a voice for the natural landscaping movement

Wild Ones®
Native Plants, Natural Landscapes

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Working toward our next 30 years restoring native plants and natural landscapes.

Welcoming Wildlife Into the Garden With Native Plants

By Doug Tallamy

Last summer my wife and I were privileged—but not accidental—participants in one of nature's special performances. A pair of birds nested in our yard. I know that doesn't sound very special. But when you think about what it took for that avian couple to successfully reproduce in our suburban setting, it becomes very special indeed.

I still remember the first time I saw the male blue grosbeak. I thought it was one of our many indigo buntings, but soon realized it was a larger bird, had a beautiful streak of red on its wings, and produced a different song. At first, he spent all day singing. He would flex his azure crest, scan the ground from his perch on one of our ironwood trees, and sing his heart out.

His goal was not to entertain me, but to stake his claim to a breeding territory. He chose our property to raise his young because it is dotted with the small trees and shrubs that are perfect for concealing his nest. Even more important, the insects he needed to feed his nestlings are plentiful here.

The male grosbeak sings for two reasons: to warn off intruding males and to attract a mate. It didn't take him long to find romance; a chocolate-colored female, lured by his melodies, found him and the quality of the territory he was guarding to her liking. Soon she started to construct a nest deep within an alternate-leaved dogwood tree. Blue grosbeaks are among the few birds that use snakeskins as nesting material. The task of locating a suitable skin typically falls to the male, and at our house he was in luck: A black rat snake had left a four-foot skin near a groundhog hole in our meadow. Soon he and his mate had woven the skin among grass blades and sticks to form the nest that would become home for three nestlings. This was his only successful bout of reproduction that year, but he sang in celebration every morning at 7 sharp until mid-September, when he and his mate departed for their overwintering grounds in southern Mexico.

Re-Building Food Webs

Please remember that what I have described did not take place in a national park, or even in a small county preserve. It happened in our yard. It happened in our yard because we have built our landscape with all of the bits of nature that blue grosbeaks require to make more blue grosbeaks.

Once mowed for hay, our property –a 10-acre lot on the site of a former farm near Oxford, Pennsylvania—is now planted with young oaks, birches, and viburnums; gray dogwoods, flowering dogwoods, and alternate-leaf dogwoods; eastern red cedars, winterberries, and

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NOTES FROM THE PRESIDENT

Is the Seeds For Education Program Worth It?

The Wild Ones Seeds for Education Program annually gives small grants to support efforts to establish or maintain outdoor learning centers; to work with public schools, charter schools, houses of worship, 4-H and other youth groups to create butterfly gardens, rainwater gardens and other projects.

I had heard about some of these areas being replaced with lawns or construction. While I realize that occasionally these outdoor learning centers come and go, the information was disheartening. Sometimes the native gardens have been eliminated because the "champions" who put them in and used them either retired or left. The native landscape soon became "messy." I found myself wondering about the value of supporting the Seeds for Education Program, and asking myself: "are these messy native gardens doing us more harm than good?"

After some serious thought I concluded that the harm is likely minimal. Just think of how many children had the opportunity to experience these native plantings and how many of those kids were inspired to try harder to make a difference. The champions who helped put in the outdoor classrooms often report that years later when they meet former students, one of the first things the students ask is, "how is the prairie (butterfly garden, etc.)?" The benefits outweigh the negative aspects.

When we see evidence that the kids remember, we know that the native garden DID make a difference in their lives. The experience is a highlight in their minds. Thousands of kids have been exposed to the existence of plants that are native to the area in which their families live. Who knows how many kids have been inspired? How many of them go on to become biologists, ornithologists, ecologists, environmental education teachers and the like? How many of those kids, when they become parents and home owners, put in native plants in their own landscapes? I suspect the answers to these questions would be quite heartening.

It is because of the teachers and environmental educators who use the Seeds for Education Grant money to provide outdoor learning centers, that children and adults are inspired to use native plants in their own landscapes. This is the core of our Wild Ones mission. People observe the benefits of native plants and make decisions to grow natives themselves. This is what makes the Seeds for Education Grant Program worth every penny.

The program is funded entirely by generous donations from members and others who recognize its value, and is managed and administered mostly by volunteers. I'm a firm believer in this program. How about you?

Tim Lewis, Wild Ones National President (president@wildones.org)

Are Nativars Native?

A new national Wild Ones committee has been formed to study the question: What are 'nativars' and should we consider them 'native'?

If you'd like to be part of this discussion, contact the home office at execdirector@wildones.org.

Wild Ones: Native Plants, Natural Landscapes promotes environmentally sound landscaping practices to preserve biodiversity through the preservation, restoration, and establishment of native plant communities. Wild Ones is a not-for-profit, environmental education and advocacy organization.

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WILD FOR MONARCHS

As you've already read in July/September 2012 issue of the *Wild Ones Journal*, Wild Ones has recently formed a new partnership with Monarch Joint Venture and Monarch Watch's Bring Back the Monarchs Program. Our national Monarchs Committee, established to develop the Wild Ones campaign to bring back the Monarchs, is co-chaired by Pam Wolfe, Lake-to-Prairie (IL) Chapter and Denise Gehring, Oak Openings (OH) Chapter. Our campaign through these partnerships will be branded as Wild for Monarchs (Wild Ones advocating for Monarch conservation.)

Members of the committee have been busy discussing the possibilities and have already started to prepare resources to make available to Wild Ones chapters and members. Everyone is energized because they see the benefit of the collaboration. The public's positive response to Monarch butterflies is genuine. Once they learn about the recent 70-80% population decline in their Mexican wintering grounds, they will want to do more to reverse the Monarch butterflies' plight by using native plants and collecting and growing native milkweed to establish Monarch waystations. We've already seen through the work of our chapters and many of our members that the public is happy to get guidance from Wild Ones and that they love attending Monarch releases.

Photo credit Janet Allen

Early in 2013, we anticipate a Wild for Monarchs brochure, chapter brochure inserts, *Wild Ones Journal* articles and a Wild Ones Monarchs webpage. Additionally, we are planning a chapter kit, which will include: partner brochures, PowerPoint presentation, newsletter material, logos, posters, sampler activities, outreach ideas, helpful links, milkweed collecting/growing info, photo gallery and more!

We already know that by partnering with the Bring Back the Monarch Program, we will need to seed and plant as much milkweed as we possibly can in the coming years. So while you're waiting to find out more about the details, plan to get wild for Monarchs and collect milkweed seeds to ensure that you have some local wild milkweed seed resources available for 2013.

Here is an example of the label you might use for your seed.

Circle Milkweed Species: Common/Swamp/Butterflyweed
Collector's Name_____
Phone # _____ **Date** _____
Email_____**Location collected** _____
Zip code_____ **County**_____ **State**_____
Circle Size of population: small/medium/large
Circle Soil Type: Sand/Clay/other_____
EcoRegion/Plant Community if known _____
Comments:_____

Wild Ones thanks you for helping the Monarch Butterfly!

For more information about collecting and handling seed, go to http://www.wildones.org/download/plantrescue/plantrescue.html

If you'd like to be part of the planning for this exciting and so very important campaign, please contact the home office at execdirector@wildones.org

Common milkweed is generally the preferred host plant of Monarchs; swamp and butterfly weed a little less so, but serve as nectar sources along with whorled milkweed and several species of woodland milkweed. According to the USDA there are 73 native species of milkweed across the United States. Many of them are not plentiful or are limited to small geographic regions. We will likely be talking about 20 or so species. For milkweed species regional details see: http://www.monarchjointventure.org/Milkweed/Default.aspx

Asclepias speciosa.
Photo Credit Joe Powelka

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Rick Webb is a Wild Ones Partner-at-Large in southeastern PA. He one of our 15 National Directors.

ECOSCAPER

Somewhere between a prairie and a formal planting lies the fertile potential of native plants in an ornamental design, the domain of the Ecoscaper – which is a brilliant synthesis in language of the two concepts, landscaper and ecologist. With this in mind, Wild Ones has developed the Ecoscaper Certification Program. Enhance your knowledge and get credit for your accomplishments. Visit www.wildcertification.org for more information or to enroll.

Wild Ones
ECOSCAPER
Check It Out!

Monarch Watch

By Candy Sarikonda

Hello! My name is Candy Sarikonda. I am a Conservation Specialist with Monarch Watch. It is my passion to teach children, and their caregivers, about the natural world. For the past 10 years, I have endeavored to learn as much as I can about native plants and Lepidoptera (butterflies and moths), and share this knowledge with people throughout my community. Why do I feel so passionate in my efforts? Here's my story.

My journey into the realm of monarch conservation was not a typical one. I am a nurse by education; Master's prepared in adult cardiology and nursing education. I dreamed of teaching students at a university, educating nurses who would one day be an extension of my hands. But things seldom go as planned. While defending my thesis, I became pregnant with my first son. He would eventually be diagnosed with Asperger's syndrome, a form of autism.

While pregnant, I did everything right—took my vitamins, exercised properly, avoided anything that might hurt my developing son. But in the months after he was born, I noticed some odd behaviors. He loved lights, and stared at them for hours on end. He hated loud noises of any kind—that included the blender, hairdryer, pencil sharpener, and vacuum cleaner. As he began to crawl, I noticed that he simply "bull-dozed" over the top of everything, as if it weren't there—there was no notion of crawling around something. My son was obsessed with ceiling fans, and would stand under them and spin for a half hour without getting dizzy. He hated the feel of tags in his shirts, the tongues in his shoes, and grass under his feet. Hardest of all, he did not have a good sense of his own body, and often plunged into other kids as he zipped by, to the sometimes wrathful anger of a nearby parent!

Candy's street-side butterfly garden in October.

Being a nurse, I was determined to find out what "evil monster" had hold of my son. I took him to multiple therapists and doctors, and pored through the medical literature. Yet my family suffered through misdiagnosis after misdiagnosis, poor advice, and painful attacks on my parenting skills. I was at my wits' end. I will tell you, for a parent there is no greater pain than being powerless to help your child.

My garden was my refuge. A place of solace and peace. One day, in the midst of this nightmare, I took my yet-again-screaming son outside. I set him down in the grass, and I just stared into the garden. Soul beaten. After a few moments, I looked at my young son, who had walked in amongst the plants. He was staring at something. I crept over. It was a caterpillar—a monarch caterpillar. My normally overbearing, loud, forceful son was gently pulling leaves apart to see the caterpillar. I picked up the caterpillar on a leaf, and gently placed it in his hand. He extended one finger, and gently began to stroke it. Tears filled my eyes. They streamed down my cheeks, though I tried vainly to stop them. Here was my breakthrough.

I identified that "weed" in my garden, called every plant nursery in town, and began raising monarchs and milkweed as "butterfly therapy" for my son. As my knowledge of native plants grew, and my son's love of Lepidoptera expanded, I expanded my garden. I planted native host plants for several species of native Lepidoptera, experimented with many different nectar plants, and eventually created a 'living fence' of native plants along the entire length of my front yard. I gave birth to a little girl, and as she grew, she too became heavily involved with raising Lepidoptera. Now at 8-years of age, she is a self-proclaimed "expert bug huntress." She can find a monarch egg better than I can.

Photo Credit Barb Olson.
Monarch caterpillar on whorled milkweed.

Since that day in the garden years ago, my son and I have continued our journey. I am still his advocate; I have learned I really do know him best. But now, I no longer look at him as my precious child with a disease. I have learned that if I fight Autism like a disease, then I am fighting my own son. Autism is a part of who he is, and I love him for the person he is. Daven recently came up to me and proclaimed, "I am going to engineer an amphibious vehicle that can go on land and in the air!" I have no idea how he is going to do it. But he does. I don't doubt him one bit.

In the meantime, our family will keep sharing our love of native Lepidoptera and plants. Thank you Wild Ones. I am proud to be your new partner in healing the earth--one garden, and one child, at a time.

Seeds For Education:

Avon Grove Charter School Landscape Project

By Rick Webb

Just outside of the borders of the small Borough of Avondale, Pennsylvania, is Avon Grove Charter School. It is located in the far south part of Chester County, which is a mostly rural area, even with some Amish nearby, but some suburban sprawl has worked its way around with a number of new developments.

Right now the school enrolls over 1,600 students from kindergarten through 12th grade. More than 100 full time teachers work there. The schools stated goal is that "the school educates each student through a constructive approach in a cooperative environment which honors differences and fosters acceptance. Science instruction emphasizes the connection between the classroom and the natural world."

The charter school occupies a brick building that once was a public school years before; plus it has added on some more buildings. The school owns about 23 acres of land, containing a few acres of mature oak-hickory-beech-maple-tulip tree forest, some acres of open willow-boxelder-walnut forest, some acres of meadow, and some big lawn areas, including athletic field. White Clay Creek flows along the north side of the property. Right now about 4 acres are native meadow with native meadow plants as partridge pea, Maximillian sunflower, and Virginia broomsedge, being the most conspicuous so far. A number of young sapling trees of American Persimmon, River Birch, Sycamore, Chestnut Oak and disease resistant cultivars of American Elm and American Chestnut have been planted.

The school was begun in 2002. In 2005 the principal, Kevin Brady, read the New York Times best seller paperback nonfiction book of that year, Last Child in the Woods by Richard Louv. The book came from a 10 year research study that documented the decreased exposure of children to nature in American society and how this "nature-deficit disorder" is harmful, helping to bring forth obesity, attention disorders, and depression. Children after about 1980 have not been as much inclined into going outside to play; to run around, bicycle, play games, or climb trees, and so on. Inspired by the book, the principal has been leading the school into getting students outside to interact with the natural world, and doing gardening and landscaping work on the grounds.

Since 2005 they have been slowly expanding a naturalistic, native landscape, along with creating six small ponds for studying native fish, amphibians, snakes, and other wildlife of wetlands. They plan to create a hydroponics garden inside their greenhouse. They plan to create a native plant nursery, starting with black willow and oak-leaf Hydrangea. One more plan is to have interpretive trails explaining ecology, plants, and wildlife. There is also a plan to develop about 15 of the 23 acres into native, natural habitat. There is a long way to go. The open forest and spots in the field around are full of invasive plants as mile-a-minute-plant, Japanese hops, common wormwood, and Japanese honeysuckle vine. There are some Norway maples, multiflora rose, and oriental bittersweet in the shady mature forest, but it is not considered out of control. The need is to populate that shady area, especially on the great slope, with more native shade plants.

Principal Brady has been very appreciative of the Seeds for Education grant that the school received last spring of 2012. He relies on grants and special donations for many of his projects. His developing landscape could still use more volunteers. He has offered to be rather helpful with any Wild Ones activity in the area.

Show us a Sign

My husband John and I recently spent a week's vacation in Duluth, Minnesota riding the Soo Line steam engine 2719 and chasing trains. We were delighted to find this lovely garden at one of the bridges we stopped for a photo-op. In spite of the drought and then the flooding, this native landscaped site overlooking Lake Superior on the Duluth Lakewalk in Leif Erikson Park, was looking healthy and happily moving toward fall dormancy. While we were there several people stopped to take photos in front of the garden and the Wild Ones sign. Good job, Wild Ones Arrowhead.

Wild Ones Gibson Woods Chapter (Hammond, IN)

Wild Ones Gibson Woods Chapter held their 12th Annual Native Plant Sale on May 5, 2012.The volunteers managed the long lines of potential customers, allowing in 10 at a time to maintain traffic flow. Other volunteer served as cashiers, consultants who helped customers with choosing the right plants, and carry out helpers. All helped the sale run smoothly.

Plant lists were available with information that answered most questions about plant height, color, bloom time, and soil and moisture requirements. Also, signs were posted next to each plant species with pictures of the plants and growing information.

We served approximately 300 native plant enthusiasts. Many people commented on the good quality of the plants and the large variety of species.

Proceeds from the Annual Native Plant Sale help fund programs, resources and speakers for the Gibson Woods Environmental Learning Center and the Gibson Woods Chapter of Wild Ones. Some of the funds this year will go towards the 4th Biennial Native Plant Symposium held on September 29, 2012, at the St. John Township Community Center, in Schererville IN. The theme this year is *"Partners with Nature"*. Three speakers are scheduled for a morning of fellowship and learning. Go to http://gw-wildones.org for more information.

Walk for Wildlife (Green Bay, WI)

Bay Beach Wildlife Sanctuary, Green Bay, honors a family each year during their Walk for Wildlife. This year they named Wild Ones Green Bay as their Honored Family of Wildlife, recognizing that our mission of encouraging native plant landscapes benefits wildlife at the Sanctuary and throughout the area. Five members represented the chapter at the Walk. Left to right in photos are Bob and Carolyn Haglund, Bonnie and Harold Vastag and Darlene Gast. Bonnie Vastag, chapter co-president, noted that, "It's an honor that we treasure and we're delighted by the recognition of our work planting natives at the Sanctuary and in the community."

Letters to the editor:

Monarch Way

I read your short article in the current *Wild Ones Journal*, and agree with most of its ideas. I would like to reaffirm to you that the concept of monarch way stations at highway rest areas/welcome centers sounds like a great idea to me. However, I have observed curbed beds of native plantings at highway rest areas/welcome centers (particularly in prairie states), and they just look weedy, confusing, and surely unappealing to the general public. In other words, such beds hurt rather than help the cause of native landscaping. Beds near buildings should have low-growing plants, so that the public can make an easier psychological transition to the concept of native-plant landscaping. Also, some states have designated "scenic highways" and these should be advocated as having native-plant landscapes as part of the scenic status. Even a few advocacy letters to state agencies will have a large impact of support.

Mark Ritzenheim
Former president of Wild Ones Red Cedar (MI) Chapter.

Janet Allen responds:

Hi Mark, Thank you for your comments! Yes, I agree that any native planting beds should look neat and start out with the easier-to-enjoy, more controlled native plants. (I have to say, though, that some of the state welcome centers I've visited have very messy non-native planting beds, too...)

I've sometimes received replies to my emails and cards/letters to state DOTs and sometimes not, but I agree that we need to write them anyway. Even if they don't reply, I assume they at least read them and eventually they'll know that there is a native plant constituency among the public. It wouldn't hurt for us to also point out the financial advantages of natural landscaping!

(There's some financial info and case studies at http://www.epa.gov/greenacres/toolkit/index.html and specifically http://www.epa.gov/greenacres/toolkit/chap2.html#ECONOMIC that might be useful to pass along to them even though it doesn't address highways in particular.)

One state we visited (I can't remember which now) even had an illustrated booklet on their wildflower plantings along their highways. I was so excited when I saw it BUT when I read it, I saw that their idea of wildflowers was what people usually think of as "wildflowers" - oxeye daisies, daylilies, and other non-native "pretty" flowers. There was hardly a native plant on the list. I guess their intentions were good, but I can see we have a lot of educational work to do. If we all work on this, we can make a difference!

Letter to the Editor

The latest Wild Ones Journal just arrived yesterday. I'm very excited about several of the articles, particularly the cover one on phragmites. I can really only tell people it's very hard to deal with, but now I can explain more/share the article.

Carol Andrews
Wild Ones Arrowhead MN Chapter

Brush Piles Good for Wildlife

The scale may vary depending on location and area available, but the principles of construction and purpose remain the same.

Whether it's a series of large piles along a forest edge, or a smaller single pile near a bird feeder in your backyard or acreage, you can make your land more accommodating for wildlife by building brush piles. Piles of tree limbs, brush, rocks, and other debris, large or small, can offer refuge to birds and other wildlife from the weather and predators.

Once common on most farms, brush pile habitat has been lost in many parts of the countryside as fence lines have disappeared along with the diversified agriculture that's now gone from many farms. Larger fields and "clean farming" methods have led to fewer brush piles.

Helpful to Many Species

Depending on size and location, brush piles are habitat for bob-white quail, rabbits, ruffed grouse, wild turkeys, skunks, raccoons, woodchucks, chipmunks, mockingbirds, cardinals, juncos and many other small mammals and birds. They may also attract coyotes, foxes, bobcats, hawks, owls and other predators because of the mammal and bird populations using them.

Location

Good locations for brush piles include edges of woodlands, along field borders, and in shelterbelts. Four piles per acre, spaced 150-200 feet apart, will give ample wildlife cover.

Building the Pile

The most important concept in building the piles is to form a solid, rot-resistant base layer with filler above that provides tunnels, dens and openings for animals to hide.

Build the base with two layers of large hardwood stumps, logs, stones or other large diameter material. You can also add pieces of drain tile, cinder blocks or tires with holes cut in the tread. Animals may use these as dens.

Then criss-cross filler branches, small trees, old Christmas trees and other brush on top. Most brush piles are mound or tepee shaped. A finished brush pile should be at least ten to 15 feet wide and 25 feet long and about 5 feet tall.

An alternative is to "hinge-cut" several trees along timber edges to create a living brush pile. Partially cut the trees 2 feet off the ground, allowing the trees to fall leaving a portion still connected to the stump. Stack more branches on the tree, but leave the treetops uncovered so they can grow for a period of time.

When to Build

A good time to build a brush pile is in early spring or late fall as part of a timber harvest, stand improvement or firewood cutting.

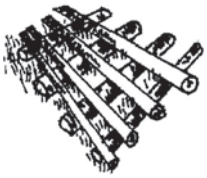
Maintenance

The brush pile will decay, so it is a good idea to add new material each year. Edges of woodlands and field borders are excellent locations for brush piles. They can offer protection to many small birds and mammals.

Steps to build a brush pile:

(1) start with first base layer;

(2) add second base layer;



(3) begin adding brush;

(4) add more brush until pile is about 5 ft. tall.

Reprinted with permission from the Summer, 2009 issue of the "Conservation Update" newsletter published by the Washtenaw County Conservation District. Editor Dennis Rice.

WILD Center Neighborhood

Photo credit Carol Toepke

Northeast Wisconsin Land Trust recently added a boardwalk and wildlife viewing platform to their Guckenberg-Sturm Preserve. Also known as the Stroebe Island Marsh, the 63 acre Preserve is located in the Town of Menasha, uniquely situated between Little Lake Butte des Morts and Mud Creek. Preservation of Stroebe Island Marsh is a shared effort between the Land Trust and Wild Ones. The marsh and surrounding floodplain forest represents one of the last remaining pristine, open cattail marshes found along the Lower Fox River drainage. It is a rare gem that can now be fully enjoyed by all.

Children can run along the 300 foot boardwalk which takes visitors from the floodplain forest through the thick cattails and finally out into the marsh to enjoy an amazing view of the water and dynamic wildlife habitat. As you emerge from the cattails you can feel the warm sunlight on your face and breathe the damp, heavy air. Here you can sit quietly on the floating platform and watch herons, cranes, ducks, eagles, and other birds taking flight while butterflies and dragonflies flutter happily around you. The sound of insects and birds chirping is loud enough to make you forget that just outside the marsh is a bustling industrial area. The stark contrast of nature and development is something to experience.

Beyond the boardwalk, people can explore the woods along a deer path that leads back to Mud Creek. Land Trust volunteers and staff have been working diligently to restore this rare habitat type that originally covered thousands of acres throughout the Fox River system. Restoration efforts include Buckthorn removal which began three years ago. This year, with help from Wild Ones, native plantings have begun on the Preserve. Wild Ones donated prairie plants which were planted near Stroebe Road at the entrance to the Preserve. Volunteers at the WILD Center facilitated the watering of both the new plants and the Swamp White Oak memorial trees that were planted this fall.

This project would not have possible without the great generosity of many local organizations, companies, and individuals. If you have not visited the Guckenberg-Sturm Preserve recently, or perhaps have never been there, now is the time! Just one visit to the serene landscape, nestled in an urban area, will keep you going back again and again with wonder at what you might see each time. We hope you enjoy this special place as much as we do. For directions and more info about the Preserve visit www.newlt.org or call (920) 738-7265.

inkberries; American elms, plums, chestnuts, and beeches; silverbells, fringetrees, black cherries, red maples, and other natives. We have planted our yard with a diversity of plants that make the food necessary for grosbeak reproduction. Our woody natives alone support well over a thousand species of caterpillars, as well as myriad other insects that are essential foods for young grosbeaks. After the fledglings leave the nest, these same plants supply the grosbeak family with seeds and berries to supplement their continued diet of insects.

We have the snakeskins our grosbeaks use to build their nest because we have black rat snakes, black racers, milk snakes, ribbon snakes, ring-necked snakes, painted water snakes, garter snakes, and ribbon garter snakes in our yard. We have these harmless reptiles because we have the mice, voles, shrews, salamanders, pollywogs, frogs, and toads that they eat, and because we have groundhog dens that are perfect places for snakes to avoid the weather extremes of winter and summer. And we have snake food because we have the plants that supply the insects and seeds eaten by mice, voles, shrews and toads, and because we leave unmowed refuges for them so they can avoid being decapitated during Saturday mowings.

We have nesting blue grosbeaks in our yard, as well as chipping sparrows, field sparrows, song sparrows, yellowthroats, willow flycatchers, chickadees, cedar waxwings, robins, cardinals, mockingbirds, bluebirds, brown thrashers, titmice, woodpeckers, wrens, and 40 other species of breeding birds because we have redundancy in each of their ecological requirements. If a mockingbird has already built a nest in a suitable dogwood, our grosbeaks can find an unoccupied dogwood—because we have many. If our black cherry trees do not support enough larvae of the Promethea moth, white furcula, and small-eyed sphinx to satiate the baby grosbeaks, our oak trees will fill the void with unicorn caterpillars, red-humped oak worms, confused woodgrains, variable oak leaf caterpillars, and white-dotted prominents. If our black rat snakes shed their skins within a mole tunnel where the grosbeaks can't find them, our black racers will leave their sheds in plain view on one of our mowed paths.

Lawn may be used as a mechanism for formalizing plant communities and for guiding us through our dense plantings.

In short, we have built a landscape that guarantees a steady supply of all of the resources needed by blue grosbeaks to successfully reproduce, a landscape with enough complexity to promote long-term balance and stability in the food webs it creates. We have lawn, but only in the areas we typically walk. At our house, grass carpet is not the default landscape, something we do with the land when we don't know what else to do. Rather, it is a mechanism for formalizing plant communities and for guiding us through our dense plantings.

Our gardens are not destroyed by sharing them with insects, as many people fear, because by encouraging populations of native insects, we are providing the food for the many animals that eat insects: the minute parasitic wasps that reproduce within stink bug and caterpillar eggs, the larger wasps that develop within the bodies of caterpillars and beetles, the assassin bugs and ambush bugs that help control our fall web worms and treehoppers, the damsel bugs that eat plant bug and lace bug eggs, the jumping spiders that pounce on unsuspecting leafhoppers, the entomopathogenic fungi that turn flies and ants into monuments of spores, and the viruses that turn caterpillars into mush. We also have big-headed flies that make sure we don't have too many planthoppers, small-headed flies that make sure we don't have too many spiders, thick-headed flies that make sure we don't have too many paper wasps, and long-legged flies that make sure we don't have too many aphids. But our garden ecosystem would not remain balanced without help from local vertebrates: the frogs, and toads, and salamanders, and foxes, and possums, and raccoons, and white-footed mice—and above all, the birds—that eat insects from morning till dusk.

Photo credit R. Lutz

Traditional Vs. Ecological Gardening: An Informal Experiment

We bought our property 11 years ago, one of a number of 10-acre lots resulting from the subdivision of a 150-acre farm. Our immediate neighbors also purchased a single, 10-acre lot. Both households had the usual choices about how to manage their properties. My wife and I (an entomologist by trade) wanted to manage for biodiversity: to do our best to restore the patchwork of forest, meadows, and wetlands that once characterized southeastern Pennsylvania. Our motivation was simple and just a little bit selfish: We enjoy nature and hoped to landscape in a way that brought us into daily contact with its many rewards.

Our neighbors chose the more traditional approach to land management, landscaping their property for neatness, aesthetics, and conformity. The current custom dictates that a property, regardless of its size or location, be planted in lawn that is meticulously maintained and sparsely decorated with standard ornamental plants from Asia and Europe. Throughout the U.S., adherence to this social norm is a measure of stewardship, character, industry, wealth, and status. Our neighbors tolerate our differences in land management because they are nice people and because they have erected an effective screen of Douglas firs that block their view of our property.

Unbeknownst to either of us at the time, we had, with our neighbors, inadvertently embarked on a long-term

experiment measuring the impact of suburban landscape choices on the sustainable production of ecosystem services.

Ten years into this experiment, all sorts of interesting comparisons can now be made: We could measure with confidence how well each of our yards sequesters carbon, filters pollutants from rain water before it leaves our properties, holds rainwater on site for maximum water table recharge, and sustains viable populations of plants and animals. We could compare the carbon footprint associated with maintaining each landscape and the number of bird species that have found our yards acceptable breeding sites. We could also compare the number of migratory birds that stop to rest and refuel as they race north to breed in the spring and retreat south to overwintering grounds in the fall.

We could find answers to such questions as: Which property will enable our kids and their kids to catch more lightening bugs on June evenings, marvel over the life cycle of the Cecropia moth or the Polyphemus moth, and watch pollywogs grow little legs and lose their tails? Which of our houses is cooled by summer shade trees or has lower heating bills because of strategically placed windbreaks of vegetation? Which property remains green during summer droughts with no artificial irrigation, and which property is providing more pollination services by nurturing larger and more diverse populations of native bees?

If You Plant Natives, Critters Will Come

I have only begun to tabulate the results, but so far the differences are striking. We now have 103 species of native woody plants on our property, while our neighbors have four; of the 16 species of ornamental plants that adorn their property, 13 are from Asia. Five of their favorite landscape plants—Callery pear, burning bush, Japanese honeysuckle, princess tree, and Miscanthus—are highly invasive and pop up uninvited on our property every year. Their property invariably looks neat and attractive; we enjoy a less controlled profusion of native herbaceous annuals and perennials, including several goldenrods, asters, warm-season grasses, spring ephemerals, rudbeckias and sunflowers, blackberries, wild strawberries, milkweeds, dogbane phloxes, violets, and eupatoriums. We have allocated 5 percent of our property to lawn, mostly in the form of mowed paths and beauty strips, while 71 percent of our neighbor's 10 acres is in weed-free lawn that is manicured to an even 1.5 inches in height twice a week.

...oaks produce the greatest number of caterpillar species (bird food) of any plant in the Mid-Atlantic States; and oaks sequester the most carbon of any regional hardwood.

We have planted 12 species of oaks in our yard for three reasons: We like oaks; oaks produce the greatest number of caterpillar species (bird food) of any plant in the Mid-Atlantic States; and oaks sequester the most carbon of any regional hardwood. Our neighbors have no oaks on their property. And so it goes. I offer such statistics not to be judgmental but to raise awareness about the unavoidable consequences of traditional landscaping practices, consequences about which most homeowners have not been informed when making choices about their landscapes. Landscape plants are more than decorations! Used properly, they clean and store water, filter air pollutants, reduce heating and cooling bills, sequester carbon dioxide, prevent floods, and maintain food webs; that is, they deliver ecosystem services that are essential to human well-being. The natural areas that used to supply such services for us are now so small and isolated that we need to rebuild functioning ecosystems right in our yards … everywhere. And we can do this only with plants. Every time we add an additional human to the earth, we need more plants, not fewer, in our landscapes.

Traditional landscapes are biologically barren areas that harbor few species, support few natural processes, and thus create few ecosystem services. The species of plants and animals with which my wife and I share our property are important, not because they entertain us, but because they create complex food webs that are essential for sustaining life. They create redundancy in our suburban ecosystem. If one species disappears, or is uncommon one year, several other similar species will be present to perform the ecosystem service once provided by the missing species. Redundancy makes food webs more resilient to natural and human-induced challenges; that is, it makes them sustainable. We can no longer afford landscapes that do not include life support systems, not if we want to be alive in the future.

My wife and I garden with a heavy bias toward plants that have been part of local food webs for millennia because that is the only way the nature we love will be able to thrive in our yard. Ten years ago, our property was overrun with invasive plants from Asia. We realized that to see local animals, we would have to keep the animals local; and to keep animals local, we would have to restore the food webs that sustain them, Hence, our use of native plants, which provide the best—and in most cases—the only food resources for our native wildlife, particularly insects that are the protein source for so many of our favorite animals. Are there cases where non-native plants provide food for native insects? Certainly, particularly nectar for butterflies and bees. But there are no cases where plants that evolved elsewhere support insect communities that are more diverse and more abundant than those supported by native plant communities. The Asian butterfly bush (*Buddleja davidii*) that attracts so many butterflies to your yard does not serve as a larval host plant for any eastern butterflies. If, in our zeal to attract butterflies to our gardens, we only planted alien nectar plants like butterfly bush, we would be left with no butterflies at all. Their native hosts, plants like black cherry, willows, hackberry, and oaks, would be eliminated from managed landscapes. The Callery pears that line the streets in my neighborhood support one species of caterpillar; had the streets been lined with native oaks trees, 534 species of caterpillars could have been made available for hungry birds. Imagine a neighborhood in which native pines are replaced by Deodor cedars from the Himalayas. Our native pine white butterfly is able to develop on Deodar cedars, but if

CONTINUED ON PAGE 11

Why is local genotype important in restoration efforts?

By Larry Noodén

General rationale

A natural area restoration can not be truly natural unless it uses plants with a genetic makeup (genotype) similar to those that were in that area originally. Of course, this applies to the animals, fungi, bacteria, etc. as well, but it depends on the plants in many ways. All of these organisms are adapted to local conditions and to each other, i.e., they work together as a functioning community. Although it is seldom put into words, we want the animals, the insects and birds, to return to the restoration site. For this to occur, the plants must fulfill their role in the web of life and match the needs of the life forms reliant on them. The scattered science available simply has not been made readily available to the conservationists who could use it.

A genetic perspective

It is well known that different ecotypes (genetically distinct varieties or populations with different genotypes/DNA) often occur within a species (Magurran and May, 1999). Much of this difference is due to local adaptations; however, geographic isolation or habitat separation often create and support these differences.

If needed, it should be possible to use genetic markers to identify and verify local genotypes just as DNA tests can be used to verify human parentage.

Local adaptations

Not only are local plants better adapted physiologically to the local climate and seasonal weather patterns, but they will contain the same structural/physical adaptations and the same spectrum of secondary compounds (organic molecules not involved in the primary functions supporting life) that existed in the original vegetation in that area. These secondary compounds are often involved in the interactions of these plants with animals, microbes and even other plants. The animals that lived in (and often still are scattered around) this area are adapted to these sets of secondary compounds. In other words, the members of a biological community are also adapted to each other. If we recreate the right vegetative community, it will be easier for the animals to return to complete the broader community that we want ultimately to achieve i.e., the local plant hosts will be more hospitable to the animals if they are reintroduced.

Photo Credit: Portia Brown

Regarding the secondary compounds

Readers of the Wild Ones Journal have already had an introduction to secondary compounds (Whitman, 2011). Secondary compounds mediate plant-animal interactions in many ways, e.g., as feeding cues (deterrents and promoters), as floral scents and pigments and more. They also govern the interactions of plants with microbes, and even other plants. (Harborne 1972, 1993; Iason et al., 2012) Secondary compounds can change over fairly short geographic distances, and these differences in the types and/or amounts of secondary compounds could greatly influence the use of those plants by animals. Many secondary compounds, e.g.., morphine and atropine, are familiar to us as a result of their medicinal uses. In nature, they serve other functions. For example, insects might be attracted to feed on certain plants, or induced to choose certain flowers as nectar sources by one set of secondary compounds, and not attracted or even driven away by another set. The total picture gets very complex very quickly both in terms of the chemical structure and diversity (estimated 200,000-1,000,000) of the secondary compounds out there in our biological communities.

What constitutes local genotype?

When collecting seeds, how far can we stray from the site being restored? This is a discussion in progress; however, foresters have long recommended collecting seeds within 100 miles. This question might better be viewed in terms of ecoregions. Consider for example, the Level III Ecoregions of the Continental United States (http://www.epa.gov/wed/pages/ecoregions/level_iii_iv.htm). SE Michigan contains 3 ecoregions (#s 55-57), and they may cross political boundaries, i.e., state lines. Also, note that many ecoregions extend quite far north and south. It can be argued that getting restoration material from nearby parts of the same ecoregion (or maybe even similar nearby ecoregions) would qualify as local, but material from distant ecoregions (which many restorers use) would not. Distant ecoregions are different environments with different environmental/population histories. Likewise, plants from distant parts (e.g. north-south extremes) of the same ecoregion might also be too different. For restoration of very high value natural areas, many public and private agencies (e.g., The Nature Conservancy) collect seeds/propagules on site, and that seems ideal.

About the diversity of the seeds/propagules used in restorations

It is important to collect from several plants and several locations in order to increase the genetic diversity of the plants produced. This diversity is important not just for long term adaptability but also to enable the plants to establish themselves in the diverse microhabitats on any site. Maintaining genetic diversity also enables a population to adapt to weather/climate fluctuations.

About rare plants

I have to add that it is especially important not to bring in very rare plants from distant sources to locations near residual local plants. An example would be sideoats grama grass (*Bouteloua curtipendula*), which is common in the Great Plains but rare in Michigan and visibly different from members of the same species further west. Importing large

MYSTERIES CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

numbers of these plants from the west could overwhelm/absorb the local Michigan genotype, especially if they are planted near remnant local plants.

Local suppliers

The number and capacity of reputable producers of local plants and seeds is increasing, and they offer competitive prices. Suppliers can be found by searching the Internet, for example, see: Michigan Native Plant Producers Association (http://www.mnppa.org/). The Michigan Native Plant Producers Association represents 12 independently-owned nurseries located throughout the state of Michigan.

Native gardens around urban homes and parks?

It is likely that most Wild Ones members would agree that native plants in natural communities offer some significant advantages over nonnative plants and formalized plantings; however, there are some special considerations that need more attention. In urban yards and parks, it may be argued that it is less important to use only local genotypes, unless of course the planting is contiguous to a valuable natural area, or they threaten species that are very rare locally. Nonetheless, local genotypes are best.

Conclusion

I am hopeful that the issues raised above will promote more consideration of local genotypes in community restoration and species conservation. We do not know all that results from mismatches in the very complex web of life in natural communities; however, it seems logical that local genotypes will fit in best.

References-

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Harborne, J.B. (1972) *Phytochemical Ecology*. London: Academic Press. Notes: Several aspects of the role of secondary compounds in flavor and food selection by animals are covered in individual chapters

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Magurran, Anne E., and Robert M. May, eds. 1999. *Evolution of biological diversity*. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press.

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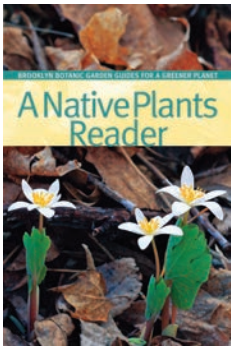
WELCOMING WILDLIFE INTO THE GARDEN WITH NATIVE PLANTS CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9

we replaced native pines with Deodor cedars, over 200 other species of moths and butterflies that can only eat native pines would lose their host plants. Should we tout Deodar cedars as being good for butterflies?

My wife and I have been enormously enriched by our restoration. Rather than ducking inside to avoid the roar of a lawn mower, the nasally whine of a leaf blower, or the sputtering of a weed-whacker, we can now set our watches by the daily sounds of the animals that call our yard home: the midnight scream of our mother fox, as she delineates the territory in which she is raising her seven kits; the dawn chorus of our resident and migrant birds; the midmorning buzz of our annual cicadas as they call for mates; the afternoon whistle of our sentry groundhog as she warns her relatives that a red-tailed hawk is nearby; the late-afternoon hum of our ruby-throated hummingbird as it hovers in front of our coral honeysuckle flowers; the crepuscular echoes of our spring peepers and toads in our marsh; and of course, the 7 a.m. melody of our blue grosbeak male.



This article by Doug Tallamy was reprinted with permission from ***A Native Plant Reader*** a book released this spring by the Brooklyn Botanical Gardens. Niall Dunne, editor of this collection of essays introduces it as "a departure from the typical BBG handbook…this book presents a collection of narratives extolling the virtues of natives, outlining their fundamental contributions to our natural ecosystems, detailing our connections with them, describing the perils they currently face, and advocating for their preservation in the garden and larger landscape."

Most importantly, www.wildones.org is listed prominently as a "Native Plant Resource".

Have you accessed the Current Members Only website yet?
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Wild Ones new website ALMOST LIVE.
Watch for an official announcement in the next Wild Ones e-newsletter.

A Monarch Rescued

This note and photograph were posted on the Monarch Watch listserve. They tell the story of a butterfly who was narrowly rescued from certain death by a kind stranger. Caring strangers, who just happened to be in the right place at the right time, and understood what was happening.

Hello Monarch Watch ....

While on a photo excursion to the Grapevine Botanic Garden - Heritage Park, in Grapevine, TX, this morning, I was drawn to this incident as it was in progress by the frantic fluttering of the Monarch butterfly as it struggled to free itself from the soon-to-be-fatal clutch of an Assassin Bug. As I approached the scene, I saw what appeared to be a tag or tattoo on the Monarch's wing. Grapevine had recently released a lot of tagged Monarchs & I assumed it was one from that batch. I snapped a few pics & then proceeded to assist the Monarch from the clutch of the bug by pinching off the flower blossom & letting it drop to the ground. The resulting jolt dislodged the bug's grip, and, last seen, the Monarch was flying off in one direction while the perplexed bug was wondering where his lunch had gone.

After a bit of research on the internet, I was able to determine that the tag # RHW 633 on this beautiful Monarch is from your program. I hope you will be happy to know that it is still making his/her way toward Mexico.

The attached picture is of Monarch # RHW 633 & the Assassin Bug which intended to have it for lunch.

After browsing your website & signing up for the newsletter, we will be planting Milkweed in our yard. We enjoy watching them as they migrate thru each year & will now have an added attraction for them to stop at.

Thank you & your team for all you are doing to ensure the health & life of these beautiful creatures.
Sue & Tom Owens, visiting Grapevine TX

WILD Center Wish List

Volunteers to help with all sorts of things: Cataloging and arranging library materials • Weeding demonstration gardens • Recording bird and critter sightings • Removing buckthorn • Restoring woodland understory and overstory.

Stuff: Computer with Windows Operating System (less than four years old), laptop or desktop • First-Aid Kit • Four-Rung Stepladder • Rain Gauge • Gardening Tools • Household Tools (drill, circle and/or jig saw, various small tools) • Native Trees and Shrubs • Canoe or Kayak • 1/4-HP Motor for Seed Sorter • Guest Chairs • Trees (6 to 8 ft.): Basswood, maple, and oak (bur, white, and swamp white oak) • Woodland plants: Grasses, ephemerals, ferns, etc. • Milkweed seed

Contact the National Office if you have other items that may be suitable for use at the WILD Center. We now have someone in the office from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Monday-Friday. Or just call for an appointment: 877-394-9453.

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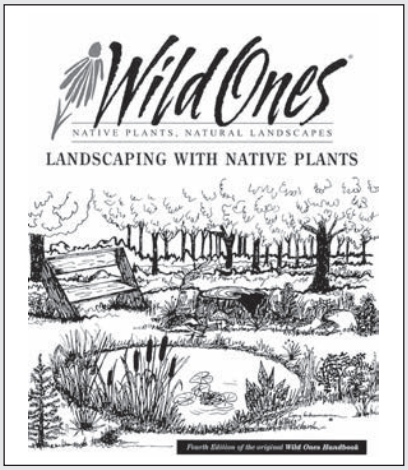

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