

a voice
for the natural
landscaping
movement



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Celebrating natives
plant and natural
landscapes
since 1979.

The Grapevine

By Maryann Whitman

Some backyard visits in Columbus, Ohio

During the recent Wild Ones annual meeting and conference in Columbus, Ohio, Wild Ones Vice-President Mariette Nowak visited with several members of the Columbus Chapter who have designed and planted their yards specifically to attract birds and wildlife.

Marty and Craig Preston, charter members of the chapter, have little lawn left in their small urban backyard. Mostly woodland, it is a certified site with the Ohio Backyard for Wildlife program. Not only does it feature many lovely native woodland wildflowers, understory shrubs, and native trees, the Prestons' yard also has a beautiful pond that attracts both birds and frogs. Thirty-five species of birds have enjoyed the premises and its 10 birdhouses, with chickadees and house wrens among the nesting birds. Craig says his experience with native plants has shown him the truth in the adage about native plants that "first they sleep, next they creep, and then they leap."

Joann and Byron Bossenbroek, avid birders, have transformed their half-acre lot into a lush native landscape in a mere five years. Their success in attracting birds with native plantings is confirmed in their yard list of birds, which includes four species of hawks and nine species of warblers, with a total of 79 species so far and still counting. The Bossenbroeks have added shrubs that provide berries for the birds, including three species of native viburnums (*Viburnum* sp), red osier dogwood (*Cornus stolonifera*), winterberry (*Ilex verticillata*), spicebush (*Lindera benzoin*), elderberry (*Sambucus* sp) and chokeberry (*Aronia* sp). A brush pile is a favorite of "their" Carolina and house wrens and catbirds – all of which nest in the Bossenbroek's yard. Sparrows also love the brush pile, particularly the white-throated sparrows in winter. The yard features plenty of prairie species that provide seeds for the finches and sparrows in late summer and fall.



Marty and
Craig Preston,
Columbus (OH)
Chapter, have
transformed their
small backyard
from a typical
suburban setting
to a pleasant,
natural relaxing
spot filled with
native plants.

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Another bird enthusiast, Ruth Massey, has installed a pond and tripled her native plantings in just over the last year. She was inspired to do so as a result of the research she did to prepare for teaching a "Living Lightly" class about yard care. She hoped to attract frogs as well as birds with her pond, and was duly rewarded. Ruth has planted a variety of wetland plants, including marsh marigold (*Caltha palustris*), iris (*Iris* sp), and bogbean (*Menyanthes trifoliata*) at the pond's edge. Her yard also has many prairie plants, whose seeds attract multitudes of goldfinches in late summer and early fall.

Mike Hall hosts a great many birds, salamanders, frogs, and toads in the beech/maple woods on his two-acre property. He, too, has added a variety of shrubs and flowers for birds, including serviceberry (*Amelanchier* sp), several species of viburnum, chokeberry, and spicebush. He's also planted several species of hawthorn (*Crataegus* sp) that are favorite nesting sites for birds, since their sharp thorns discourage predators. He chooses hawthorns with smaller berries – the better to fit birds' beaks. In fall, he has had as many as 100 robins feasting on all these berries, as well as catbirds and thrashers.

Instead of keeping a hummingbird feeder, which needs to be cleaned every two days in hot weather, Mike has planted one of their favorite nectar plants, jewelweed (*Impatiens capensis*), alongside his house. And, although he didn't plant it, a small patch of poison ivy (*Toxicodendron radicans*) supplies berries, a favorite winter food of downy woodpeckers. (Although we humans can be extremely allergic to poison ivy, many species of birds and animals thrive on the berries.) Watch for Mike's advice about other plants that will furnish natural winter food for birds in an up-coming issue of the Journal.

Foothills (SC) Chapter presents first symposium

Chartered just one year ago with only 11 members, the Foothills Chapter (SC) of Wild Ones now has a symposium held in May and three major plant sales to its credit.

Chapter member Rykha Morris described the symposium "Chaotic Gardening: Appreciating Natural Landscapes," which brought together five speakers of diverse backgrounds and interests but united in their concern for the rapid destruction of the rich and varied habitats of the Piedmont.

Of these speakers, Peter Loewer, a botanist, writer, and artist who illustrates his own books, is now one of two advisors to the Foothills chapter. He profiled plants not

commonly used in local gardens. Dr. David Bradshaw, Professor of Horticulture at Clemson University and a popular naturalist at the South Carolina Botanical Garden, focused on the emotional and psychic harmony resulting from "A Chaotic Mind Set: Cultivating a Relationship with Nature." Dr. Larry Dyck, Aquatic Botanist and Professor of Botany at Clemson University, addressed a common problem for the many who have recently settled along the shores of Lakes Keowee and Hartwell in the South Carolina foothills, the "Restoration of Shorelines Along Piedmont Reservoirs" using man-made materials and native plants. Patrick McMillan, curator of the Clemson University Herbarium, discussed how plants specific to certain areas are nevertheless found in unexpected locations.

In addition, there were seven workshops led by some of the featured speakers as well as other experts.

This successful event was financed largely by the chapter's two successful plant sales.

The membership of the Foothills Chapter of Wild Ones has more than doubled as a result of this initial symposium, and thanks to the plant sale at the symposium, the finances of the chapter remain healthy and green!

Take a slug out for coffee

Slugs – those slippery little snails who have left home without their shells, seem to evoke a unified negative opinion. About the most positive things that can be said about them is that they are garbage-eaters, part of the process of breakdown and nutrient recycling; bottom of the food chain, food for the larvae of fireflies, harvestmen (daddy-long-legs), toads, turtles, thrushes, doves, crows, moles, voles, squirrels, and even foxes if other food is scarce. All this is forgotten in the face of the damage they inflict when they eat green plants in gardens instead of garbage. Gardeners mash them, stomp them, salt them, get them drunk, and drown them in beer.

Researchers in Hawaii, looking for an environmentally low-impact way to get rid of alien frogs, have discovered that a 2% caffeine solution kills slugs, snails, and frogs. As a point of reference, a cup of instant coffee contains approximately .05% caffeine and brewed coffee may have as much as .1% (one-tenth of one percent).

As environmentally innocuous and even "organic" as this remedy might sound there are a few things to keep in mind before you breathe, "Finally, a solution."

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A spray of a 2% solution can kill frogs and does damage to green leaves.

It is not yet known what effect this solution might have on earthworms and the other microscopic flora and fauna in your soil.

A much lower concentration of only 0.1% caffeine may prove useful. Sprayed onto such slug-prized cuisine as cabbage leaves, this concentration deterred feeding by 62%, when compared to uncaffeinated salad greens. This suggests that a regular spray of leftover coffee, which tends to have a caffeine content of about 0.1 to 0.05%, might control nighttime crop losses in the garden.

It is not known what effect a weaker cup of coffee will have on slugs. Perhaps they will become caffeine addicts and you'll have slugs hanging about your kitchen door.

On coffee plantations, caffeine leaches from leaf, twig, and berry litter, eventually raising caffeine concentrations in the soil to a point where the soil becomes toxic to the parent plant. This is one reason why productivity of coffee plantations tends to wane with time. In other words, caffeine does not break down very quickly in the soil.

The upshot is this: consider using a .05 to .1% (brewed coffee) solution sprayed directly on your target plants (carefully avoiding frogs and earthworms). The researcher thinks this practice will have a "deterrent" or "repellent" effect on the slugs in their nighttime feeding. Let me know how you fare.

Welcome, newest chapters!

These chapters have been chartered since February, 2001. Welcome! In the future, we will announce new chapters as they become chartered. Be sure to see "Meeting Place" on page 12 for meeting information about these and other Wild Ones chapters.

- Red Cedar (MI); Lansing/East Lansing area
- Greater Cincinnati (OH); southwest Ohio, southeast Indiana, and northern Kentucky areas
- Central Upper Peninsula (MI); Gladstone area
- Door County (WI); Door County area
- Foothills (SC); Seneca, Clemson, and Spartanburg areas
- Twin Cities (MN); Minneapolis and St. Paul areas
- Cadillac (MI); Cadillac area
- Root River Area (W); Racine

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