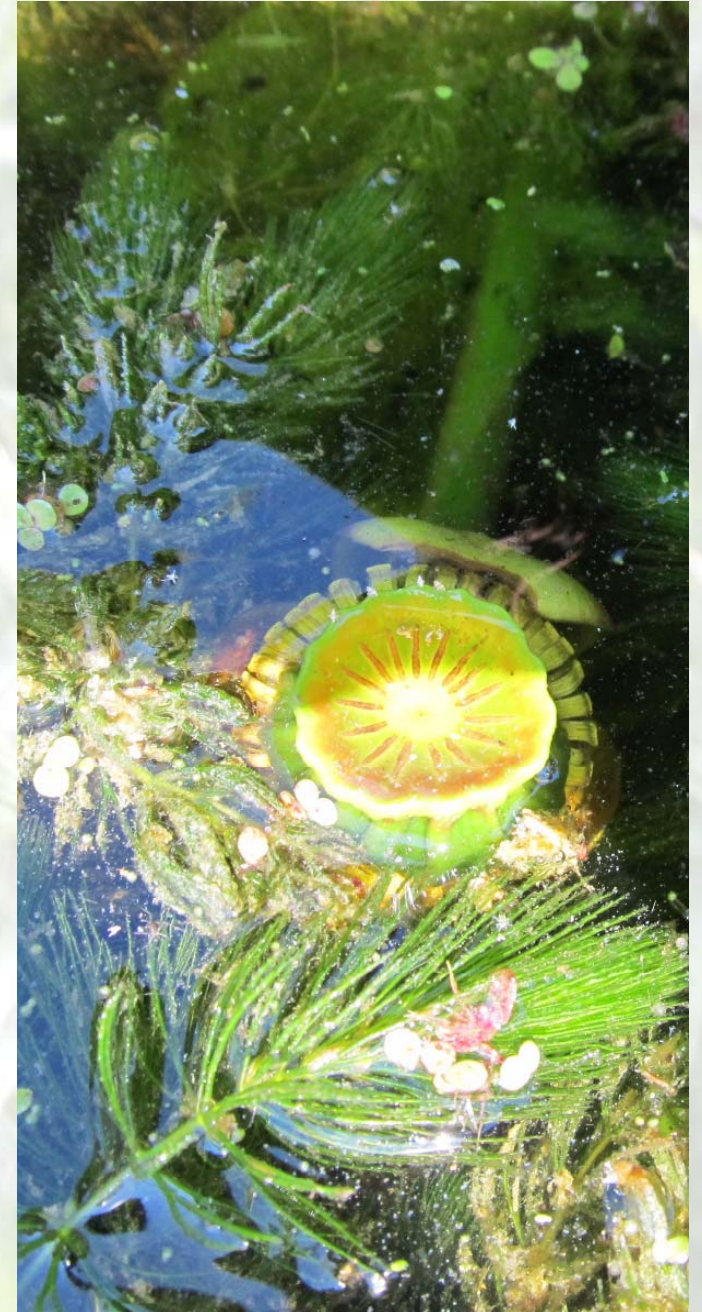
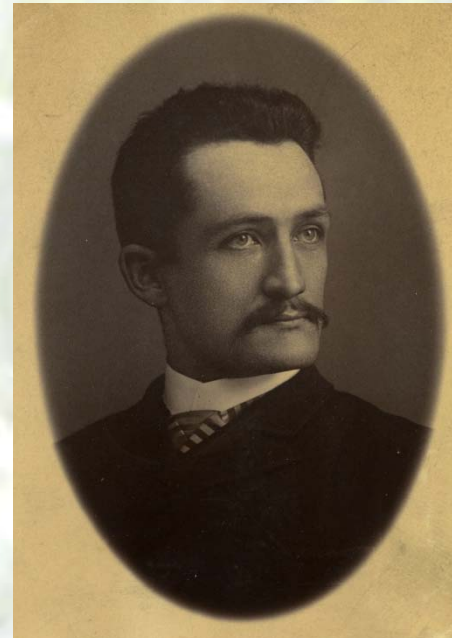


Photo courtesy of Leslie Kuhn

# Speaking of Heritage...

In his botanical study of North Park, Chris follows in the footsteps of the father of American horticulture, Liberty Hyde Bailey, Professor at MSU from 1885-88:

“And I went out with my old gray mare and the buggy all day with Alfred Russell Wallace [co-founder of evolutionary theory, along with Charles Darwin], wandering through the fields; we went out to Pine Lake in Michigan, ten miles away, which is now Lake Lansing. I thought he saw every plant, and certainly every animal, in the whole way out and back. A remarkable man he was!” – L. H. Bailey



**Liberty Hyde Bailey.** Photo courtesy of Alan Fryday, MSU Herbarium.



Courtesy [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Horse\\_and\\_buggy\\_1910.jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Horse_and_buggy_1910.jpg)