



**Honorary Lifetime Director  
Lorrie Otto**



*“If suburbia were landscaped with meadows, prairies, thickets, or forests, or combinations of these, then the water would sparkle, fish would be good to eat again, birds would sing and human spirits would soar.” Lorrie Otto*

**Lorrie Otto (1919 – 2009)**

**Founding Inspiration -- Wild Ones**

**Founder -- Natural-Landscaping Movement**

**Wisconsin Conservation Hall of Fame Inductee -- 1999**

Lorrie, a farmer’s daughter, was born near Madison, Wisconsin in 1919. Lorrie’s love of nature traces back to long, hot summers traipsing behind her father as he guided the horse-drawn plow, soil squished between her toes, studying unearthed grubs and worms.

Lorrie graduated from the University of Wisconsin – Madison, married Otto Owen (later divorced), and had two children while living in a Milwaukee suburb. Her Milwaukee neighborhood included a twenty-acre ravine called Fairy Chasm, a local play area for children in a natural setting. In the late 1950s, the area was slotted to be sold for development. Lorrie turned naturalist, crusader, and teacher, and was instrumental in The Nature Conservancy taking title of the twenty-acre property.

Lorrie’s environmental interest continued to grow as the use of DDT became more common in the later 1950s and 1960s. She began to campaign against its use and even carried a basket of dead robins into community meetings in Bayside, Wisconsin. At first, she was met with hostility as DDT was considered safe and was effective against elm blight and mosquitoes. It’s Lorrie’s vigilant crusade against DDT that led to its banning in Wisconsin in 1967, the first state to do so. In 1972, Lorrie was instrumental in the banning of DDT nationwide.

Lorrie continued to serve the community by teaching, lecturing, and acting as witness and advisor in legal matters. She was known for her many essays, speeches and radio talks promoting natural landscaping. She spoke at gatherings around the country and received many awards from organizations for her conservation work including the National Audubon Society and the National Wildlife Federation along with praise from former Vice President Al Gore. In 1999, she was inducted into the Wisconsin Conservation Hall of Fame.

Lorrie is the founder of the natural landscaping movement and taught others to view natural landscaping as a public good rather than as a health hazard. She was the founding inspiration for Wild Ones – Native Plants, Natural Landscaping. She also supported the military during World War II by joining WASP, the Women Airforce Service Pilots.

Lorrie often used the words of Chief Seattle when she spoke: *“We do not inherit the earth from our ancestors, but rather borrow it from our descendants.”*

\* Collaborated from writings of Carol Chew, Mandy Ploch, Bret Rappaport and The Seattle Times