

A voice  
for the natural  
landscaping  
movement



## JOURNAL

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Notes from the President 2  
Welcome to the newest chapter 2  
My Wild Ones Experience 3  
Monarch Matters 6  
A Tree for Winter Birds 8  
Are “Safe” Pesticides Killing  
Pollinators? 9  
WILD Center News 10  
Grapevine 11  
2013 Photo Contest Results 12  
A Lady’s Moment in the Sun 14  
Have You Seen  
the Mighty Monarch? 15  
Seeds for Education 17  
Meeting Place 22



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

## Nativars: Where do they fit in?

Last fall the national Board established a committee to develop a position statement for Wild Ones on “nativars.” The following is the result of their deliberations and all have been approved wholeheartedly by the Wild Ones National Board.

Here is an update and restatement of the Wild Ones definition of the term “native.”

*A native plant species is one that occurs naturally in a particular region, ecosystem and/or habitat and was present prior to European settlement.”*

This is how the Board agreed to define the term “nativar.”

*“Nativar” is one term for a cultivar of a native species. Like all cultivars, nativars are the result of artificial selections made by humans from the natural variation found in a species. Nativars are almost always propagated vegetatively to preserve their selected trait. This means they no longer participate in natural reproduction patterns (like, for instance, open pollination) that would maintain genetic diversity.*

The committee then developed the *Wild Ones Position Statement on Nativars*. This was accepted by the National Board.

### What are ‘Nativars’ and Should They Be Used?

Executive Summary:

*Due to the loss of genetic diversity and other potential problems described in this position statement on nativars, and because nativars are understood to be very different from native species in the wild, Wild Ones does not encourage the use of nativars. We feel this is the only position on nativars that is consistent with Wild Ones’ mission statement.*

*Nativars, cultivars of native plants, are becoming increasingly popular and are marketed by nurseries around the country. It is important to know more about them when planning your landscaping.*

### What exactly is the difference between a nativar and a straight species native plant?

A native plant species is one that occurs naturally in a particular region, ecosystem and/or habitat and was present prior to European settlement. Nurseries that sell specifically native species grow them from seeds or divisions, and don’t select a particular form of the species to the exclusion of the inherent variation found in nature.

Nativars are the result of artificial selections made by humans from the natural variation found in species. Nativars are almost always propagated vegetatively to preserve their selected trait. Use of these methods of reproduction means the plants thus produced no longer participate in natural reproduction patterns that would maintain genetic diversity.

As a result, a nativar was only truly native when in its original context. But once removed from its natural habitat and propagated vegetatively, it is no longer native in the same way — since it no longer reproduces naturally as straight species do, through open pollination.

*continued n page 4*

## Do for One What You Wish You Could Do For Many - Part 2



Tim Lewis, President

In the last issue of the Journal, I talked about the “doing well for one what you wish you could do for many” principle—that is choosing one or two organizations

to devote you time and talents to. I'd like to continue this theme, but concentrate, this time, on monetary donations.

This is the time of year our mailboxes fill up with appeals from many non-profit organizations -- many worthy, others not so much. The letters and literature list all the reasons you should send money to them. And some of the professionally written ones tug at your heartstrings and purse strings. How does one choose where to donate?

My mom was one of those who donated to many organizations. Because she was on a limited budget, she gave just a few dollars to each. I have to admit; I followed her example and did the same for a long time. Unfortunately, my mailbox filled up with even more solicitations from

the same organizations who now sent requests throughout the year, and even more from others who must have bought mailing lists from the first organizations.

After I applied the “doing for one” principle, my mailbox has fewer appeal letters and I feel much better about assisting the organizations that I do help. In choosing those organizations, I consider what they do and how important their missions are to me. That has narrowed the choices to a select few.

The intent of the principle, I believe, is to be more selective of where you donate, and thereby have a larger impact. I feel my larger donations are more effective with “the few” than when I was giving a few dollars to “the many” organizations.

Following my donation to my church, Wild Ones is at the top of my short list of organizations that I have chosen. Naturally, as president, I feel that in order to show my commitment, besides my time and a lifetime membership, I give financially.

My fellow directors also are committed to Wild Ones and make donations within their means.

If you have been giving to many, maybe it is time for you too to apply the “doing for one” principle, in order to simplify your giving and make your donations more effective. This is the time of year that Wild Ones mails its annual appeal letter—the only time of the year that we do this. You should have received it by now, or it will arrive soon.

Please consider making Wild Ones one of the select few organizations that you support whole-heartedly.

<http://www.wildones.org/join-the-movement/support-us/>

## Welcome to the newest Wild Ones Chapter!

We are pleased to welcome the West Cook Chapter to the Wild Ones family. Located west of Chicago in Oak Park and the surrounding areas, this chapter already has 35 members. Welcome West Cook. Pamela Todd is the charter President.

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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## My Wild Ones Experience: 2013 Annual Meeting

By Fran Glass, St. Louis Chapter



Hal Mann releasing a Monarch. Members from around the country attended.  
Photo credit: Donna Van Buecken

Such a joy to meet dedicated people from all over the country who share my native plant landscaping passion, who care enough about the Wild Ones organization to attend the Annual Membership Meeting. With whom better to share and exchange ideas?

As a sixteen year member of Wild Ones, 2013 was the first time I took advantage of the opportunity to attend an Annual Membership Meeting. It will certainly not be my last.

The Fox Valley (WI) Chapter graciously volunteered countless hours preparing for and hosting the weekend. I felt welcomed by each and every volunteer who always had a smile and kind words to share.

It was a privilege to meet some of the national Board of Directors members who generously donate their time and talents to keep our organization moving forward.

The workshop sessions provided a forum for idea exchange about chapter events, issues, committees, activities, etc. There also was plenty of time to socialize and further exchange ideas. Soon a compiling of notes from the workshops will be posted on the website for all to utilize. The dedicated and talented staff provided their full attention to every detail. Donna's superior leadership sets the tone for excellence. Thanks to Donna, Jamie and Joan for your day to day work for our organization both as employees and volunteers.

I had seen photos of our headquarters yet was amazed to experience it in person. As I approached the WILD Center the beauty of the landscaping was

breathhtaking. I was greeted by an exquisite rain garden that fronts the building. It was later pointed out to me that the walkways are made of permeable pavers that allow rain water to filter through the pervious basin below ground into the garden. Additional majestic gardens surround the lovely home-turned-office building. The pollinator garden is abundant with native grasses, forbs, shrubs and trees. Equally abundant were the pollinators including several species of butterflies. The landscape was much more beautiful than I imagined.

The property consists of 16 acres of marsh, riparian woodland and upland on the west shore of Little Lake Butte des Morts which is on the Fox River and part of the Great Lakes Watershed.

Several years ago the foresighted Wild Ones leadership seized the opportunity to step up its promotion of environmentally sound landscaping practices. Located in the Fox Valley, home of one of the largest PCB contamination clean-up projects in the world, the WILD Center is now a showplace of what can be done to restore the health of an ecosystem. And a permanent national Wild Ones headquarters of which we can be proud has been established. The WILD Center is a showcase for Wild Ones philosophy, serving as our headquarters and inviting everyone to enjoy the biodiversity within. Here we are able to help people learn about native plants and natural landscaping while at the same time preserving, restoring and establishing native plant communities on the site.

I am proud to be part of this organization. My wish is that every Wild Ones member would have the opportunity to experience the WILD Center and an Annual Membership Meeting. ☪

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## Celebrating Wild Ones 35<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

Can you believe it? Wild Ones will be celebrating its 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2014 and we're so glad you'll be along for the festivities. Plans are just beginning to be developed on how we will celebrate this auspicious event. If you'd like to be part of the planning, let the home office know and we'll get you involved. And, while you're thinking about it, why not help us out with a theme and/or some taglines for the celebration. Don't hesitate to send us any ideas for promoting Wild Ones and our 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary, and mark your calendar for next year's Wild Ones Annual Membership Meeting. Email us at [execdirector@wildones.org](mailto:execdirector@wildones.org)

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## ATTENTION!!

### New National Board Members Needed

Have you ever thought about what makes Wild Ones grow? Or, how it goes about providing services to all its members? And all its chapters? Have you ever thought you might like to be part of what's going on at the business end of running Wild Ones? Or, how everything gets done as well or not so well as it should? Then have we got an opportunity for you. 2014 is the year seven national board members will be elected for new four year terms. If you have skills to lend to the running of Wild Ones from a national perspective, we'd like to talk to you. Besides the typical skills required of most any board member, the other main qualification is that you want to help Wild Ones spread the word about the importance of preserving, restoring and establishing native plant communities to encourage biodiversity. For more information or to be nominated as a future board member, e-mail Donna VanBuecken at [execdirector@wildones.org](mailto:execdirector@wildones.org) or call her at 877-394-9453.

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**Gabriel Popkin** is a PAL in MD

**Mark Charles** of the Ann Arbor (MI) Chapter, is the Wild Ones Seeds for Education Coordinator.

## What are the pros and cons of using nativars?

Nativars are selected and perpetuated by horticulturists for many alleged reasons: atypical colors or forms of flowers, compact size, insect or disease resistance, tolerance of certain challenging environmental conditions, and many other reasons – all of which, if true, may be valuable in themselves and for home gardeners.

However, there are a number of important concerns regarding the use of nativars.

The premise behind the use of nativars is to isolate a single genetic sliver from the diversity of the natural gene pool of a native species. Therefore, the use of nativars inherently excludes as much genetic diversity as possible, resulting in nursery stock that is almost always genetically identical to the original selection. The diversity of genes in straight native species gives species more flexibility (and adaptability) when confronting stress such as disease or climate change.

A small percentage of nativars in the nursery and landscape trades may not be a concern. However, the pervasive scale of mass-production, promotion and use of nativars is of concern to ecologists and environmentally-focused gardeners, horticulturists and native plant professionals. The longer we rely on nativars – clones – that are not cross pollinating in natural populations to produce their offspring, the greater the risk that we are left with only diminished selections of native plants – the nativars instead of straight species.

An example from recent history can serve as a cautionary tale: the Irish Potato Famine.

The potatoes being grown in the country were almost entirely of a single variety, the Irish Lumper. Economic and political reasons led to the potato becoming a base food of the poor. This large dependency on a single crop and the lack of genetic diversity among the plants had catastrophic effects when a disease struck (a blight called *Phytophthora infestans*) killing the potato plants. [info rewritten from Wikipedia.]

While the horticulture industry promotes the use of nativars, our natural areas where species live, in the wild, are under constant pressure. By propagating from seed, promoting and using straight species of native plants, gardeners and professionals alike can support a form of horticultural conservation—or at the very least, can avoid taking part in the continuing loss of genetic diversity.

A less obvious concern with nativars is that, because they are by definition genetically un-diverse, any stress that kills a particular nativar could have the ‘Irish potato famine’ effect — killing that same nativar in many places, quickly and at once. Just as the industry claims cultivars are better or improved, they could easily be considered inferior once a threat begins to affect them – pest,

environmental stress, changes in climate, etc. They could be considered more vulnerable by virtue of their sameness. Genetically they are deprived of a variety of ‘tools’ necessary to adapt to change.

Renowned environmentalist Aldo Leopold advised: “keep every cog and wheel is the first precaution of intelligent tinkering,” (*A Sand County Almanac with Essays on Conservation from the Round River*. 1966. Oxford Univ. Press). By planting straight native species instead of nativars, we will be preserving the amazing genetic diversity found in nature.

The native New England aster (*Symphiotrichum novae-angliae*), with a nectaring monarch butterfly, appears on the left. On the right is a photo by Janet Allen of a nativar of the New England aster. Janet comments: “The ‘improvements’ attributed to this nativar is that it’s more compact and a bit more intensely colored than the straight species. What is interesting, though, is that I’ve made a point of observing this plant, not in any organized way, but frequently enough that I have concluded that whatever the New England aster species provides has apparently been lost in this cultivar. While I have literally thousands of bumble bees, honey bees, and other native bees in my yard, buzzing around all my other plants, they seem to consistently ignore this plant.”

A close look at the center of each pink blossom shows a diminished quantity or reproductive parts, both male and female. It has been noted by botanists that when a straight species produces a plant with multiplied petals (as this pink cultivar evidently has), it does so at the expense of some of its reproductive parts and likely some nectaries.



Native New England Aster  
Photo credit: Becky Erickson

Nativar of  
New England Aster  
Photo credit:  
Janet Allen



*Rudbeckia* nativar ‘Cherry Brandy’ Photo credit: Cliff Orsted



Native purple cone flower *Echinacea angustifolia*  
Photo Credit: Thomas G. Barnes  
@ USDA-NRCS PLANTS Database

*continued on next page*

## Other Concerns or Unknowns Regarding Nativar Usage

- Loss of wildlife habitat
- Loss of pollinator habitat
- Increase in allergies to pollen or other impacts on human health
- Invasiveness potential
- Unpredictable response as climate changes
- Maintenance costs to gardeners
- Economic loss to native species growers

There are too many unknowns and not enough research results regarding these other concerns to make the decision to use or not use nativars. But like decision makers before us, we prefer a precautionary principle approach, because we intuitively know these losses are possible and a proactive and protective stand is needed until research demonstrates otherwise.

*Color is one of the most frequently seen variations from the typical native species. One has to wonder what it is that our pollinators see, and if they are attracted to these different colors. Colors are perceived, by flying pollinators, from a distance and are the primary attractants. Senses of smell and taste come into play when the animal has been attracted by sight. How the nativars vary in taste and nutritional value, while very important, are not subjects that have been widely explored.*



Native black-eyed susan,  
*Rudbeckia hirta*  
Photo credit:  
Wikimedia

*Rudbeckia hirta*  
nativar 'Cherry Brandy'  
Photo Credit:  
Cliff Orsted

### Bottom Line:

Due to the loss of genetic diversity and other potential problems described above, along with the fact that nativars are not the same as native species in the wild, Wild Ones does not encourage their use. As stated in our mission statement, our goal is "to preserve biodiversity through the preservation, restoration and establishment of *native* plant communities." (Italics added.)

Nativars should certainly never be used in restorations to replicate native plant communities. Individual gardeners, on the other hand, are free to make their own decisions when landscaping their own yards and larger properties.

One of the major difficulties gardeners experience is that desired native plants may not be commercially available for landscaping. However, we can't allow the traditional nursery industry's marketing strategies to undermine our environmental and ecological goals. Only by customers' asking for straight native species plants will growers and garden centers begin to tune in to the environmental concerns presented here, and on the minds of countless ecologists and native plant gardeners all over the country.

To make your decisions, we urge gardeners to follow the advice of Douglas W. Tallamy, Ph.D., chair

of the Department of Entomology and Wildlife Ecology at the University of Delaware and author of *Bringing Nature Home: How You Can Sustain Wildlife with Native Plants*: "It IS a bad idea to load the landscape with cultivars that have no genetic variability. I would go that route only if it is a choice between a nativar and a plant from China. I think the safest policy right now is to encourage the use of straight species. Ask for them at your local nursery to encourage nurserymen to start stocking more straight species. The nursery industry has not embraced the message that native plants are more about ecosystem function than about looks. We have to convince them that there is a market for plants with high function."

In a time of climatic uncertainty, it is important to protect the natural environment we live in. Without it, we cannot survive. Part of that protection strategy is to create our own native gardens to:

- connect corridors for songbirds, pollinators, etc.;
- incorporate species of our natural heritage;
- reduce use of potentially invasive garden plants;
- reduce water, fertilizer and chemical usage;
- educate our family and neighbors; and
- support local native plant growers.

Submitted for approval to the Board of Directors of Wild Ones by a committee of member-volunteers:

Co-Chair Mariette Nowak, Co-Chair Dan Segal, Loris Damerow, Cindy Eack, Bonnie Harper-Lore, Trish Hennig, Scott Leddy, Tim Lewis, Shey Lowman, Amy Redfield, Lynn Steiner, Donna VanBuecken, Rick Webb, Maryann Whitman, Laurie Yahr.

## Wild Ones 2014 Calendar is now available!



Wild Ones 2014 Calendar

Wild Ones has produced a 12 month calendar for 2014 featuring pictures from Wild Ones 2013 Photo Contest. We have a limited supply so order yours today! Go to [www.wildones.org](http://www.wildones.org) or call the WILD Center at 1-877-394-9453

## Meaningful Gardening: Tricks of the Trade to Bring Life to Your Garden

By Candy Sarikonda

It's fall, the perfect time for planting. As you think about creating a new garden, consider ways in which you can garden more meaningfully. Many landscapes are full of plants that have little or no value to wildlife. These gardens are full of flowers and shrubs that are attractive to the human eye, but provide little more than just a pretty picture. The gardens are lifeless. For those of us who garden with natives, we know the garden can be much more. It can be a habitat, a life-sustaining force in our backyards.

Gardening to attract butterflies and moths (Lepidoptera) to your yard can be very fulfilling. When creating a butterfly garden, there are a few things you should know to help you design your garden.

First, most butterfly plants prefer full sun. Furthermore, you will find your butterflies are most active in your garden on warm, sunny days. So choose a full sun location for your garden if possible.

Second, install butterfly plants en masse. Ideally, plant a particular variety of plant in groups of 3 or more for maximum appeal to butterflies. For example, include 3 butterfly weeds, or 5 asters, in your design. Butterflies locate plants by sight as well as smell, so the more of their favorite plants you have in your garden, the better. Grouped plantings are often more visually appealing to humans as well.

Lastly, do NOT use pesticides/insecticides! You will kill the very butterflies you are trying to attract! Make sure you purchase pesticide-free plants. Some nurseries do not grow their own plants—a grower produces plants for them. You must make sure that the nursery's grower has not treated the plants with pesticides. *When in doubt: don't buy. If the plant looks perfect, it has likely been treated with pesticides—you WANT to see chew holes in the leaves!*

There are several "tricks" you can use to entice native Lepidoptera to your yard. First, it is extremely important to include native host plants in your garden. Host plants provide food for caterpillars. Each species of caterpillar will eat only certain plants. Some caterpillars are generalists and will feed on a variety of plants, while others will feed on only one specific type of plant. For example, monarch caterpillars will feed only on milkweed, while luna moth caterpillars will enjoy hickory, sweetgum, and walnut tree leaves. By including these host plants in your landscape, you will provide food for caterpillars. And since female butterflies lay their eggs on host plants, you will also encourage female butterflies to linger in your garden—and you will attract males who will come looking for the females! To find out which host plants support the butterflies in your area, visit your local library, or check the North American Butterfly Association website at [www.naba.org](http://www.naba.org) and your state's Department of Natural Resources for more info.

A second trick to entice butterflies to your garden is to include nectar plants. Nectar plants provide food for adult butterflies. But not just any flower will do. Butterflies prefer certain types of flowers, with lots of nectar. Many cultivars have been bred to be more showy or compact, and thus the nectar has likely been bred out of them. But native plants have co-evolved with our native Lepidoptera, and these plants provide the nectar that butterflies depend on for life. By providing



*Candy's curb-side pollinator garden. Photo credit: Candy Sarikonda*

nectar-rich native plants throughout the growing season, you will entice a variety of butterfly species to your yard. Some of the best native nectar plants include milkweeds, sunflowers, coneflowers, Joe-pye weed, hoary vervain, wild bergamot, blazing star, Susans, phlox, mint, buttonbush, New Jersey tea, asters and goldenrods. Experiment with nectar plants in your yard, and see which plants the butterflies enjoy most. In my yard in northwestern Ohio, butterflies LOVE my milkweed, New England asters and stiff goldenrod. You may find they like something different in your yard. So don't be afraid to try a variety of plants. Once you find something that works, plant lots of it and tell your neighbors!

Make sure you design your garden so that you will have nectar and host plants blooming throughout the growing season. Choose spring-blooming flowers like spring beauty, spiderwort and violets, and summer-blooming flowers like common milkweed, wild bergamot, and woodland sunflower. In fall, asters and goldenrods are unbeatable—and goldenrods do NOT cause hay fever! Ragweed, is the culprit. It blooms at the same time and has wind-blown pollen. So enjoy that brilliant gold color in your fall landscape, and watch the pollinators feed so heavily that you can closely observe and enjoy them.

Lastly, when you create a native plant butterfly garden, consider the "look" you want to achieve—your wildlife won't care one way or another. You can go "wild" and allow the garden to have a more natural appearance. Or, you can opt for a more formal appearance. Huh? Natives in a formal garden? Yes, it can be done. The simplest trick? Mulch, and use negative space. In design terms, when you leave space between plants, thus highlighting each plant as a specimen, you are creating "negative space." Mulch that negative space, and your native plant will have the appearance of a formally-placed cultivar. Also, group specimens of a particular species of plant together. You can place 3 milkweed plants next to each other for a more formal look; or place 3 milkweeds scattered throughout the garden bed for a more natural look. It is entirely dependent upon your preference--butterflies will come either way!

There are a few tricks I have learned over the years that help specifically to entice monarch butterflies to my yard.

*continued on next page*

## Meaningful Gardening: Tricks of the Trade to Bring Life to Your Garden

*continued from page 6*



*Curb-side pollinator garden looks more formal with space and mulch between plants. Photo credit: Candy Sarikonda*

Most notably, monarch females prefer fresh, tender milkweed for ovipositing (laying eggs). Monarch females can smell milkweed from one mile away. By planting more than one variety of milkweed in your yard, you can ensure that a healthy, fresh-looking milkweed will always be present in your yard. For example, in my yard, monarchs like common milkweed and butterfly weed in spring and early summer, and they tend to prefer swamp milkweed later in the summer. Swamp milkweed remains more tender and lush later into the growing season than my other milkweeds. However, to overcome this, I have learned another trick: pruning my common milkweed. Yes, prune it. Not all of your plants, just some of them. I prune about one-quarter of my common milkweed. Details? In my northwest Ohio yard, I find that if I use my clippers and prune my common milkweed stems to the ground around July 4, I can expect to have lush, new growth by mid-August. Mid-August is precisely the time when pre-migrant monarchs are passing through my area, and they heavily lay eggs on my freshly resprouted milkweed. The only drawback is that the milkweed

does not grow back fast enough to produce seed, so bear this in mind if you want to collect seeds. Otherwise, prune away, your lady monarchs will love you for it!

Gardening with natives can be transformative. A garden is a living, breathing organism. We look for meaningful relationships in our human interactions. It should be no different with our gardens. We need to look at them as an opportunity to help our fellow creatures, to interact with and explore the wonders of nature up-close, and to nurture our souls.

By making a commitment to garden more meaningfully, we can experience the richness of the diversity of life that would not be seen in a traditional garden setting. Gardening with native plants is a gift of life to be enjoyed for years to come. ☪

## Your Opinions Are Important Wild Ones Survey Reminder



The Wild for Monarchs committee applied for funding assistance from Monarch Joint Venture to help with some of the costs of the program. As part of our award, we need to provide updates and results of our activities. To help us obtain this information, we have prepared a survey which is now ready for you to complete.

Please take the time to help us understand what you, as our members, and you, as an advocate, are doing to help the monarchs. Thanks for your input. At the end of the program in 2015, we will do a follow up survey to see how much we've achieved.

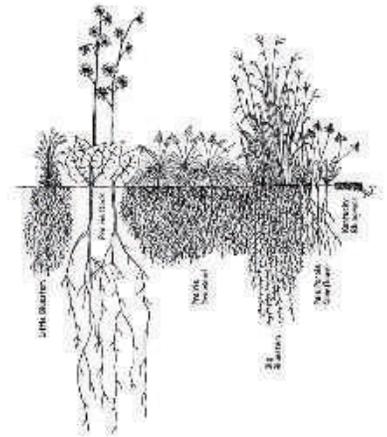
Go to [wildones.org](http://wildones.org) and click on <http://survey.constantcontact.com/survey/a07e80e2e4thkdbucp/a01gkho1wcnhr/questions>

## Great Stuff at the Wild Store



### Wild Ones Sweatshirts

When the weather is cool, you can't beat a Wild Ones sweatshirt. Available in several colors and styles, with the Wild Ones logo, some have the "Roots" drawing, and some have "Yesterday's Lawn, Tomorrow's Habitat." Pricing varies.



### Long-Sleeve Roots T-Shirts

The roots of native plants grow deep and here's a great way to show off that important fact. Display your "wildness" with the "Roots" drawing on the front along with the Wild Ones logo. Cool and unique. \$22



### Ordering

Prices include shipping and handling. Order on-line at [www.wildones.org/wild-ones-store/](http://www.wildones.org/wild-ones-store/) Or send checks payable to Wild Ones to Wild Ones Merchandise, PO Box 1274, Appleton, WI 54912. For more information, contact the National Office at 877-394-9453.

## A Tree for Winter Birds (but really, for me)

By Denise Gibbs, PAL Maryland

An apartment dweller for most of my life, I couldn't wait to get my hands in the dirt at our first home with a yard. The move was in early April. Even before the boxes were unpacked, the lawn grass was removed, and the front yard meadow was planted with plugs and seeds of all my favorite sun loving native wildflowers and grasses. We included seed-producing composites for the birds, host plants for caterpillars, and plenty of nectar sources for all the local pollinators. At the meadow's edge, we planted a hedgerow of berry-producing shrubs for bluebirds. It was lush with native sumacs, blueberry, blackberry, and a staggered row of Eastern red cedar trees. It wasn't until everything was planted that I realized what I had done. I had recreated a scene from my childhood—a broomsedge field where I first discovered nature's treasures, where I first listened to the sweet song of a bluebird, and the place where I fell in love with Eastern red cedar trees. In *A Sand County Almanac*, Aldo Leopold wrote ". . . I love all trees, but I am in love with pines." Well, that's just how I feel about Eastern red cedars. They are my "good medicine" tree, and I never tire of admiring their beauty, breathing in their fragrance, or spying on their many wild inhabitants. I believe that every yard should have at least one Eastern red cedar, so I have advocated for their use as a landscape tree for as long as I can remember. During my career as a park naturalist for our county park system, I seized every opportunity to educate others about the need to preserve red cedars and their habitat.

There's a rural road near our home where I frequently walk. When I first walked the road 30 years ago, the nearby field was in the early stage of succession, with native broomsedge grass, goldenrod, common milkweed, and 12" tall Eastern red cedar tree saplings. The surrounding land had once been a farm, but the new owner—the county parks department, had plans to convert it to ball fields, complete with hundreds of paved parking spaces.

On an early morning summer walk along the road, I watched helplessly as the park maintenance crew leader mowed down the young red cedars with his tractor. Without hesitation, I immediately called the park manager. I wanted her to hear the anguish in my voice. I begged her to please allow the tiny trees to regrow. Her first response was "What's the big deal? It's just a "trash tree". I had to justify the trees' existence by suggesting that, once mature, they would provide a dense buffer from sound and would hide the ugliness of paved parking lots from the surrounding neighbors. I also convinced her that the mature trees would make a visually attractive entrance to the future park, thus saving time and money by allowing nature to do the landscaping for them. Then I proceeded to quote our parks department mission statement: "Protect and interpret our valuable natural and cultural resources; balance the need for recreation with the need for conservation. . ."



This the classic form of a Red cedar in the wild.

Photo credit: Wikimedia Commons

Those red cedar trees are maturing beautifully now. They have grown into a dark green thicket at the road's edge. Their dense foliage cradles and conceals the nests of several bird species. Fledgling bluebirds often fuss and flutter from the red cedars nearest to their nest boxes. Screech owls snooze in the trees during the day, out of sight from mobbing crows. Red fox kits frolic to exhaustion and then rest in the shade of the thicket. The red cedars also provide fall and winter food for the field's birds and mammals. Copious light blue fleshy cones (which look like berries) are eaten by bluebirds, mockingbirds, robins, and of course—cedar waxwings. Twice during summer, the trees host one of my favorite butterflies, the "Olive" Juniper Hairstreak, whose well camouflaged caterpillars munch on the needles. The National Wildlife Federation has labeled this species "One of the Top Ten Wildlife Food Plants."

If you don't already have a red cedar on your property, please consider planting it as part of your next landscaping project for the birds; or even just for yourself.

Eastern red cedar is not a true cedar, but a Juniper—*Juniperus virginiana*. It is a native pioneer species, sprouting and growing in fields of native grasses. Not surprisingly, field mice are mainly responsible for dispersing the seeds all over the fields. Since their wood is resistant to insect attacks and fungal decay, red-cedars can live to be 300 years old, but only if we show some respect and stop mowing over them . . . ☪



Red cedar berries are a favorite of birds—particularly cedar wax-wings in the dead of winter. Photo credit: Wikimedia Commons

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## Are “Safe” Pesticides Killing Pollinators?

By Mariette Nowak

Nicotine is a deadly natural insecticide found in tobacco plants and has also been responsible for the deaths of millions of smokers. It evolved in tobacco plants to combat insect pests. So it is no surprise that a class of insecticide was developed in the early 1990s, based on nicotine, called neonicotinoids.

These neonicotinoids have come into widespread use because they are considered much safer than many other pesticides for humans and mammals, primarily because they don't cause cancer. Unfortunately, for bees, more and more evidence is coming to light that shows that they are sickened and killed by these neonicotinoids.

As is well known today, bees are disappearing and dying in multitudes throughout North America and Europe in a phenomenon called Colony Collapse Disorder (CCD). Although neonicotinoids are originally not thought to be a direct cause of CCD, many experts consider them a significant contributing factor.

Let's look at the evidence.

Neonicotinoids are systemic pesticides, meaning that they are absorbed by the plant, making every part of a treated plant toxic to insects. This includes the pollen and nectar produced by the plants. Pollinators, like bees, are exposed to neonicotinoids as they feed on the plants.

Because these insecticides are systemic, they cannot simply be rinsed off—not off the roots, not off the flowers.

Studies have shown that neonicotinoids are highly toxic to bees, including honey bees, bumble bees, blue orchard bees, and an assortment of other native bees. If not killed outright, bees exposed to the chemicals show problems flying, navigating, and learning. Worker bees often die prematurely.

One of the major problems that has emerged is a result of the nearly universal use of neonicotinoids in seed coatings for corn and soy in agricultural fields. The Researchers at Purdue University in Indiana investigated bee deaths in hives close to agricultural fields in 2010 and 2011. “We know these insecticides are highly toxic to bees; we found them in each sample of dead and dying bees,” said Christian Krupke, associate professor of entomology and co-author of the study. Surviving bees often had tremors, uncoordinated

movements, and convulsions, all of which are signs of insecticide poisoning. Due to similar bee die-offs in Europe, neonicotinoids are banned or severely limited in Germany, France, and Italy.

The problem is not only the toxic plants themselves, but the talc used in planting the seed. Because the coated seeds are sticky, talc is added so the seeds flow freely through the planters. Excess talc is released both during planting and in planter cleaning and has extremely high levels of neonicotinoids – up to 700,000 times the lethal contact dose for a bee. “This material is so concentrated that even small amounts landing on flowering plants around a field can kill foragers or be transported to the hive in contaminated pollen,” said Krupke. Measures need to be taken, said Krupke, to eliminate or limit talc emission. In my own state, University of Wisconsin—Madison entomologist Phil Pelliteri agrees, “The Purdue research is alarming”, he said. “Changes in seeding procedures need to be made as soon as possible.”

The use of neonicotinoids in home gardens and landscaping can also be a problem. A major concern is the long term contamination of soil after applications to ornamental plants, many of which are pollinated by bees. A common treatment is soil drenching and a series of studies showed extremely high contamination of the soil for months and even years after such treatment.

For example, treated rhododendrons had 4.5 times the lethal dose of neonicotinoids in their blossoms nearly 6 years after treatment. In another study, serviceberries had up to 26 times the lethal dose in their blossoms after 18 months and 17 times, in their leaves, after 6 months. In yet another study, Cornelian cherries had up to 15 times the lethal dose in their blossoms after 18 months. Pelliteri finds this data very disturbing.

However, Pelliteri said that “some treatments—such as systemic drenches to prevent ash borers from killing ash trees—do not seem to have much of a chance of exposure to bees, since they are not pollinated by bees. The issues have more to do with flowering plants that bees use. It is also dependent on rates of chemicals used—the rates used



Marvelous adaptation of horsemint (*Monarda punctata*) to its pollinators.  
Photo credit: ErinVastag



Green sweat bee (*Agepostemon* sp.) Credit  
Photo credit: Jon Sullivan, Wikimedia



Squash pollinator bee. (*Peponais pruinosa*)  
Photo credit: USDA photos

for some ornamentals is much higher than crop production rates.”

The Xerces Society, an organization dedicated to invertebrate conservation, is concerned about the use of neonicotinoids on bee pollinated plants. In a major well researched report this year, Xerces recommends a ban on the cosmetic use of neonicotinoids, as is in force in Ontario, Canada. Until that time, it suggests, “all neonicotinoid products marketed for non-agricultural use (ie., home garden products) should have label restrictions that limit application times, and reduce application rates on plants visited by bees.” It also recommends labeling the products as potentially toxic to bees.

continued on page 10

The EPA recently acted on this labeling recommendation after a catastrophic event in Oregon. Tens of thousands of bumble bees died and covered a Target parking lot after the blooming linden trees around the lot were sprayed with a neonicotinoid insecticide.

As a side note, I went to my local hardware store in the small town of East Troy, Wisconsin (population 4000) and found a number of neonicotinoid pesticides under the Bayer label. Although Wild Ones members rarely

resort to chemical use, you can help spread the word to family and friends. To determine if a pesticide contains these neonicotinoids, look at the labels. Imidacloprid, acetamiprid, dinotefuran, clothianidin, thialoprid and thiamethoxam are all neonicotinoids.

For more information, see: [http://www.xerces.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/Are-Neonicotinoids-Killing-Bees\\_Xerces-Society1.pdf](http://www.xerces.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/Are-Neonicotinoids-Killing-Bees_Xerces-Society1.pdf)

<http://www.purdue.edu/newsroom/research/2012/120111KrupkeBees.html>



Female Blueberry Bee *Habropoda laboriosa*  
Photo credit: Jerry A. Payne



## WILD CENTER NEWS

# Council Ring Completed



CNRA board members recently held their annual meeting at the WILD Center. It ended with a visit to the council ring, surrounded by the pollinator garden and the mesic prairie/oak savanna. The fire pit is in the foreground under a steel safety cover.

Great News! Citizens Natural Resources Association (CNRA) has donated the balance of funds needed to complete the council ring which makes up the center focus of the Pollinator Garden. This council ring will be dedicated to CNRA and Lorrie Otto in appreciation of all their efforts to keep Wisconsin environmentally healthy – from being the first state to outlaw the use of DDT to restoring the Horicon Marsh after the failed attempts to use it for industrial and agricultural purposes.

Editor's Note: Horicon Marsh is internationally known as a major flyway that provides 32,000 acres of habitat for endangered species and is a critical rest stop for thousands of migrating ducks and Canada geese. The spectacle of watching the annual migrations attracts amateur birders and internationally based professional ornithologists. The marsh is recognized as a 'Wetland of International Importance' and ranks high on the lists of important global and state bird areas.

The northern two-thirds of Horicon Marsh is managed by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service as the Horicon National Wildlife Refuge. The southern third of the marsh is managed by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources as the Horicon Marsh State Wildlife Area. (Taken from [http://dnr.wi.gov/news/weekly/Article\\_Look-up.asp?id=1522](http://dnr.wi.gov/news/weekly/Article_Look-up.asp?id=1522))

## Exploring the Council Ring

In Jens Jensen's *Siftings*, published in 1939, he wrote, "In this friendly circle, around the fire, man becomes himself. Here there is no social caste. All are on the same level, looking each other in the face. A ring speaks of strength and friendship and is one of the great symbols of mankind. The fire in the center portrays the beginning of civilization, and it was around the fire our forefathers gathered when they first placed foot on this continent."

A council ring concept may be as informal as a small number of logs to sit on, or stumps set on end, around a campfire, where friends may gather.

The designer of our Council Ring intended this close spacing between folks and fire, seeing it as great for intimate gatherings—particularly for our residential setting. Larger gatherings, such as classes, meetings, and weddings, require a fair amount of open space; our scale can accommodate about 30 people.

Jensen designed council rings for public parks and schools. Fire was usually a component in these designs, but their most important component was the inwardly focused circular space—room, actually—that served as intimate and egalitarian settings for social gatherings. Fire provided a background ambiance (the flickering light enhanced story telling), as well as a reference to Native American camp meetings, which were part of the historic American landscape that Jensen admired. In a number of cases Jensen and his protégé Alfred Cauldwell omitted fire platforms or pits. But invariably these landscape features were configured to provide a strong visual sense of an open air room within the larger landscape. That is the sense that our Council Ring evokes.

## Grapevine

### Pre-poisoned Plants

This is a reiteration of the importance of Mariette Nowak's article titled "Are 'Safe' Pesticides Killing Pollinators". A few things that have come up since she wrote it.

It was recently revealed (Pesticide Research Institute, Pesticide Action Network of North America, Beyond Pesticides) that many "bee friendly" home garden plants sold at Home Depot, Lowe's, Target and other leading garden centers

have been pre-treated with bee-killing pesticides.

The systemic pesticides known as the neonicotinoids (also known as 'neonics') enter the tissue, nectar and pollen of the treated plants. There is no way to clear the plants of the pesticide once it has been applied.

After the neonic bee-kill in the Target parking lot in Oregon, Representatives from Oregon and Michigan have

introduced in Congress the "Save our Pollinators Act" which seeks to suspend the use of neonics on bee-attractive plants until EPA reviews all of the available data, including field studies.

There is already on the books, in the 2008 Farm Bill, a requirement to "protect native pollinators". How do we get people to pay attention to these protective acts? ☞

### Mexico bans GM (genetically modified) corn

A federal judge in Mexico is reported to have issued an order to the Mexican equivalent of the EPA to immediately "suspend all activities involving the planting of transgenic corn in the country and end the granting of permission for experimental and pilot commercial plantings". The judge's order also ruled that "multinationals like Monsanto and Pioneer are banned from the release of transgenic maize in the Mexican countryside" as long as collective action lawsuits initiated

by citizens, farmers, scientists, and civil society organizations are working their way through the judicial system. The judge's opinion cited "the risk of imminent harm to the environment" as the basis for the decision.

The class action lawsuit is supported by scientific evidence from studies that have – since 2001 – documented the contamination of Mexico's native corn varieties by transgenes from GMO corn, principally the varieties introduced by

Monsanto's Roundup ready lines and the herbicide-resistant varieties marketed by Pioneer and Bayer CropScience. The lawsuit seeks to protect the "human right to save and use the agrobiodiversity of native landraces from the threats posed by GMO maize".

Recall that farmers are forbidden from saving and replanting the genetically modified corn, year after year as farmers have always done. ☞

### New biological agents to fight invasive weeds: or foreign bugs to eat foreign weeds

Pale and black swallow-wort (*Cynanchum* sp. previously known as *Vincetoxicum* sp.) were accidentally introduced into the United States from Europe over a century ago and have since spread throughout the Northeast and well into Canada and the Midwest. These vining plants are major pasture pests and serious weeds in many agricultural, ornamental, and forest environments.

Important to gardeners who want to support pollinators—monarchs especially, swallow-worts are closely related to milkweeds and threaten monarch butterfly populations. Monarchs readily lay eggs on swallow-worts, but all larvae that hatch on the plant die—they cannot eat the swallow-wort leaves.

After seven years of testing and comparing against 76 potential host plants in the University of Rhode Island Insect Quarantine Lab, a caterpillar of the moth *Hypena opulenta* (from southern Ukraine), which feeds exclusively on the invasive

weed black swallow-wort, is almost ready for release in the US. While the USDA requires that a few more steps be taken in the approval process, the Canadian government has granted permission for an immediate field release of 500 larvae at Carleton University just outside Ottawa.

Biological control programs of this type require a great deal of cooperative research. In addition to the University of Rhode Island team, the project involved Ukrainian plant taxonomists, Swiss, French, and Canadian biocontrol specialists, and faculty and USDA researchers at Cornell University. It was funded by several grants from the USDA, U.S. Forest Service, and Agriculture Canada.

Garlic mustard, (*Alliaria petiolata*), was brought here from Europe in the 1860s as a culinary herb. Since then, this invasive weed has spread to 34 U.S. states and four Canadian provinces. It is very difficult to eradicate



Black swallow-wort.

Photo credit: Leslie J. Mehrhoff, University of Connecticut, Bugwood.org



Black dog-strangling vine also known as black swallow-wort.

(*Cynanchum louiseae*)

Photo credit: Leslie J. Mehrhoff bugwood.org

Grapevine continued on page 16

## 2013 WILD ONES PHOTO CONTEST RESULTS



*People's Choice and Scenery 2nd Place - Oak Savanna Sunrise by George Sydlowski*

The Wild Ones 2013 Photo Contest was an awesome success. This year we had a record breaking number of entries with over 170 top quality photos sent into us. The pictures this year were so excellent it was hard to pick the winners. The judge this year was professional photographer Mike Matthews whose passion is nature photography. Check out his great shots at [www.mikemattewspography.com](http://www.mikemattewspography.com).

Members also had a difficult time picking a winner for the People's Choice award. For the first time ever, we had a tie so there are two People's Choice winners this year. Congratulations to all!

The people's choice winners will each receive a \$25 gift certificate from Prairie Nursery courtesy of owner Neil Diboll. All first place winners receive a ribbon and a \$10 gift certificate to the Wild Store, second place winners receive a ribbon and a \$5 gift certificate to the Wild Store and third place winners receive a ribbon and Wild Ones decal.



*People's Choice and Wild Ones In-Action 1st Place - Botanizing on Glade by Becky Erickson*



*Non-Residential Landscaping 1st Place - Monarch Waystation at Shaker Village KY by Betty Hall*



*Photos by Kids 1st Place - Flora-Coneflower by Erin Vastag*



*Residential Landscaping 1st Place - Xeric in Front of House by Dianne Blankenship*



*Flora 1st Place - Rosa Setigera Portrait by Becky Erickson*



*Scenery 1st Place - Dutchmans Breeches Hillside by Karen Schulz*

**People's Choice Winners**

Oak Savanna Sunrise, George Sydlowski, Oak Openings (OH) Chapter  
 Botanizing on glade, Echinacea simulate, Becky Erickson, Mid-Missouri (MO) Chapter

**Photos of Children**

1st Place – The Age of Discovery, David Poweleit, Northern Kane Co.(IL) Chapter  
 2nd Place – Milkweed Harvest Fun, Denise Gehring, Oak Openings (OH) Chapter  
 3rd Place – Catch Your Star by David Poweleit, Northern Kane Co. (IL) Chapter

**Flora**

1st Place – Rosa setigera [climbing rose] portrait,Becky Erickson, Mid-Missouri (MO) Chapter  
 2nd Place – Soft Sky, Bright Flowers by Michael Anderson, Madison (WI) Chapter  
 3rd Place – Aster with Dew by George Sydlowski, Oak Openings (OH) Chapter

**Photos by Kids**

1st Place – Coneflower, Erin Vastag, Menomonee River Area (WI) Chapter  
 2nd Place – Busy Bee,Erin Vastag, Menomonee River Area (WI) Chapter  
 3rd Place – White Water Lily,Erin Vastag, Menomonee River Area (WI) Chapter

**Non-residential Landscaping**

1st Place – Monarch Waystation at Shaker Village KY, Betty Hall, Lexington (KY) Chapter  
 2nd Place – A Prairie Birthday Legacy, Denise Gehring, Oak Openings (OH) Chapter  
 3rd Place – Rain Gardens, Lansing, Michigan, Jim Hewitt, Red Cedar (MI) Chapter

**Pollinators**

1st Place – Meadow Beauty with Visitor, George Sydlowski, Oak Openings (OH) Chapter  
 2nd Place – Great Spangled Fritillary Feeding, Tim Lewis, Rock River Valley (IL) Chapter  
 3rd Place – Buckeye Butterflies on Goldenrod, Betty Hall, Lexington (KY) Chapter

**Residential Landscaping**

1st Place – Xeric in Front of House, by Dianne Blankenship, Partner-at-Large (IA)  
 2nd Place – Front Yard One, Mark Plunkett, Greater Cincinnati (OH) Chapter  
 3rd Place – Benign Neglect, Roberta Herschleb, Madison (WI) Chapter

**Scenery**

1st Place – Dutchmans Breeches Hillside, Karen Schulz, St. Croix Oak Savanna (MN) Chapter  
 2nd Place – Oak Savanna Sunrise, George Sydlowski, Oak Openings (OH) Chapter  
 3rd Place – Church rain garden, Beate Popkin, Lexington, (KY) Chapter

**Wild Ones In-Action**

1st Place – Botanizing on glade, Echinacea simulate, Becky Erickson, Mid-Missouri (MO) Chapter  
 2nd Place – Lexington chapter at Shakertown, Beate Popkin, Lexington (KY) Chapter  
 3rd Place – Restoring the Watershed Ecology, Hal Mann, Oak Openings (OH) Chapter



*Photos of Children 1st Place - The age of discovery by David Poweleit*



*Pollinators 1st Place - Meadow Beauty with Visitor by George Sydlowski,*

## A Lady's Moment In the Sun

By Maryann Whitman

She followed me home—so I had to figure out how to keep her. Actually, while harvesting the seeds of sweet everlasting (*Pseudognaphalium obtusifolium*), I had unwittingly collected her 'day nest'—with her in it. To me it looked like nothing more than a convenient clump of fluffy seed heads, so I stuffed it into the brown bag. That evening I stuck my nose into the bag to sniff the maple-syrup aroma of the seeds and leaves I had collected, and there she was! Fuzzy black with spikes and gold and green bracelets around her inch-and-a-half long body: an American Painted Lady caterpillar (*Vanessa virginiensis*).

I was quite taken by her (or him—who knows), and immediately did a web search. This caterpillar builds a "day nest", from which it emerges each evening to feed on its host-plant leaves [cudweed, pearly everlasting, and pussy toes]. I was a little puzzled that none of the references pointed out that 'nest building' by a caterpillar is unusual behaviour.

For three weeks I kept it in a gallon jar on my kitchen counter, watching it, feeding it, mostly worrying that I might do something to damage it. She was my responsibility.

Fortunately the little creature knew what to do, even if I did not. After the first week it was hanging upside-down in 'J-form', and 24 hours later it had formed a chrysalis. Two weeks later it was still a chrysalis, and showing no signs of planning anything else; I was sure it was dead. To my great relief, a couple mornings later the chrysalis was an empty shell, with a brilliant gob of red fluid on the glass floor below. The Lady was perched on a twig, shivering her tightly closed wings. Her transformation was complete.

It was a cold and dismal morning. The previous night's temperatures were in the high 30s. Freezing nights were not distant. What was I to do with this little Lady? I was responsible; I couldn't just put her outside.



Adult Lady just emerged from chrysalis  
Photo credit: Don Hall, U of FL

I had read in Betty Dzedzik's book (*Learn about Butterflies in the Garden*) that adult Ladies like to 'puddle' and feed on rotten apples. An old apple tree provided a plentiful supply. The next morning again it was cold and cloudy. The Lady was feeding on the rotten apple. But surely she needed

something more? She still hadn't opened her wings; she walked around her glass cage.

Around 2 o'clock on the afternoon of October 20<sup>th</sup> I decided, with the sun breaking out here and there, to take the Lady outside. Perhaps I could find a warm sheltered spot for her in the flower garden. Her wings were tightly closed, grey/dun colored with a lovely blue streak along the outer reaches.



American Painted Lady butterfly (*Vanessa virginiensis*) basking in sun.  
Photo credit: Don Hall, U of FL

In the warmth of the sun, she opened her wings! A brilliant burnt orange...she took my breath away!

Uncertain what else to do, I left her to her own devices. An hour later, the responsibility I had adopted was gone. Dr. Donald Hall's University of Florida website informed me that "adults hibernate"; Dr. David Wagner (*Caterpillars of Eastern North America*), University of Connecticut, said they migrate. This was not very helpful information. (I later concluded that it all depended on the authority's home location. In Florida the Ladies hibernate. In Connecticut they migrate south to Florida. Their northern limits are not known.)

The following days were warm and sunny. That boded well for the Lady (if she hadn't become a tasty morsel for a passing bird). I saw her one more time, on a goldenrod two days after I released her. Relieved, I wished her well.

While I am aware that people are collecting Monarch eggs and caterpillars, raising and releasing them, I had not done this before. It had been for me such a strange period of dithering, of indecision, of worrying. There seemed to be no clear-cut information on what to do for this apparently very common and insignificant creature.

I grew to resent it when I read "Conservation: Not required. Demonstrably secure globally." So am I, after all. The species may be 'globally secure', but this single member on my kitchen counter certainly was in trouble—in my ignorant hands. 'Conservation' for the species may not be required but I certainly wanted to conserve this one quivering specimen. At what point does "CONSERVATION" begin and become important?

I recalled a line from the musings of Carl Jung that said something like: 'when you become emotionally involved with something, it becomes important.' That was exactly what I had experienced.

Perhaps all the small mercies that we perform daily, opening a window so a trapped bee might escape, trapping a spider with a tissue to take it outdoors instead of squishing it, are the foundations of the spirit of conservation. This spirit acquires capital letters when it is formalized and upper and lower limits are set.

I believe that conservation is what we practice when we plant native plants in our gardens and welcome all the random species we care about, for some of whom Conservation is Not Required. ☪

# Have You Seen the Mighty Monarch?

By Gabriel Popkin

*This article originally appeared on the blog The Sieve ([www.the-sieve.com](http://www.the-sieve.com)). Gabriel Popkin is a science and environmental writer based in Maryland.*

The once-mighty monarch butterfly migration—an extraordinary natural phenomenon that passes right through our neighborhoods and fields—has been reduced to a trickle. Where were you all summer, did you notice?

For how things used to be, here is Annie Dillard describing the event in *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*, published in 1974:

“The monarchs clattered in the air, burnished like throngs of pennies, here’s one, and here’s one, and more, and more. They flapped and floundered; they thrust, splitting the air like the keels of canoes, quickened and fleet. It looked as though the leaves of the autumn forest had taken flight, and were pouring down the valley like a waterfall, like a tidal wave, all the leaves of hardwoods from here to Hudson’s Bay.”

Dillard seems to be describing a scene of almost unimaginable natural wealth. The world had such an excess of raw material that it could make monarch butterflies not by the ones and twos, but by the millions.

Indeed, estimates of the number of monarchs that used to overwinter in Mexican fir and pine forests range up to a billion. In pictures, the trees seem to be literally dripping with butterflies. I fear that in the four decades since *Pilgrim*, we have become accustomed to an invisible poverty. One can understand the intensity of seeing the migration in full force, as Dillard did—of being left feeling “inundated, drained.” But what is the experience of not seeing the monarch migration? An uneasy emptiness? A directionless longing? Only those people whose work involves seeing—namely the gardeners and the

scientists—seem to realize the enormity of what is happening.

Case in point: this year, I have seen a total of one monarch butterfly. Having been told they were scarce, I went outside and watched it flutter, fold its wings and drink nectar from a flower, and fly away again. I felt both pleased with my brief connection with the creature, and sorry for its solitude. But then I went back to being distracted by many other things; I admit I haven’t been focusing much on monarchs.

Then again, I presume, neither was Annie Dillard. She was just looking out her window.

Among gardeners, however, even a single monarch sighting is now

are also documenting a monarch impoverishment in the Northeastern Region. Probably the most startling evidence comes from Mexico, where the forested area covered by overwintering monarchs has fallen precipitously in recent years. If the trend continues, the population will soon reach zero.

Scientists have identified several factors behind this decline. Perhaps most obviously, the monarch’s overwintering habitat in Mexico has been reduced by logging, although what’s left is now protected. Unusually hot weather has also taken its toll, drying out monarch egg sacs and the nectar plants the adult butterfly relies on for food. But more than anything, the monarch butterfly’s fate is wrapped up with that of a genus of plants—*Asclepias*, or milkweed—because it is only from milkweeds that its caterpillars feed.

Isn’t it risky, you might ask, for a species to stake its evolutionary fate on one type of plant? It would seem so, but for millions of years this gamble apparently paid off. Common milkweed is a hearty plant that, as its name suggests, grows and reproduces readily with no human intervention; it was ubiquitous on the prairies that long occupied the central part of our continent. But as anyone who has visited the Midwest



*Monarch Sipping Nectar, Photo Credit: Janet Giesen*

enough to set off a volley of emails. Gardeners these days are all gaga about pollinators, and now in late summer, their Joe pye weeds, ironweeds and black-eyed Susans swarm with bees, wasps, butterflies, moths, even hummingbirds. But lucky indeed is the gardener who spies one of the rare orange and black Technicolor beauties—the butterfly which, in Dillard’s thrilling words, appears at rest “like a fleck of tiger.”

Gardeners focus on the small scale; scientists look at the big picture. And many—though not all—of them

knows, the diverse prairie ecosystem has been almost entirely replaced by corn and soybean monocultures. Even this might not be such a problem for the monarch if milkweeds could grow in field margins and between crop rows, as they used to. But corn and soy are now mostly planted “Roundup-Ready,” meaning that farmers can douse their fields with unprecedented quantities of herbicide. The milkweed seems to have become a casualty of Monsanto-enabled agricultural efficiency, and migrating

*continued on page 16*

to sprout in prairies and farm fields, well by golly, it will grow in the nation's suburbs.

My mother, a native plant landscaper in Kentucky, recently became the 6,895<sup>th</sup> person to plant a "Monarch Waystation," which is a habitat containing a certain number of milkweed varieties and other nectar plants. For her efforts, she received a certificate and a sign from Chip Taylor, the University of Kansas biologist and monarch butterfly devotee who launched the Waystation program. Taylor and his conservation compatriots are betting that they can create managed ecosystems to replace the natural functions we've lost, though so far, the monarch has continued to decline.

In the end, the fate of this project depends on how well scientists and gardeners are able to see like a monarch. For the butterfly, the world is milkweed, pollen plants, Mexican fir trees, other monarchs, birds, North, and South. Everything else is just plastic—worthless. In our complicated human world, by contrast, monarchs are just one of thousands of pieces, and hardly the most vital to our survival. It is thus perhaps not surprising that we lost sight of them in all their abundance, and blithely obliterated their food source. It is impressive we were smart enough to piece together their life cycle and migration routes, and to see the connection between herbicide and butterfly decline. And it is inspiring that thousands are now putting their gardens in service of this regal insect. It will be years before we know if they have succeeded, but theirs is unquestionably a noble effort.

Gardeners and scientists know that nature has given us riches beyond measure. Evolution needed billions



*Monarch Butterfly feeding on goldenrod*  
Photo credit: Claire Kim

of years to create the beautiful and charismatic monarch butterfly, which has now thrived on this continent for a few million years. And yet this butterfly may all but disappear from the Northeastern region within one human generation, without even being deliberately hunted like the passenger pigeon. What are we to make of this careless catastrophe? As it has since the passenger pigeon vanished, life is going on. We can presumably live without the milkweed and the monarch, and even without the birds that feed on monarch caterpillars. But why would we want to? Why choose poverty when we were given wealth?

To avoid that dismal fate, we need to be willing to see—to really see—what a poor world we are in danger of creating. ☪

New biological agents to fight invasive weeds: or foreign bugs to eat foreign weeds *continued from page 11*

has spread to 34 U.S. states and four Canadian provinces. It is very difficult to eradicate because its seeds can remain viable in the soil for more than 10 years. A single plant can produce hundreds of seeds, which scatter as far as several yards from the parent. Garlic mustard also releases natural substances called allelochemicals into the soil to suppress growth of other plants.

Years of testing in agricultural insect quarantine labs has settled upon four species of the *Ceutorhynchus* weevil that so far have been shown to feed almost only on garlic mustard. One weevil, *C. scrobicollis*, has been demonstrated to feed exclusively on the root crown area of garlic mustard. *C. scrobicollis* is currently awaiting release at the University of Minnesota. Among the reasons for the very careful and prolonged testing is that garlic mustard belongs to the Family Brassicaceae—just like cabbage, brussels sprouts, broccoli, cauliflower—all cruciferous vegetables. At least one member of the *Ceutorhynchus* genus (*C. obstrictus*) is known to feed largely on cabbage. The insect is native to Europe and was introduced into the United States in 1922. It is controlled with insecticides. A complicated situation. ☪

## 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 • Gardening Tools • Household Tools • (circular saw and/or jig saw, various small tools) • Canoe or Kayak • 1/4 HP Motor • Seed Sorter • Guest Chairs • Native Trees (6 to 8 ft.) Basswood, maple, and oak (bur, white and swamp white oak) • Native Shrubs: Witchhazel • Woodland Plants: Grasses, ephemerals, ferns, etc. • Game or Trail Cameras**

**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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## Youth Gardens, Edibles, and Native Plants

By Mark Charles



Worthington Hooker School Gardens

The Amazing Common Ground Crew

### BUTTERFLY GARDENS 2013

A GREAT JOB TO ALL THE KIDS PLANTING IN THE RAIN !!! THANKS TO ALL WHO DONATED AND BOUGHT PLANTS! ALSO SPECIAL THANKS TO WHS CUSTODIANS, TO JOE BARBAROTTA (AFB/NIIPS), MS TONI'S ECHIOS TO OUR PARTNERS: WILDONES, RANGER DAN and New Haven Parks, AUDUBON CT and ♥♥♥ to COMMON GROUND to BROKEN ARROW NURSERY AND PRIDES CORNER FARMS,

Recent years have seen a groundswell of interest in localizing food sources and reducing reliance on far-distant suppliers. This has led to an increase in schoolyard and community gardens, usually focused on tomatoes, salad greens, and traditional Euro-American vegetables such as carrots and cucumbers.

Native plants can enrich this trend by providing educational and nutritional value. Two approaches have been used by recent SFE projects:

Adding native wildflowers and grasses close to food gardens can provide habitat for pollinators and thus increase yields. Awareness of pollinators may also inspire restraint in the use of pesticides.

Planting edibles with North American lineage can increase menu diversity. In many cases, such crops depend on native pollinators, so focus attention on pollinator-host plant relationships. In addition it introduces children to foods that may be less-familiar.

Declines in honeybee populations have received broad coverage in the press, but grass-roots responses are less well known. Adding a community of native plants close to a conventional vegetable garden will extend the availability of nectar and pollen, thus benefiting native and introduced pollinators. It will also attract butterflies and songbirds, thus adding to aesthetic interest.

There is some awareness of squash and pumpkins as plant families indigenous to the Americas. The heritage of



blueberries, raspberries and serviceberries is less widely known. Few people realize that these crops depend on specialized insects for pollination – insects that are also indigenous. The native bees that visit these plants are diverse and beautiful. In most cases, their size and other features make them especially well-matched to the blossom shape and pollen/nectar location. And, of course, their annual life-cycle is synchronized to a degree that seems almost miraculous. The addition of woody shrubs to a schoolyard adds options for design and permanence.

As an example, one of our 2012 SFE Grant Recipients, Four Winds of Indian Education from Chico, California planted a native plant garden of plants native to Northern California that will subsist solely off of rainwater with a little watering during dry seasons. Although their grant application was looking only for funding assistance for the native plant garden, there are other garden boxes on their site that are for growing organic fruits, vegetables and herbs to allow the students an opportunity to plant, grow and harvest their own food. Another example is the Highland High School in Highland, New York which received a SFE Grant also in 2012. Their grant application sought funding to expand their streamside learning area garden with the addition of more natives. They chose fruit bearing vines and bushes that suit the area and complement

*continued on page 18*

## Youth Gardens, Edibles and Native Plants

*continued from page 15*



*Native plants will be planted around the edge of the fenced in vegetable garden to attract pollinators. Highland high school in Highland, NY.*

the existing berry bushes, as well as some native flowers for their beauty.

And finally, the Gabriel Richard Catholic High School of Riverview, Michigan that received a SFE Grant just last year. It is their desire to landscape the area around the bell and the sign of the school with indigenous native flowering plants and grasses, especially to encourage birds and bees, which they feel are essential for the local crops to grow.

Children at McDole Elementary School in Kane County Illinois, included plants for pollinators in their native plant garden. They planted in the spring of 2012 with plants of local ecotype. They get excited seeing butterflies, beetles and bees visit the flowers.

Their teacher, Jeremy Berger, reported: "The kids loved planting live plants (rather than seeds.) They really took ownership of individual plants that they planted. Children have taken to checking and helping outside of school as well."

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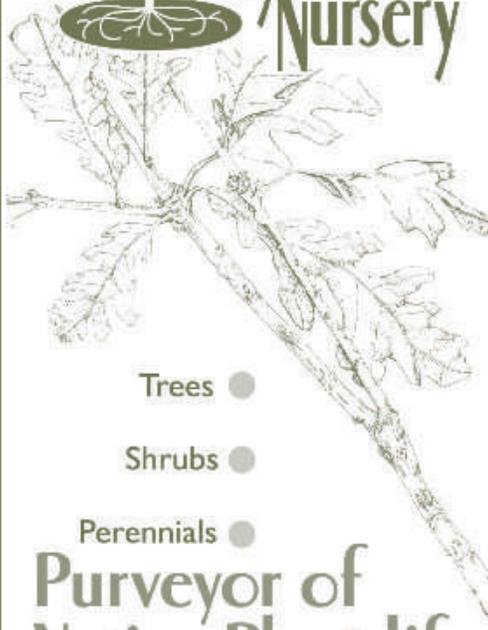
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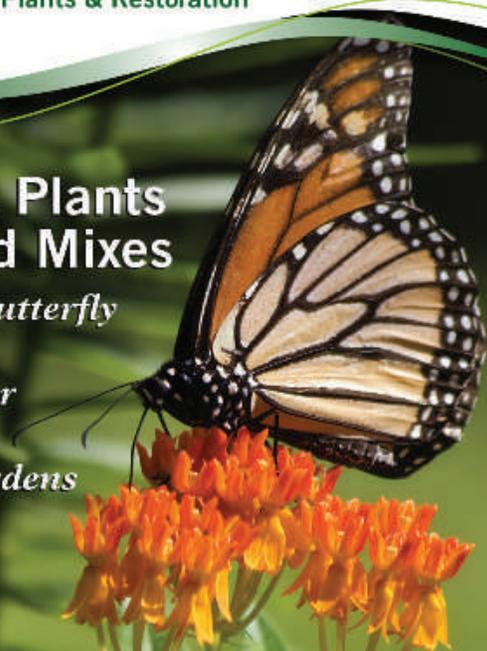
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# Mark Your Calendars

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first quarter national Board webconference

Jan 17, 2014 - Jan 18, 2014

2014 Science, Practice & Art of Restoring Native Ecosystems Conference, The Kellogg Center, East Lansing MI hosted by The Stewardship Network.

Jan 26, 2014 - 18th

Annual Toward Harmony with Nature Conference - native Plants and natural landscapes, Oshkosh Convention Center, Oshkosh WI, hosted by Wild Ones Fox Valley Area Chapter features Doug Tallamy as keynote along with six other experts on natural landscaping, native plant communities and wildlife.

March 2-3, 2014

*Becoming Native to the Place* Annual conference of the Wildflower Association of Michigan (WAM). Kellogg Center, Michigan State University. Keynote: Doug Tallamy, author of *Bringing Nature Home*. [www.wildflowersmich.org](http://www.wildflowersmich.org)

“Many have forgotten this truth, but you must not forget it. You remain responsible, forever, for what you have tamed.”

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