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NATIVE PLANTS, NATURAL LANDSCAPES

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COVER PHOTO: Bob Grese
Rudbeckia hirta
provides color atop this garage green roof

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Promoting environmentally sound landscaping practices to preserve biodiversity through the preservation, restoration, and establishment of native plant communities.

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I have been told Lorrie Otto disliked being called the “founder” of Wild Ones. So I try to remember to use terms like “inspirational leader” for this

forward-thinking woman who, 40 years ago, started the initial momentum for Wild Ones. It was Lorrie’s natural landscaping workshop in Milwaukee that motivated nine people whose enthusiasm morphed into the nationwide 4,000-member organization we all love.

The Lorrie Otto Seeds for Education Grant Program

One of Lorrie’s key legacies is the Lorrie Otto Seeds for Education Grant Program, an annual grant competition started in 1996 and named in her honor. SFE awards small grants up to \$500 each for youth-centered projects that establish and maintain native plant landscape learning environments. Through 2017, the SFE program has received 719 applications and awarded 239 grants totaling \$72,010 to schools and other nonprofit organizations across the U.S.

Repeatedly, our members have said SFE is a favorite program. I see why – it supports children and students, involves the broader community, leaves something beautiful to enjoy for years, and teaches so many ecological concepts. To communities, Wild Ones’ help isn’t just about the money; it’s about the support and advice they receive. Wild Ones benefits, too, by getting its name out and spreading its message just a bit more.

Oct. 15 Deadline

I hope you are as proud of this program as I am, and I further hope that you will help spread the word about SFE and its Oct. 15 grant submission deadline. Reach out to teachers, nature centers, and other potential recipients. Tell your out-of-town friends and family about SFE, too, and direct them to apply on our [website](#).

Education by Seed

Perhaps I have SFE on the brain because I just submitted the 2018 program modifications. Or maybe I have too much time to think while weeding, but I’ve

realized that I just had my own education by seed. As a master gardener working the Q&A booth at the local farmers market, I’ve heard many questions about gardens that were not performing. In more than a few cases, we determined the reason was herbicide-contaminated compost. Knowing that, I’ve been very careful to make my own. After 3 years of carefully tending my pile, this spring I proudly spread my chemical-free, organic, homegrown and lovely compost in two of my three raised bed vegetable gardens. Two weeks later, what do I see but a healthy crop of grass growing in (yep) two of my three garden beds. Clearly, my compost temperature failed to reach the recommended 145 degrees. So, my own personal “education by seed” is to never – ever – put anything with seeds into my compost pile!

But gardening, like life, offers lessons. After an unanticipated 2 hours of weeding tiny grasses, I came to the conclusion that it’s best to keep one’s eye on the end goal (tasty beans and beets) and not to sweat the small stuff (like a grass infestation). This even applies to Wild Ones. We just spent the last 10 months weeding and pruning our expenses and processes. We have all the seeds we need, so it’s time to start planning for how we plant a “garden” of programs and outreach efforts to continue to grow Wild Ones’ reach and impact in the U.S.

To that end, I ask that you think about where you want your organization to go in the next few years. What programs should we emphasize? Can we be more effective with additional partnerships like the ones we have with Monarch Joint Venture and Monarch Watch? To paraphrase Lorrie Otto’s words, “How can we better reach the public to care about the Earth, healing it by removing lawns and finding alternatives to lawns? How do we show people how to do wonderful things on their own property to protect the environment? For, each little island, each corridor will help bring back the butterflies and birds.”

Give it some thought. I’ll be asking for direct input from those attending our Aug. 18-19 Wild Ones Annual Meeting and Chapter Leadership Conference, and in “open discussion” webinars that we’ll hold in September.

Janice





Those lazy hazy days of summer are in full swing at the WILD Center as this JOURNAL goes to press. Lots of sunshine, flowers, green plants, fireflies and bees

and, of course, in Wisconsin, great brats and beer. It's a perfect time to invite you to visit the WILD Center, our national headquarters, for a quick look and a "meet and greet" with the people who work here.

Our doors are open...

Every week visitors stop in at the WILD Center. Some are local residents who drive by several times before finally coming to "see what's here." Others are members who drop by just to say hello as they travel in the area, and many are people intrigued by native plants and natural landscapes who want to learn more. People even occasionally give us a wounded bird or turtle to "fix."

After this spring's prescribed burn, the WILD Center gardens are truly putting on a wonderful show. The Center continues as an excellent ambassador for introducing many new people to Wild Ones and engaging them in the natural landscaping movement.

Meet the staff...

Elaine Krizenesky (Pronounced Kriz-ě-n-eskē)

Elaine is manager of marketing and membership for the Wild Ones. Until a new executive director is hired, she is the only full-time staff member at the WILD Center. Elaine lives in the Neenah area with her two amazing sons, Justin, 19, and Ryan, 14, and her very patient husband, Troy, whom she met while working in finance for Kimberly Clark. Elaine received her MBA from the University of Arizona in marketing and management and has nonprofit experience as a trainer, marketer, manager and volunteer.

An avid gardener, Elaine is eagerly embracing natural landscaping and learning all she can about WILD Center native plants – even though some of those plants make her sneeze. She is equally giddy over WILD Center wildlife – bald eagles, ducks, geese, turkeys, deer and her favorite, cranes – that inhabit our Center grounds.

Elaine cannot roll her tongue or cross her eyes; however, what she does really well is answer questions with patience and humor. She is always ready with expert help when you need it, and working hard to improve national processes and procedures, all of which will greatly benefit chapters in the future. Please contact Elaine at administration@wildones.org for questions regarding chapter startups, chapter membership and officer changes, WILD Center photos, marketing materials and State of the Chapter submissions.

Joining Elaine at the WILD Center is **Mary Van Horn**. Mary joined Wild Ones' as a temporary employee in late spring. She works 15 hours a week responding to member requests, entering new or renewal memberships and updating the membership database. A lifelong Wisconsin native, Mary resides in the Neenah area with her family. She will be visiting South Korea this fall to visit her daughter who is teaching conversational English to elementary school children in Daejeon.

Thank-you...

I am privileged to experience first-hand the effort and care that Elaine and Mary give to their jobs. I am also impressed with the efforts of our talented JOURNAL editor, Barbara A. Schmitz. A University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh adjunct professor, Barb works with an equally talented volunteer editorial group and authors

to produce a premier publication that showcases the best of the natural landscaping movement and the accomplishments of WOs' members.

The staff may be small in number, but they are mighty in spirit and dedicated to providing the excellent service that WO chapters and members deserve. Assuming things go as planned, they will be joined by a talented, new executive director who will be selected by the Wild Ones national board this fall.

It has been my great pleasure to join you for a short time and to work with our national board, staff, chapters and members. You truly are the nicest members that I've worked with during my rather long nonprofit management tenure, and you are joined in an equally important, wonderful cause. My thanks to Janice and the board for this experience, and I look forward to seeing amazing things from Wild Ones in the future. 🌸

Pam



This crane family has made their home at the WILD Center.



Elaine Krizenesky, left, and Mary Van Horn

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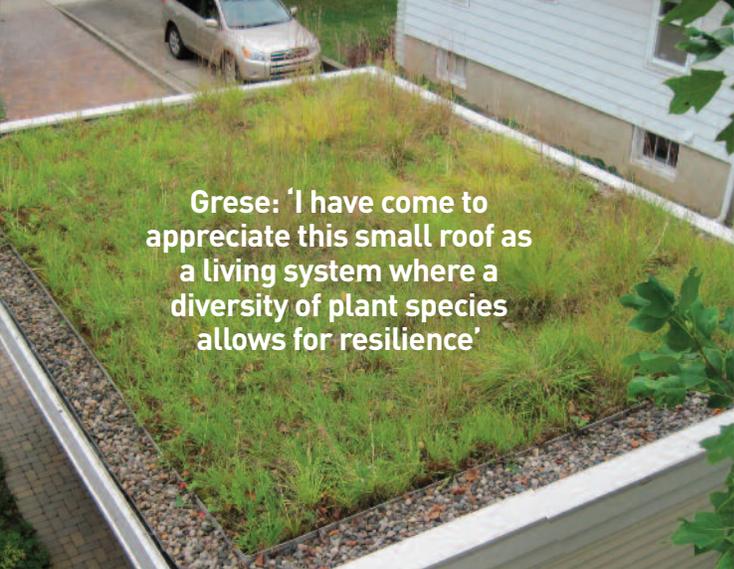
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Grese: 'I have come to appreciate this small roof as a living system where a diversity of plant species allows for resilience'

A green roof is typically a sandwich of different layers on top of the roof decking—a waterproofing membrane, insulation layer, drainage layer, root barrier and soil media.

All text and photos by Bob Grese

Green roofs featuring native plants provide a number of benefits. In addition to reducing storm water runoff, keeping interior spaces cooler in the summer and warmer in the winter, and generally extending the lifetime of roofs, using native plants on green roofs can help provide a sense of regional identity while also extending habitat for various insects, birds and other wildlife.

In 2004, when my wife and I were remodeling our house, we decided to include a green roof on our single car garage that sits in front of our house in Ann Arbor, Michigan. Our bedroom window looks down at the roof, and we wanted something more interesting than a conventional roof. In addition, I was interested in experimenting with a variety of native plants to see what might thrive on a green roof in

our particular climate. I asked our architect, Henry Ofiara, to design a roof with a soil depth of 4 to 5 inches, and I went

about exploring locally native species of plants that would tolerate the shallow soil of a green roof environment, adapt to both drought and saturated soil conditions, and be attractive throughout the year. I looked at lists of plants typically found on oak barrens in Michigan, on the thin-soiled limestone environments in the Great Lakes region known as alvars, and in other stony and shallow soiled glacial habitats found in our area.

While many of the prairie and oak openings grasses in our area frequently grow in areas where their roots reach down several feet, I also knew that they could grow in fairly shallow soils.

Hence, native grasses and sedges became key dominants in my initial list of plants, as well as creeping plants such as wild strawberry (*Fragaria virginiana*) and creeping potentilla (*Potentilla simplex*) that I knew would tolerate dry, nutrient-poor soils. I also wanted a mixture of forbs to provide color throughout the season and greater diversity in the range of plants. While my roof is in full sun for much of the day, I also get shade from nearby trees for at least part of the day, and so I also tried a few plants found typically in dry oak woods and woodland edges.

A green roof is typically a sandwich of different layers on top of the roof decking—a waterproofing membrane, insulation layer, drainage layer, root barrier, and soil media. The soil media is not standard soil, but rather a lightweight mix of sand, expanded clay, shale and a small amount of organic matter. Our green roof was designed to slope to one side of the garage ¼ inch per foot for drainage, and we included a 1 foot-wide buffer of washed river stone around the edges of the roof.

After construction was completed back in 2004, our green roof was planted with a combination of seeds and plugs. I had collected seed of several local grass and sedge species—Bicknell's sedge (*Carex bicknellii*), purple lovegrass (*Eragrostis spectabilis*), and little bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*)—and I spread the seed of those species before tacking down an erosion control blanket over the soil media. For the plugs, we cut small holes in the fabric and planted them. Shortly after planting, I had small seedlings emerge, and by late summer the young seedlings and plugs had begun to fill in. By the end of the second summer, we had a full carpet of grasses and sedges on the roof.

About three years after planting, I began to suspect that water was leaking through the membrane. Fortunately, I was able to lift the membrane at the downhill edge of the roof and feel in with my hand. Sure enough, there was standing water under the membrane. Over the next weeks, my wife and I worked hard to divide the now blocks of sod into approximate 18-inch squares and slide the plants down off the roof on a special ramp I built for the purpose. Over the next few months, we held the plants on our driveway while seeking out someone to repair the roof membrane. Initially, it was challenging to



Growing a native green roof

WANT TO learn more?

- [How to Install a Green Roof, This Old House](#)
- [Green Roofs for Healthy Cities](#) (This is a great resource for finding knowledgeable people and for calculating the cost savings of a green roof over time. Website includes "greensave" calculator tool.)
- [General Services Administration](#)
- [Toledo Grows](#)
- [Matthaei Botanical Gardens and Nichols Arboretum](#)
- [New York City Department of Parks & Recreation](#) (Includes green roof species)
- [Chicago Botanic Garden](#)



Rudbeckia hirta and various grasses provide color to the green roof.

ABOVE: *Allium cernuum* has been one of the toughest native plants on the roof, flourishing in even the most severe droughts.



The roof includes a 1-foot wide buffer of washed river stone.

find roofers in the area with any expertise in green roofs, but I finally found a contractor from Toledo who suggested sealing the roof with a hot-applied asphaltic mixture. After this brief interruption, my wife and I returned the plants to the roof without major losses and have been enjoying the green roof now for nearly 10 years since replacing the original membrane.

Other than this episode with a leak, we've been very happy with the green roof. It's like having a small prairie meadow outside our bedroom window with grasses that sway in the wind and change with the season. During the growing season, much of the rainfall is absorbed by the roof except for periods when we have torrential rains or early in the spring when the plants are not actively growing.

The dominant grasses and sedges on the roof are little bluestem, prairie dropseed (*Sporobolus heterolepis*) and Bicknell's sedge. Originally, I had planted purple lovegrass as well, but it gradually died out over time. I had also experimented with bottlebrush grass (*Elymus hystrix*), but it died out in one of the early droughts. I originally planted two additional sedges species—Pennsylvania sedge (*Carex pensylvanica*) and rosy sedge (*Carex rosea*). Both declined in overall numbers, but remain as a few specimens in the overall plant community.

Among the forbs planted on the roof, nodding wild onion (*Allium cernuum*) has been one of the toughest, flourishing in even the most severe droughts. Many other forbs have come and gone, some thriving for a few years but not really spreading. These include columbine (*Aquilegia canadensis*), sky blue aster (*Aster oolentangiensis*), lanceleaf coreopsis (*Coreopsis lanceolata*), wild geranium (*Geranium maculatum*), gay feather or rough blazingstar (*Liatris aspera*), dotted horse mint (*Monarda punctata*), mountain mint (*Pycnanthemum virginianum*), black-eyed susan (*Rudbeckia hirta*), stiff goldenrod (*Solidago rigida*), showy goldenrod (*Solidago speciosa*), and spiderwort (*Tradescantia ohiensis*). I occasionally collect seed from prairie plantings elsewhere in the yard and spread the seed on the roof, just to see what might come up and add to the diversity.

Early on, I wanted to try prickly pear cactus (*Opuntia humifusa*). It has persisted on the roof since our roof repair in 2007, but it hadn't bloomed at all until this year when its bright yellow flowers graced the roof.

I've found that creeping plants seem to be a life form that does well on green roofs like mine. Both creeping potentilla and wild strawberry have thrived. Both have spread, but not become overly aggressive on the roof. The beautiful red color of the wild strawberry leaves in the fall is a welcome contrast to grasses and birds and squirrels seem to find and devour the fruits before I can get to them. Both of these also seem to have the ability to go dormant in extreme droughts and spring back when it rains.

Another plant that has done surprisingly well is the common pussytoes (*Antennaria parlinii*). As a small creeping plant, it spreads along the ground often under other plants. Like wild strawberry and creeping potentilla, it also goes dormant in a drought, but greens up again when it rains.

In addition to all these other plants, moss has also become a dominant part of the green roof. I don't know the species of moss that I have, but they are especially vibrant in the early spring before other plants green up. Like some of the others, the mosses go dormant in droughts but are quick to green up again after rains.

Through my years of experimenting with my small green roof, I have come to appreciate many factors that contribute to its success. Because I was interested in learning how the plants would adapt to drought situations, I have not watered the roof except initially and only in the most extended drought situations. I have come to appreciate this small roof as a living system where a diversity of plant species allows for resilience. During wet years certain plants flourish, and during dry



The Greses have experimented with a variety of native plants to see what would thrive on their garage roof in Ann Arbor, Michigan. The soil depth is about 5 inches.



Sedges and *Fragaria virginiense* are on the edge of the roof.



RIGHT: Grasses and sedges are prominent on the Grese green proof.



A side view of the Grese green roof looks out to their vegetable garden.

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years other plants become more dominant. During extended drought years, some plants die back completely, but then come back from seeds in the soil. I've helped facilitate recovery by adding additional seeds from time to time.

Fortunately, weeds on my green roof have been relatively few. When I first planted the roof, my neighbors had some large Norway maple trees (*Acer platanoides*) and I had visions of hundreds of maple seedlings all across the roof. Fortunately, tree and shrub seedlings have not survived the shallow soils and extreme conditions. The two weed species I have most often are black medic (*Medicago lupulina*) and white clover (*Trifolium repens*). If I work to stay ahead of them, neither becomes a major problem. Other than the minor weeding and the occasional watering in extreme drought years, I have little maintenance. I do cut back the plants by hand in the early spring, which I like to think simulates the occasional fire or grazing these plants might have in the wild.

Over the years, my small green roof has been a tremendous source of satisfaction for my wife and me. It changes dramatically through the seasons whether covered by snow, turning various shades of ochre and brown in the fall, or greening up in early spring. It is a source of joy to look out our bedroom window each morning and see what's coming into bloom or to see robins or other birds gathering last year's grasses or bits of moss for their nests. When I climb up on the roof, I feel separated from the rest of the yard and neighborhood and immersed in some wild prairie remnant.



Grasses and sedges are prominent on the Grese green proof.

My only regret is that I wish we could have found a way to make the roof more visible to others.

As the grasses get tall each summer, they become more visible to passers-by as they look at our house from the street. For many folks not familiar with green roofs, it looks rather novel, and people frequently stop to ask questions. The only access to the roof is via a ladder, and this has limited visitors from fully appreciating the roof when I entertain groups of students or have included our yard on occasional garden tours. Of course, it becomes a true point of conversation when people have to climb a ladder to take a look at the roof. During a recent garden tour several years ago when we had about 800 visitors over the course of the day, waiting in line to climb the ladder and see the roof was one of our dominant attractions.

For those who think that sedums are the only plants capable of surviving on a green roof, I would argue that a diversity of native plants is much more satisfying and contributes much more to providing a regional sense of place. There does seem to be a threshold, however, where shallower soils less than 4 inches or so become limiting for many native plants. In contrast, the 4 or 5 inches of soil media on my roof seems to work perfectly fine. ❁

BOB GRESE is an honorary director of the Wild Ones, director of the University of Michigan's Matthaei Botanical Gardens and Nichols Arboretum and a professor of landscape architecture in the School for Environment and Sustainability where he is also the Theodore Roosevelt Chair of Ecosystem Management. He is the author of "Jens Jensen: Maker of Natural Parks and Gardens" (1992) and "The Native Landscape Reader" (2011).

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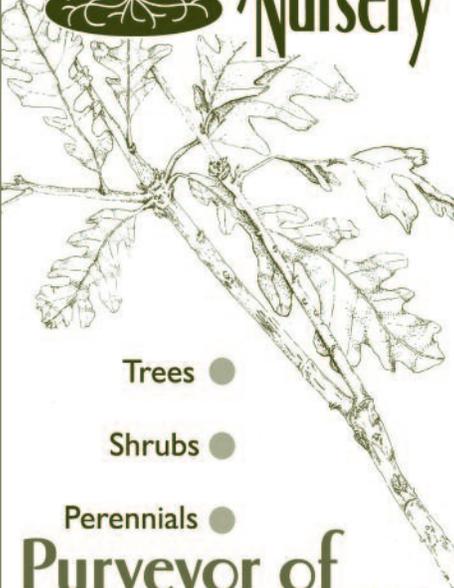
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By Barbara A. Schmitz

Todd Crail knows you don't need a big yard to make a big impact.

Crail, of Toledo, Ohio, has only one-fifth acre city lot, but that lot, named the Metal House Farm and Preserve, is brimming with gardens that represent different communities of plants, as well as food gardens, chickens and just enough turf grass to entertain people around the campfire.

A fish ecologist, Crail says he became interested in native plants about 15 years ago and started slowly adding some to his yard. "I became interested in native plants because I wanted to lessen my terrestrial footprint to benefit native fish and mussels that live in our streams," he explains. "Everything goes someplace, and usually, it's into a river first. You can't fix things in streams; you have to fix what's upstream."

Wanting to gain control of his hydrologic footprint, Crail set out to reduce the amount of lawn in place, and not use chemicals or fertilizers to do that. "I started with a couple of beds, and water resources was my primary interest. I didn't get interested in pollinators until later."

He moved to his current home 10 years ago, transplanting some of the plants from his old house to his new one, and adding more. Today, Crail has nine gardens based on light, soils and competition. "As a researcher, I'm interested in interactions between species and themed communities that work together," he said. "There is some level of organization in my gardens, but within the gardens themselves there is no organization, and that seems to work well."

For an example, he talks about his blue lobelia. "The seeds blew to one side of the house and took off. They seem to be happy there, so why fight them?" he asks.

Natives need to saturate a space, rather than have a plant here or there, Crail says. "I spend very little time on my gardens. I let them do what they do, but they somehow still look right."

With heavy clay soil, Crail said he had to haul in sand for sand-specific species. "I made modifications for water, soil and light, and assembled communities according to those topics. We basically filled in all the spaces we wanted to fill in, and the grass that was left was the grass that was left. Everything here is about storing water and reducing our footprint."

Crail says his yard is less about native plant gardens, and more about a philosophy for sustainability. "There have been great benefits to our food from having so many pollinators around," he explains, adding that his neighbors are enjoying his extremely fruitful tomatoes thanks to the number of bee visits the flowers get.

Despite that there is more than 150 different native plant species in his yard, there is one plant that fascinates him most — the carrion flower (*Smilax ecirrhata*).

Todd Crail's garden includes four types of milkweed — *Asclepias incarnata*, *A. sullivantii*, *A. syriaca* and *A. tuberosa*. Here a monarch caterpillar is about to munch down on an opening butterfly milkweed.

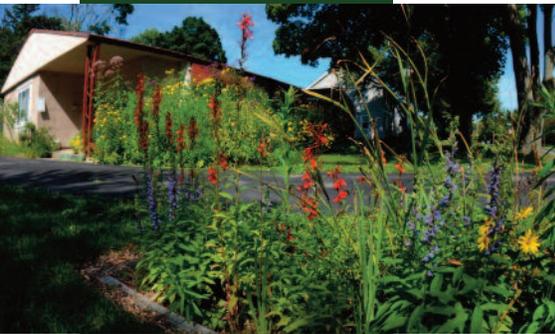


Member Garden

Todd Crail
Oak Openings Region (Ohio) chapter



Madeline Crail "takes a photo" of a Native Landscape Award in their yard.



Lobelia cardinalis and *Lobelia siphilitica* dominate one of Crail's native flowerbeds.



A patio is made of pervious pavement, or crushed stone that absorbs and regulates soil moisture.



Eryngium yuccifolium stands out with its unique shape in one of the Crail gardens.

EDITOR'S NOTE: We'd like to feature our members' native gardens, large or small, in upcoming issues. If you're interested in sharing your native garden, send three or four high-resolution photos, as well as a brief description, to write2us@sbcglobal.net. Please include your contact information so we can get in touch with you.

ALL PHOTOS: Todd Crail

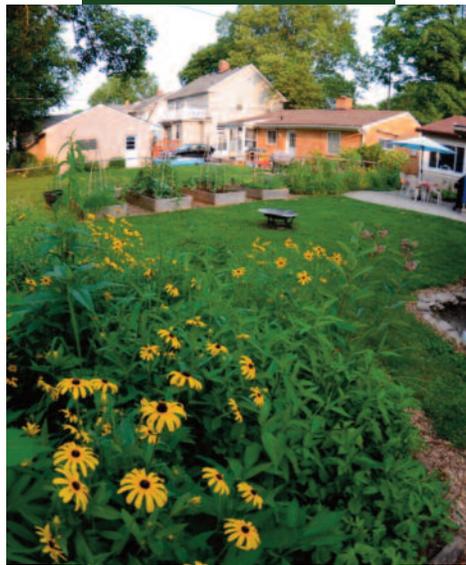
Why? “It’s ‘dead meat’ attraction for fly pollinators and the shape of its flowers,” Crail explains. He also enjoys Michigan lilies (*Lilium michiganense*) that dominate one of the rain gardens.

Crail doesn’t just enjoy native landscaping; he speaks to groups and tells them that natural landscaping is possible, even in small places. He uses Bret Rappaport’s BRASH acronym to stress important considerations when using native plants. (BRASH stands for Borders, Recognize the Rights of Others, Advertise, Start Small and Humanize.) “When you follow those principles, everyone is happy, including the neighbors,” he says.

Of those, the most important advice Crail gives others is to start small and not place your garden on the edge of your property. “Leave those borders,” he says. “Native gardens are the cultural pariah. Getting sanctimonious is not winning favors with other people, especially if they have common milkweed popping up in their grass.”

Crail has also done a lot of service learning with his University of Toledo environmental students, such as removing invasive buckthorn. In addition, *Hometown Habitat* featured Crail and his students who worked to restore habitat at Irwin Prairie State Nature Preserve.

Crail wishes all people would use native landscaping in their yards; the Earth would be better off if they did. But there are also other benefits to using native plants. “I enjoy having the plants here to photograph, as I can really get to know the ‘plant people,’” he says. “And with a 2-year-old daughter, it’s really nice to walk straight out the door into a nature preserve, even though we are square in an urban setting.” 🌸



Todd Crail’s yard includes more than 150 species native to Lucas County, Ohio.



Lilium michiganense are one of Todd Crail’s favorite native flowers. These dominate one of his rain gardens.

About the Yard

- It includes more than 150 species native to Lucas County, Ohio on a one-fifth acre city lot.
- Native gardens occupy about 40 percent of the lot, including the house, garage and driveway. All the plants come from a 60-mile radius of the home.
- The yard was featured on a recent Toledo Naturalist Association Garden Tour and Wild Ones Summer Garden Tour. The yard and home were also featured in the *Hometown Habitat* documentary.
 - The yard includes six raised vegetable and herb gardens, pervious pavement (crushed stone to absorb and regulate soil moisture), as well as rain gardens, woodlands, prairies, and a savanna garden.
- Just some plants included are horsetail (*Equisetum hyemale*), Royal fern (*Osmunda regalis*), white haneberry (*Actaea pachypoda*), wild columbine (*Aquilegia canadensis*), Jack-in-the-pulpit (*Arisaema triphyllum*), tall coreopsis (*Coreopsis tripteris*), flat-topped aster (*Doellingeria umbellata*), bottle gentian (*Gentiana andrewsii*), and swamp, Sullivant’s, common and butterfly milkweeds (*Asclepias incarnata*, *A. sullivantii*, *A. syriaca* and *A. tuberosa*).

Chapter creates Native Garden Awards

By Denise Gehring
Oak Openings Region Chapter

In 2012, the Oak Openings Region chapter established Native Landscape Awards. The awards have been presented annually at our year-end meeting and provide many benefits for our chapter.

The Oak Openings Native Landscape Awards recognize excellence in local native gardens for residential, nonprofit, public agency and business categories. Schools are included in the nonprofit or public categories.

Each year, Wild Ones members submit award nominations electronically; nominated native gardens or habitats can be member or non-member sites within the chapter membership area.

Here’s an overview of the criteria:

- Nominated gardens must be established for at least two years.
- The garden theme must be described.
- Judges will consider garden design, creativity and appearance during a brief site visit.
- The garden must contain at least 50 percent native species (local genotype preferred) and should appropriately represent the local eco-region(s).
- The application must include a statement of how invasives are managed, a list of native species and plant sources, three to five photos and a garden plan or sketch.

A three-person team with professional knowledge and experience evaluates nominations. The team also includes a non-voting award chair or board member. The chair coordinates the judging process, which includes arranging nominated garden visits, photographing sites and creating a brief PowerPoint of the winning gardens for the award presentation.

Winners receive a framed award certificate and matching garden sign. Honorable mention winners receive a certificate. The colorful Wild Ones graphic with monarch butterfly and native plants by Fox Valley member Joan Rudolf is featured with permission in these award materials.

In the summer, tours of the winning gardens are scheduled. To promote the awards, an article is written for the chapter newsletter and press releases with photos are sent to media in the region. Sometimes securing media coverage for native landscapes in December is out of synch for the news cycle. We hope to capture greater media coverage in summer/early fall when native plants are at their peak, and media representatives and our members can readily tour the winning gardens.

Examples of award-winning projects include a SFE preschool pollinator garden, a fire station rain garden, a member’s native shade garden and water feature, a 9-acre backyard prairie at the home of a university president, and an eco-region demonstration garden at the trailhead of a nature preserve.

We hope you’ll consider implementing chapter native landscape awards. Please share your experiences with us. If you have any questions or would like sample nomination and garden evaluation forms, email us at WildOnesOakOpeningsRegion@gmail.com.

By Kelly S. Cartwright

As a member of Wild Ones, you already know what conservation gardening means, although you may know it by a different name: ecofriendly landscaping, gardening for wildlife, pollinator-friendly yards, native landscaping and other terms. To me, conservation gardening is an umbrella term for practices that provide habitat, improve environmental quality, decrease the use of external resources, such as chemicals, energy and irrigation water, and allow us to be closer to nature in our everyday life.

As a biologist, I have been interested in the tangible benefits conservation gardening can provide wildlife and our surrounding ecosystems. More recently, I became interested in the human side of things: Who partakes in conservation gardening and why? My doctoral research examined this question, focusing on people who have certified their yard through a regional conservation gardening program. Participants in the study represented programs from the Midwest (Conservation@Home and Conserve Lake County, Illinois), the West Coast (Backyard Habitat Certification Program, Columbia Land Trust, Washington and Audubon Society of Portland, Oregon), and the East Coast (Certified Wildlife Habitat Program, Delaware Nature Society, Delaware and National Wildlife Federation). The results of my research provide a snapshot of the conservation gardening population and identify common characteristics and gaps in their makeup.

The average conservation gardener is female, 60 years old, has a high level of education (often graduate level), earns above-average income, volunteers and is a pet owner. In terms of employment, individuals were equally distributed between the categories of retired, homemakers and working full-time, including self-employment. Conservation gardeners are also active in outdoor



Loris Damerow of the Fox Valley Area Wild Ones chapter fits many of the characteristics of a conservation gardener. PHOTO: Donna VanBuecken

recreation. High participation levels were noted in gardening, bird watching and hiking, with moderate participation in cycling, camping and kayaking/canoeing. Few individuals identified as hunters or anglers. There is, of course, variability, but the trends for the above demographic categories were surprisingly similar in the populations examined.

Why do we as conservation gardeners do what we do? My underlying idea is that it is because we have a strong connection to nature. Using a series of instruments, designed to measure the relationship between people and nature, I was able to assess conservation gardeners' human-nature relationships on an emotional, cognitive, physical and motivational level. Across the instruments, individuals demonstrated a strong multi-faceted relationship with nature. People who participate in conservation gardening have a strong emotional connection to nature, are comfortable in nature, and see themselves as a part of nature, although they see a distinction between people and nature. Also, the motivation for environmental concern is due to other species and other people, as opposed to benefit for one's self. Conservation gardeners have a deep connection with nature and wildlife and demonstrate altruistic tendencies; their landscaping practices are a physical expression of these qualities.

Who are conservation gardeners?

Because of the similarity between populations located in Illinois, Delaware and Washington/Oregon, I believe the idea of being a conservation gardener is stronger than regional influences. The employment and basic demographic data were remarkably similar across populations, as were the results from the human-nature relationship instruments. However, the results were different from general populations; the strength of connection to nature was higher in conservation gardeners than other published studies of the general U.S. population and environmentally minded college individuals. In addition, the volunteer rate of conservation gardeners was 50 percent, or twice the U.S. average and did not decline with age, which is seen with the U.S. data. This may be a reflection of the altruistic tendencies of conservation gardeners.

So how can we use this information? It tells us that conservation gardening programs, at least those studied, have done a good job of reaching a certain part of the population. It also reveals that we need to work to recruit individuals from underrepresented populations such as males, and individuals of younger ages with diverse economic and educational backgrounds. A strong connection to nature and interests in outdoor recreation and volunteering were common traits across conservation gardeners in the study, so tapping into those elements in the surrounding community may be an avenue to explore. By reaching out to outdoor enthusiasts in hiking, cycling and kayaking/canoeing, programs may engage new individuals. Similarly, working with volunteer groups may introduce conservation gardening to individuals who are not aware this is even an option. These routes may also attract individuals of younger ages, but if not, developing programs that engage children, and subsequently their parents, may reach individuals in their 30s and early-40s, who were virtually nonexistent in the study.

How we manage our residential habitat makes a difference. Conservation gardeners provide habitat for our pollinators, birds and other wildlife species. We decrease soil runoff and improve water quality. We eliminate nonnative invasive species and decrease our use of detrimental chemicals. And ultimately, we find peace and enjoyment as we interact with nature in our yards. Expanding the population of people adopting environmentally friendly practices benefits both people and nature. Many conservation gardening programs have reached the early adopters and champions of conservation gardening; now we need to work to ensure the movement keeps growing. 🌱

KELLY S. CARTWRIGHT is member of the Lake-to-Prairie Chapter of Wild Ones in Illinois. She is a biology professor at the College of Lake County in Grayslake, Illinois, and is an avid birder, gardener and nature enthusiast. She and her dog, Cooper, enjoy spending time in their yard.

On June 13, Wild Ones **Blue Ridge** (Virginia) members visited Watermark Woods, a native plant nursery in Hamilton, for a presentation on “Native Plant Trivia.”

Greater Cincinnati (Ohio) members toured an in-progress woodland renovation on June 10, viewing strategies and stages of renovation ranging from 12 months to 25 years. A June 24 tour took members to a 5-acre wooded property featuring more than 200 native plants with hiking trails and two streams. Then, on July 9, members toured a yard where the owners transformed their half-acre lot into a native plants showcase where they raise and release monarch butterflies.

Door Peninsula (Wisconsin) Wild One members took part in a naturalist guided hike at The Ridges Sanctuary, a 1,600-acre preserve in Bailey’s Harbor.

Fox Valley Area and Green Bay (Wisconsin) chapters took part in a native plant rescue in Clintonville where the Wisconsin Department of Transportation was constructing a roundabout and a large variety of native woodland plants would have been destroyed.



The Fox Valley Area chapter of Wild Ones sold native plants and answered questions at their booth at Oshkosh’s Bird Fest. Here, volunteer Kristin Kauth answers questions about native landscaping for Linda VanderHeyden of Appleton. PHOTO: Barbara A. Schmitz

Mountain Laurel (Connecticut) hosted a program, “Bird of the Barn Island Salt Marsh,” featuring a hike

and presentation by biologist Gary Casabona of the U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service – Rhode Island. The focus was on salt marsh sparrow conservation, other migratory songbirds, wading birds and pollinator plants of the salt marsh.

Wild Ones Rock River Valley (Illinois) chapter held a members-only show me/help me event featuring visits to two members’ homes and a prairie located at Willowbrook Middle School in South Beloit, as well as a plant share. Their June program, “Gardening with Nature,” featured educator and naturalist Ray Wiggers, while Heather Holm spoke on “The Pollination of Native Plants” in July.

The **Tennessee Valley** (Tennessee) chapter of Wild Ones hosted a members-only hike at Picket CCC Memorial State Park, which is second to only the Great Smoky Mountains National Park in biodiversity in Tennessee. Led by Park Ranger Travis Bow, members saw sandstone cliffs, stone arches and rare plants.

West Cook (Illinois) members attended a screening of “Can you Dig This?” on June 29 at the Harambee Garden in Chicago. The award-winning film is from executive producer John Legend.

Milwaukee North and Menomonee (Wisconsin) chapter members toured Luther Park Cemetery in Muskego on July 22. The 0.6-acre site is an unplowed and ungrazed mesic prairie cemetery, which has been not only designated a natural area, but also a historic site since it contains the remains of the area’s first settler of European ancestry and of other local pioneers. The field trip was meant to educate and generate positive publicity for the cemetery since a group wants the site maintained as a “traditional” mowed cemetery. 🌻



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Dig a little

Healthy soil in the city is possible with some work

Text and photos by Cheryl Rice

Claims run amok of the curious and problematic things urban gardeners have found in city soils: building debris, scrap metal, glass, even parts of the kitchen sink — all basic artifacts of neglect and disregard buried in the matrix beneath our feet. For those who see grand potential in this underground world, these findings remind us the basics of a healthy soil can be elusive and challenging to cultivate. Let's chat about a couple basics then, those base concepts and characteristics that indicate the soil is alive or those things we need to foster to bring urban soils back to life.

Soil sampling

In my work with urban gardeners and growers I have always been surprised by the lack of soil sampling that happens. Not surprisingly, it is hard to write a prescription for recovery unless we know what is wrong. It is difficult to describe a soil's wellbeing if all we have done is observe the surface, barely turning over the top few inches. Soil sampling can do much for us, answering questions and offering some insight into its current potential. It can give us a snapshot of sorts, of where the soil stands currently. Are key things missing? What is present that can be a problem? What characteristics are we starting with?

Most gardening-focused soil samples look at micro and macronutrients — the biggies in the plant world that support seed germination, vegetative growth, flowering and fruiting. These are critical to beginning any sort of garden. However, keep in mind these results mean little without including pH and other basic soil chemical characteristics. Most labs cover this routinely and quite affordably. The labs often provide recommendations on what amount of nutrients are needed for success of particular plants as well. So simple, but yet so critical and many never test their soil, instead simply buying commercial fertilizer with a label that indicates its suitability for a crop of interest. Once I have persuaded a gardener to sample, however, they often find they have no need to buy fertilizer; their soils contain much of what they need already.

In urban and suburban areas we need to look further for more information on soil chemistry. Site history becomes a critical element. A knowledge of who occupied and utilized the soil formerly gives an incoming gardener an idea of other elements possibly present. Publicly available resources like city directories, Sanborn fire insurance maps and aerial photographs are great places to look for past occupants and



TOP: This is a typical garden tillage approach to tackling tough urban soils.

BOTTOM: Heavy equipment can make the job move faster, but can also cause soil compaction if you are not careful.



learn a lot

activities. These resources will help a gardener decide where and what to sample. It can explain areas of extreme compaction, areas of discoloration or areas where water disappears or refuses to soak in. Certain industries are notorious for certain contaminants: gas stations for fuel, dry cleaners for solvents and old railroads

for creosote. Once you know who was there, you can sample for what they tend to leave behind.

Give a solid look to those historical resources and then come up with a plan. Sample areas separately that appear different. Sample like areas together to reduce costs. Sample deep (6 inches or more) in areas you will have deep rooted plants, sample shallow for turf. Sample for lead around old building foundations and near transportation corridors like streets and sidewalks. Before you get started, learn what you can from what is there. Sample the soil; it's well worth the investment. You'll use every bit of your results to make better decisions in your garden.

Soil organic matter

Ah, the true elixir of urban soils, organic matter! It covers a multitude of past mishaps, neglect and outright abuse. Developing and maintaining organic matter is essential for establishing resilience in urban soils. Organic matter helps soil hold onto water, moderates high temperatures, sustains life in the soil, feeds your plants nutrients, and resists compaction.

But how do you do this? There are many ways: include perennial vegetation in your garden, annual crops that leave high levels of residue and cover crops or green manures; directly add compost; reduce tillage; mulch; and the list goes on! With all these possibilities, you will certainly find an option suited to your gardening style and inclination.

However, all these management practices take a little planning. Take cover crops, for example. Each plant species that can be used as a cover crop has different strengths. Radishes are great for addressing compaction. Its deep taproots break up tightly compressed soils and its large leaves provide some significant weed suppression on the surface. Once your soil samples tell you what your soil needs, you can select a cover crop that meets that need. Many cover crops take nitrogen from the atmosphere and place it in the soil to feed your next crop. Some can help

with soil erosion or pest control by sustaining predator insects. All have the potential of adding diversity to your garden and organic matter for your soil.

Years of study prove that reducing tillage keeps soil organic matter in place beneath the surface. Mulching and high residue crops protect the surface of the soil and add organic matter from the top. Portions of that mulch and residue end up as materials for the earthworms to collect and bring below the surface. Perennials and many native plants turn over much of their root mass every year, adding to the organic matter cycling. There is so much potential in each approach; try one and see what happens.

Soil microbial life

As I have taught about healthy soils I have found soil microbial life becomes more and more exciting. What I studied back in school was a tiny (no pun intended) drop in the bucket of what is now known about soil ecosystems. We can now measure their interactions, enzymes, protein production, how populations change over time, and a myriad of other metrics that give us a window into their world. Microbial interactions with plant root systems has become the basis of many horticultural industry best management practices; some crops just cannot be grown without their microbe companions. The further we probe we find they are so intimately connected with all other forms of life around them.

In a garden, the microbial community thrives on a variety of plants to collaborate with, organic matter to colonize and soil water to traverse. The greater the diversity of plant life you introduce to your garden, the greater the variety of microbial partners you encourage to join your garden. Crop diversity and rotation then become key to supporting microbial communities; think of a buffet that needs to feed a large and varied crowd. What will you cater as the garden host? What will all your miniature guests need? Go for the gusto and throw them a party!

Soil compaction

One of the challenges in urban soil health is compaction. We beat up soils in cities! Cars, construction equipment, foot traffic — you name it, and we dish it out. It takes very little to do a great deal of damage to soil structure. Studies have shown just two or three passes with typical construction equipment can turn topsoil into having many of the same characteristics as concrete. Urban gardeners inherit this scar material and can find the challenge formidable. I turn again to organic matter and some basic rehabilitation methods urban foresters and landscapers have begun to use to remedy and begin healing soil.

Start with the end in mind. What you are looking to do is give the soil a chance to rebound and regain structure. Begin with breaking up the compaction to a depth of about two feet. I encourage the use of motorized tools to keep your sanity and back intact. Add a well-cured compost, two or three inches worth, to that disturbed soil and mix well. Top your garden off with at least an inch of compost. Now you can begin again.



TOP: Some hands-on efforts to improve urban soil at a center city community center.

BOTTOM: Youth help to install a garden and learn about soil health.

Urban contaminants

I need to circle back and wrap up with chemical issues in the soil. I could not in good conscience write an urban soils article without addressing lead. Lead has been a sentinel of soil contaminants in urban environments. Our past mistakes and decisions come back to haunt us in our soil. Lead-based paint and lead remaining from car emissions accumulates

in our urban soils. Lead can move through neighborhoods and into areas we intend to grow, even after soils have been cleaned up. Exposure pathways are not just hand-to-mouth, but can be airborne as well. Children are uniquely susceptible to this exposure.

Cover your risks by avoiding corridors of transportation where lead is more likely to move into your garden. Create buffers by growing hip-height or higher hedges to prevent movement. Keep the soil pH in a lower range (less than 7) to make lead less available to plants. Adding compost does this affordably and efficiently. Keep plants in good physical shape; they tend to take up less lead when they are healthy. Permanent plant cover over contaminated soils helps reduce movement and exposure. Pick your favorites, get them established, and mulch where they do not fill in. Finally use a risk-based approach for deciding on how and where you will grow things. Avoid growing food where you know too much lead is present.

Healthy goals

Now that you know just enough about soil health to get thinking about that amazing material under foot, get busy and try taking a closer look at your soil. Sample your soil, ask yourself what you can be doing to help all the life that resides there prosper. Do your homework. Who was there before you? What clues did they leave for you in the soil? Find your urban artifacts and make a plan for a healthier soil future. Dig a little, learn a lot. 🌸

CHERYL RICE was born and raised in Toledo, Ohio and attended Miami University studying botany, geology and environmental sciences. Rice spent 2½ years doing graduate work at the Ohio State University in the Horticulture and Crop Sciences program where she worked on urban trees and their stress response. She has been with USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service as an urban conservationist in Northwest Ohio since 2007. While with NRCS, Rice has been working with the leadership of the Western Lake Erie Basin Partnership in implementing projects to protect and improve the water quality of Lake Erie. Urban conservation and watershed work has included community gardening, rain gardens, urban canopy replacement, storm water best management practices, peer training and NRCS conservation program support.

By Barbara A. Schmitz

They're been described as nightcrawlers on steroids. And while they may be amusing to watch as they wiggle and shake as you try to pick them up, they are downright frightening because of the damage they can do.

According to a Wisconsin DNR fact sheet, jumping worms change the soil in a negative way. They produce a unique, grainy soil that may keep plants from growing. In addition, jumping worms produce young (cocoon) without a mate, so just one worm can start a population. And the Midwest's cold winters aren't enough to kill them. The worm cocoons survive the cold and hatch in spring.

Native to Southeast Asia, jumping worms belong to the genus *Amyntas* and go by several names, including "crazy worms" or "Alabama jumpers." But they aren't the only invasive worm spreading across the Great Lakes Region. In fact, the region has no native worms since they were all destroyed during the last ice age, according to the June 2015 Wisconsin Natural Resources Magazine. And while introduced earthworms can cause problems — such as increasing erosion and rainwater runoff — jumping worms exacerbate the problems.

According to the Great Lakes Worm Watch, several Asian species of earthworms are already widespread on the East Coast. They are commonly found in compost and leaf mulch because they are very good composting worms. However, they have great potential for very destructive impacts in the ecology of native forests as well as some gardens. *Amyntas* has been implicated in the die-off of garden plants in several areas where they were accidentally introduced with a load of mulch brought to the site. In addition, invasive plants tend to dominate areas where invasive earthworms are also abundant, The Conversation reported.

The National Park System also reports that jumping worms are causing major problems in the Great Smoky Mountains. In some areas on the western side of the Smokies, the jumping worm population is so high there is almost no

JUMPING WORMS

change soil in a negative way

Want to learn more?
Check out these videos:

- National Science Foundation's Invasion of the Earth Worms!
- View jumping worms

leaf litter left. Without this food, native animals are disappearing, and the nutrients from decaying plants aren't there to build new soil.

How to recognize them?

- Their appearance: Smooth, glossy gray color. The clitellum (lighter colored band) is cloudy-white to gray, smooth and completely encircles their body. They can be 1.5 to 8 inches long.
- Their behavior: They thrash wildly and can shed their tails in defense.



The soil in this plant plug is grainy, dry and almost looks like coffee grounds. Plants may have difficulty growing in this type of soil, which jumping worms create. The unique look and feel of this soil is what we call the jumping worm's "soil signature."



Next to a pen, it is easy to see how jumping worms are smaller than your average nightcrawler.



Notice the grainy, dry soil this worm is with and the cloudy-white clitellum (lighter colored band) on its body. A jumping worm's clitellum goes completely around its body and is smooth to the body, not raised.

LEFT: The clitellum (lighter colored band) does not rise up above the rest of the jumping worm's body. It is smooth against the body, unlike European species of earthworms.

- What you won't see: You won't see just one; you won't see jumping worm adults until late June.

The cocoons, holding the unhatched baby worms, are tiny. You can't see them with just your eyes.

- Where they spend their time: They stay on the soil surface.

Officials aren't sure how they initially arrived, but jumping worms were first discovered in Wisconsin in fall 2013 in Madison. A year later, they were found in Appleton, which is near the WILD Center, according to a Fox 11 report. Today, they can be found in 20 Wisconsin counties. They have also been found in Illinois at the Chicago Botanic Garden and in DuPage County, according to the botanic garden website.

As with all invasive species, the goal is to minimize their spread. However, there are no good control measures, reports Cool Green Science, the conservation science blog of The Nature Conservancy. It says prevention is the most effective tactic if you live in the Upper Midwest.

The Wisconsin DNR suggests:

- If you see a writhing, snake-like earthworm in your backyard, report it to your state natural resources department. (In Wisconsin, you can email invasive.species@wi.gov to report sightings.)
- Educate yourself and others to recognize the jumping worm from the common nightcrawler using this identification card.
- Examine potted plants and gardening and landscaping materials for the presence of jumping worms. If you are doing landscaping and gardening work, be sure to clean your equipment and clothing to prevent transporting cocoons.
- If you buy compost, only buy from sources that heat the compost at appropriate temperatures and duration to reduce pathogens.

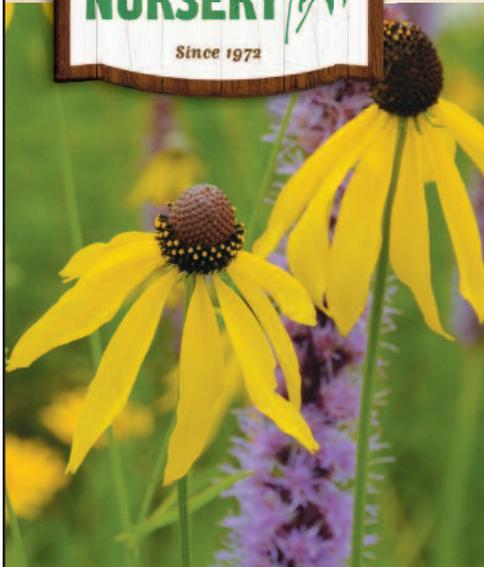
The jumping worm is already having a huge impact on plant sales, and could also impact plant rescues. In Madison, Wisconsin, to minimize the spread of this invasive species, many garden clubs are suspending sales that include plants dug from members' gardens. In addition, Olbrich Botanical Gardens has indefinitely suspended its leaf mulch sale, according to the city website. 🌸

ALL PHOTOS: WDNR



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Annual meeting, leadership conference

By Karen Syverson



The 2017 Wild Ones Annual Meeting and Chapter Leadership Conference will be held Aug. 19 at Seno K/RLT (Kenosha/Racine Land Trust) Conservancy. Located near Lake Geneva in southeastern Wisconsin, meetings will be held at Seno's picturesque, rustic barn, which has been converted for education and event space.

Seno is located at 3606 Dyer Lake Road, Burlington.

The day will be filled with interesting speakers, engaging activities and an opportunity to meet and talk with chapter leaders from around the United States. The 2017 conference theme, "Root to Rise," is inspired by the yoga practice of gaining strength to rise and grow from firmly established roots. Our goal is to celebrate the roots of our organization and rise to meet the challenges of the future.

Here is the line-up for Saturday's event:

- 7:30 a.m.** Yoga or meditation on the prairie
- 8:15 a.m.** Registration
- 9-9:30 a.m.** "Welcome to Seno," by Nan Calvert, director
- 9:30-10:30 a.m.** "Importance of Planting Local Ecotypes," by Kelsay Shaw, Possibility Place Nursery
- 10:30-10:45 a.m.** Break
- 10:45 a.m.** Roundtable discussions with chapter leaders
- 11:45 a.m.** "Walk About" Seno
- Noon** Sandwich buffet luncheon
- 1-2 p.m.** Wild Ones 2017 Annual Meeting. All Wild Ones members may attend the annual meeting without registering for the rest of the event.
- 2-2:15 p.m.** Break
- 2:15 p.m.** "Insects on the Prairie," by Entomologist Rick Wadleigh
- 3:15 p.m.** "Citizen Science and Community Outreach," by Susan Carpenter, University of Wisconsin-Madison Arboretum
- 4:15 p.m.** Interactive discussion with board and chapter leaders
- 5 p.m.** Music and social hour. Refreshments available
- 5:30 p.m.** Wisconsin-style picnic dinner with vegetarian options
- 7-8 p.m.** Film or special activity

Register online for the conference and annual meeting by Aug. 9. The \$75 registration fee includes lunch and dinner.

In addition, at 1 p.m. Aug. 18, the National Board will hold its August meeting at Seno, followed at 3:30 p.m. by a facilitated workshop for the board. Chapter leaders, especially those interested in board service, are welcome to attend the board meeting, and there is no registration fee for Friday. Directors will go out for dinner at a Lake Geneva restaurant, and each person will pay for his or her own meal. To better plan reservations, please email secretary@wildones.org if you will be attending the board meeting and wish to join the board for dinner at 6 p.m.

Sponsors for the leadership conference and annual meeting include Ernst Seeds, Landmasters Landscape Design & Construction, Prairie Nursery and Wild Birds Unlimited of Green Bay.

We hope to see as many of you as possible for this event!

KAREN SYVERSON is secretary for the National Board of Directors for the Wild Ones. She is a member of the Fox Valley Area chapter. **NAN CALVERT** is also a member of the Wild Ones National Board, and is director of the Seno K/RLT (Kenosha/ Racine Land Trust) Conservancy where the conference and meetings will be held.



Register by August 9



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FLORIDA

The Institute for Regional Conservation in Delray Beach has developed [Natives For Your Neighborhood](#), a free online tool, to help residents plan their residential landscaping around native plants. Type in your zip code or search by county to get a list of the cultivated native plants best suited for that area. The website advises native plantings for the state's east and west coasts and the Keys.

ILLINOIS

The Illinois Department of Transportation told its maintenance workers to mow no more than 15-feet away from the roadway to keep milkweed growing since the state's official insect, the monarch butterfly, needs it to survive.

The DOT adjusted its mowing routine along state highways during the spring and summer as part of its overall effort to encourage green and sustainable practices in all its programs and projects, and to help re-establish types of plants that are food sources for bees, butterflies and other insects that are native to Illinois.

NORTH CAROLINA

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working on recovery plans in western North Carolina and other states to protect the rusty patched bumblebee, which became the first bee to be placed on the federal Endangered Species List.

Over the summer, staff looked for still-existing populations of the bee. The last known record of the species was in the early 2000s in Great Smoky Mountains National Park, according to the USFWS.

The Service will also be working with partners to create habitats for the rusty patched bumble bee and other pollinators that are at risk of becoming endangered.

OREGON

Vigor Shipyard has partnered with the University of Portland to create habitat for the monarch butterfly. The three- to five-year project calls for planting thousands of milkweed and other native plants on 2.25 acres of the shipyard property.

WISCONSIN

Landowners who want to boost wildlife habitat on their property — whether a city lot or hundreds of acres — have a new resource to help them choose native plants that can thrive where they live, benefit a wide variety of wildlife and promote water quality.

[“Wisconsin's Native Plants: Recommendations for landscaping and natural community restoration”](#) was developed by Amy Staffen and Lucas Olson, conservation biologists with the Department of Natural Resources, to help people boost habitat on their property by adding native plants that have historically thrived and evolved in the area where they live. 🌸

Connecticut nature center adds bioswale thanks to SFE grant

ANSONIA, CONNECTICUT — Employees, volunteers and students at [Ansonia Nature and Recreation Center](#) planted native plants for an Earth Day celebration in April 2016, thanks to funding through a Wild Ones grant program, *Lorrie Otto Seeds for Education*.

Director Alison Rubelmann said the [bioswale](#) area is “helping children learn about native plants that have existed for thousands of years, while also getting a close-up view of butterflies, songbirds and other creatures that use the plants for food or shelter.”

In the SFE first-year report, Rubelmann wrote: “The native edible and medicinal garden has generated a lot of enthusiasm from our program participants. We not only take them to the garden to identify plants, but we also smell and taste them. The gardens are not only functional, but they are also beautiful and attract a lot of native wildlife.”

During 2017, the nature center continued to work on its educational area, adding more plants to fill in holes or replacing plants that were destroyed by browsing or drought. In addition, they constructed education station kiosks next to the gardens so they are able to provide information for teachers and visitors about native species, field habitats and more. Additional educational resources are also available online.

Wild Ones' Seeds for Education grants include technical assistance and advice from local experts. Earth Tones LLC, a local native plant nursery, partnered with Wild Ones to supply plants at a discount. 🌸



Children, employees and volunteers helped plant the bioswale, thanks to Wild Ones SFE funding.

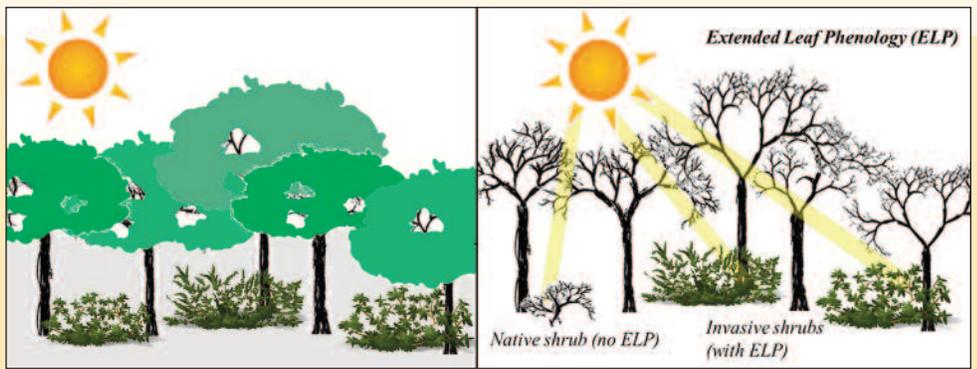


The finished bioswale at Ansonia Nature and Recreation Center is used to educate people about natural landscaping.

Shady Invaders:

Invasive shrubs can overcome native ones in eastern deciduous forests

Text, photos, graphics courtesy Erynn Maynard



Picture a bird flitting about in search of insects. When danger approaches it swiftly retreats and hides. In contrast, plants are rooted in place. Being stationary in space, timing becomes paramount for success. For example, young leaves tend to be more delicious and less defended than older leaves. Some plants have been found to leaf out much earlier than when their insect herbivores emerge in the spring, giving leaves time to grow and develop defenses, according to a [2006 leaf emergence study](#). Yet the benefits of early leaf production have to be balanced with the risks of a late frost and leaf damage. Recurring or cyclic life history events such as breaking leaf buds, flowering, fruiting, fall color change and senescence are called **phenophases**. How phenophase timing varies across a landscape and through years is called phenology.

You can think of phenology as how tuned a species is to its surroundings. As such, phenology is one of the most important drivers of the success of a species. In fact, invasive species that become highly successful in a new range frequently exhibit novel phenology compared to the communities that they invade. For example, invasive grasses in western

ABOVE: The left panel represents the forest during the growing season. Extended leaf phenology becomes apparent at the extreme ends of the growing season — early spring and late fall — when most other species have lost their foliage, as shown in the right panel.

rangelands green up earlier than native species, taking up space before natives can.

If you spend time outside in the eastern U.S., you've probably noticed shrubs creeping into forest stands. You may have also observed that these invasive shrubs, such as honeysuckles (*Lonicera maackii*, *L. morrowii*, *L. tartarica*), Japanese barberry (*Berberis thunbergii*), privets (*Ligustrum spp.*), and burning bush (*Euonymus alatus*), tend to be green much longer than native shrubs in the understory. In central Pennsylvania, I track the phenology of eight invasive and five native shrub species. The invasives have leaves about 28 days earlier in the spring and keep leaves about 27 days later in the fall compared to native shrubs. Earlier leaf emergence and/or later leaf senescence of one plant compared to another is called extended leaf phenology.

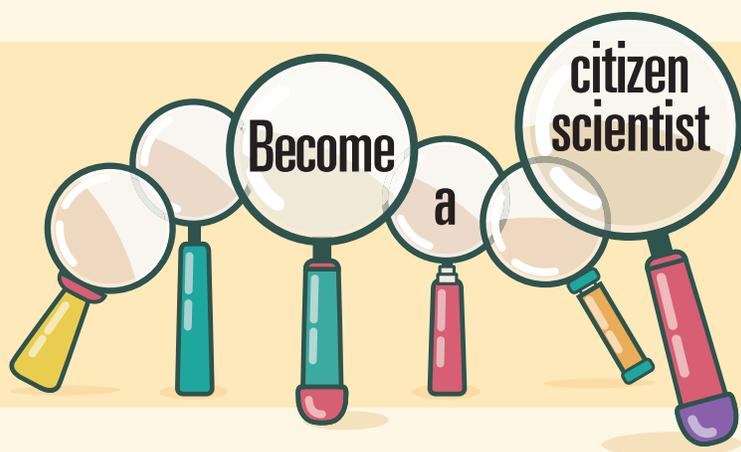
Why does ELP of the shrub layer matter in eastern deciduous forests? To start, there is more light available in the understory of deciduous forests in early spring and late fall when the overstory canopy is leafless. In studies in [1989](#),

[2007](#) and [2011](#), this has been shown to provide significantly more food through photosynthesis for some invasive shrubs when compared to natives. Beyond this direct benefit to the invasive shrubs, ELP has the potential to impact native ecosystems through novel shading.

Most of the plant diversity in an eastern deciduous forest occurs in the herbaceous layer, and many native herbaceous species have ELP compared to the overstory canopy. Spring ephemerals are a group of herbaceous plants that are specifically adapted to green up, flower and die back while more light is available prior to the canopy layer leaf-on.

Additionally, many tree seedlings and saplings have ELP compared to mature individuals of the same species in the overstory, an adaptation helping young trees survive in their parents' shade, according to research by [Carol K. Augspurger](#).

So, it's not surprising that the presence of invasive shrubs with ELP, which creates novel shade in the early spring and late fall, has been associated with decreased native herbaceous diversity



WHAT?

The [Shady Invaders](#) Citizen Science campaign studies the difference in leaf phenology (when plants have leaves) between some common invasive and native shrubs.

WHY?

To better understand how invasive shrubs impact eastern forests.

WHO?

You! As part of Erynn Maynard's Ph.D. project, she is recruiting citizen scientists to record observations in nearby wooded areas.

HOW?

- Find a forested site near you that you will enjoy visiting *at least* once a week in spring and fall when things are changing fastest. The site should have at least one species of native shrub and one species of invasive shrub from the [species list](#).
- [Sign up](#) for an account with Nature's Notebook. This is where you will enter [your site](#) and [plant information](#), [print prepared data sheets](#), and [log your data](#). There's even an [app!](#)



LEFT: Mapleleaf viburnum (*Viburnum acerifolium*), exhibits fall color prior to the adjacent invasive privet (*Ligustrum obtusifolium*).

RIGHT: The native shrub, spicebush (*Lindera benzoin*), with yellow fall color surrounded by Japanese barberry (*Berberis thunbergii*) that still has deep green foliage as well as red fruits.

BELOW, LEFT: Leaf emergence for eight native and seven invasive shrub species across latitude based on 506 observations. Latitude and nativity account for 99.1 percent of the variation in leaf emergence date. The lines represent the linear relationship between leaf emergence and latitude by nativity (native, green; invasive, purple). The shaded regions represent the 95 percent credible intervals surrounding the modeled relationships. No overlap between the credible intervals indicates a significant difference with greater than 95 percent confidence.

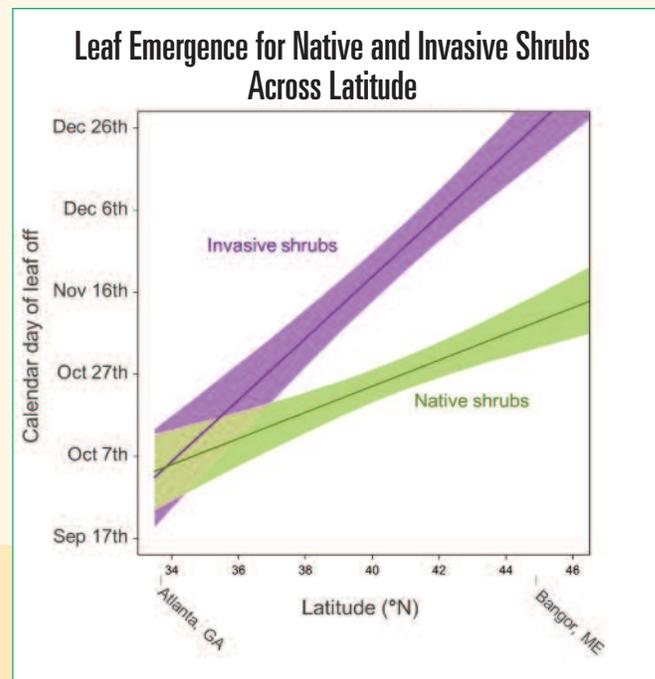
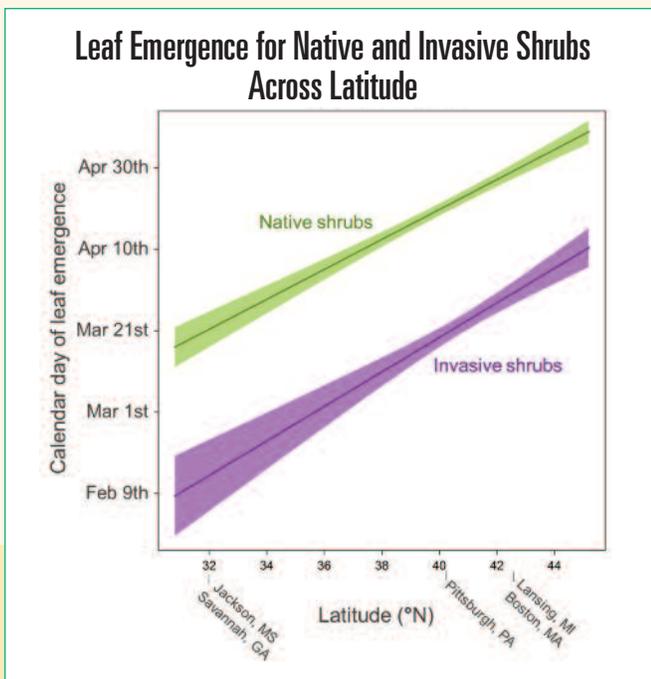
BELOW, RIGHT: Leaf senescence for eight native and seven invasive shrub species across latitude based on 358 observations. Latitude and nativity account for 97.4 percent of the variation in leaf senescence date. The lines represent the linear relationship between leaf senescence and latitude by nativity (native, green; invasive, purple). The shaded regions represent the 95 percent credible intervals surrounding the modeled relationships. Where credible intervals overlap, we cannot say with confidence that there is a significant difference between native and invasive leaf senescence.



Spicebush (*Lindera benzoin*) is a native shrub that is just breaking buds on the left, while an invasive shrub, Morrow's honeysuckle (*Lonicera morrowii*), has well-developed leaves on the right.

Furthermore, the cues themselves, including day length, temperature and precipitation, vary through space and between years. So, is the difference in leaf phenology between an invasive Amur honeysuckle and a native spicebush I observe in central Pennsylvania the same difference seen in North Carolina or Missouri? How do these differences vary for other native and invasive shrub species? Does research on the impacts of ELP at one place apply across their introduced range?

To address these questions, I teamed up with Citizen Scientists through the [USA National Phenology Network](#). Our citizen science campaign, [Shady](#)



The more insidious impacts of shady invaders

Some of the impacts of invasive shrubs may not be as direct as the competition for light. The novel shading produced by Amur honeysuckle (*L. maackii*), for example, has been found to reduce the pollination and seed set of native herbaceous species. It turns out that many pollinators don't like the cooler, darker conditions created under honeysuckle's canopy, according to a [2010 study](#).

In contrast to pollinators, small mammals such as mice and chipmunks prefer the

novel shading and protective cover produced by these shrubs. Small mammals use honeysuckle as habitat and preferentially browse nearby natives in the understory, maintaining low native diversity, a [2015 study](#) showed. Ecologists call this "apparent competition." In other words, it appears as if honeysuckle is a strong competitor, better at taking advantage of light and soil resources, when in actuality its success may at least partially be the result of indirect mechanisms.

Invaders, began in 2016. Despite only 1½ seasons of data, we already have some interesting preliminary results. Invasive species leaf emergence is significantly earlier than natives across latitude. At the mean latitude (~40.5°N), invasive leaves emerge on average 32 days earlier than natives, with a 1.9 day decrease in the difference for every 1°N.

For leaf senescence of 2016, the difference between natives and invasives increases dramatically as you move north. While native leaves senesce about 29 days earlier at the mean latitude (~40.5°N), there is no significant difference south of about 37°N. This may have resulted from drier-than-normal conditions in summer and fall of 2016 that were exacerbated in the south by hotter temperatures. So, in 2016, studies on the impacts of fall ELP of invasive shrubs in the northern range would not be reflected in the southern range.

With additional years and growing participation from citizen scientists, we can better understand the wider applicability of local studies. What else can we learn from these observations? There is evidence that native woody species are less responsive to warming spring temperatures than invasive woody species in terms of leaf phenology. Our growing dataset could help predict changes to ELP with climate change. Additionally, we are exploring species-level phenology to understand if certain species have greater ELP in different areas to help target research and management efforts. Finally, the campaign itself raises awareness about ornamental plant escape and invasion. Even while I'm out collecting data, curious hikers are surprised to learn that invasive shrubs were, and still are, intentionally introduced. 🌿

ERYNN MAYNARD is a Ph.D. candidate in ecology at Penn State. She earned her master's degree in biology from the University of Mississippi at Oxford and earned bachelor degrees in both environmental science and biology from the University of Buffalo (SUNY).

The president and longtime member of the Winnebago Audubon Society received the National Audubon Society's top award this spring.

Janet Wissink, of Pickett, Wisconsin, became the second person from her local chapter, behind only Anita Carpenter, to receive the Great Egret Award from the national organization. The Great Egret Award is given to individuals who have made significant, long-term contributions to Audubon and to conservation in pursuit of the Audubon mission.

To be eligible for the top award, individuals must have been working for the Audubon mission "in the trenches" for 20 years or more, either as a volunteer or staff member, and must have made significant contributions at one or more levels within the local chapter, state, regional or national level.

The Great Egret Award certificate states that the award was given to Wissink for her 35 years of outstanding service to the Winnebago Audubon chapter. It reads: "A charter member, Janet has served almost continuously as a board member and as secretary, treasurer, vice president and several terms as president. For the past 18 years, she has used her artistic and creative talents to edit and produce an informative, well-designed, professional-looking chapter newsletter, "The Lake Flyer." With her enthusiasm for the natural world, excellent leadership skills and attention to detail, Janet is the sparkplug and glue that keeps Winnebago Audubon moving forward."

Wissink said she has been a bird watcher since she was a child. "I would go with my parents on a drive or a

picnic after housecleaning on Saturday morning, and I was always interested in the birds we saw," she said. When the Audubon chapter was forming in the early 80s, she went to a meeting and joined.

Throughout the years, her interest has grown from birds to all forms of life in the outdoors. "Bird watching isn't just bird watching," Wissink said. "It is looking at the plants, the animals, the butterflies and bees. I came to appreciate the relationship between all plants and animals and realize how important that is. I want to share that appreciation with young people so that

there continues to be people who will help preserve nature and the environment."

Wissink said she is most proud of the Winnebago Audubon Society's focus on educating children. "We do

more hands-on programming specifically for children today," she said. "We want children to realize how interesting and fun nature can be, and to respect and care for our environment."

Some of their most popular children's programming has been about monarchs, frogs and raptors. Every year the chapter sponsors these types of programs in area schools, in addition to

year-round activities that are open to the public.

Along the way, Wissink met Katherine Rill, a botanist and birder who became one of her mentors. As Rill taught Wissink more about native plants, Wissink joined and also became involved in the Fox Valley Area chapter of Wild Ones. In addition, she is chairwoman of the planning committee for Oshkosh Bird Fest. 🌿

Fox Valley Area member receives National Audubon Society's top award



Janet Wissink received the Great Egret Award from the National Audubon Society in April. The award includes a certificate signed by National Audubon Society president and chairman of the Audubon Board of Directors.

In addition to being stunningly beautiful ...



Symphotrichum oblongifolium
[Aromatic Aster]

PHOTO: Pat Hill



Symphotrichum ericoides
[Heath Aster]

PHOTO: Cathie Bird, Flickr

“Asters, like prophets, are without honor in their own country,” said Louise Wilder Beebe, an American gardening writer whose books are considered classics of their era. Known as “Michaelmas daisies” because they bloom around St. Michaelmas Day on Sept. 29, asters are held in high esteem by English and other European gardeners, while we in the United States disdain them as common weeds.

Asters: much more than 'common weeds'

By Pat Hill

Our native asters, however, are the last act in our vast prairie drama and their purple, lavender, azure, mauve and white palette is dazzling. Aster cultivars, such as ‘Purple Dome,’ ‘Alma Potschke’ and ‘October Skies’ are usually available at garden centers. But you will have to look further for the equally beautiful straight species asters, which are available at native plant nurseries and through native plant catalogs or, even better, from friends.

Five asters dominate my prairie garden in fall:

- Smooth Blue Aster
- Sky Blue Aster
- New England Aster
- Heath Aster
- Aromatic Aster

Smooth Blue Aster (*Symphotrichum laeve*) is actually lavender, not blue, but it does have smooth leaves and stems. Its dark green leaves are sessile, almost clasping the stems, a characteristic that makes this plant easy to identify. In gardens, it grows up to 4-feet tall in a narrow, upright fashion, but it grows only 1-2-feet in densely crowded prairies.

I planted *Sky Blue Aster* in my garden many years ago, but it disappeared and I’ve never replaced it. *Sky Blue Aster* used to have a beautiful scientific name – *Aster azureus*. However, it has been renamed *Symphotrichum ooleniensiense*.

Pat Hill’s home in September is ablaze with color from various asters. PHOTO: Pat Hill



ASTER PHOTO:
Wikimedia
Commons

The most colorful and best known of the species asters is **New England Aster** (*Symphyotrichum novae-angliae*), with its intense purple or occasionally rosy flowers that bloom from early September to the end of October. An upright, multi-stemmed plant, it grows 2-4-feet tall on leafy stems and its hairy leaves hug the stems. It is a common resident of wet and mesic prairies, calcareous fens, moist meadows and conversely, dry pastures, roadsides and railroad tracks. It also grows well in clay soils.

Heath Aster (*Symphyotrichum ericoides*), named for its narrow heath-like leaves, grows 2½-3-feet tall and around; its elongated clusters of tiny, white stars begin to bloom mid-September and carry on through mid-October. Common in remnants of dry prairie and along railroad right of ways, it can also be found in moister prairies, according to “*Plants of the Chicago Region.*”

Aromatic Aster (*Symphyotrichum oblongifolium*) forms a 2-3-feet soft, billowing mound covered with 1½-inch daisies with pointed, deep violet rays and yellow discs (turning to burgundy with age) that bloom over a long period of time, from mid-September through the end of October. Indigenous to hill prairies, it is rare in the wild; nevertheless, it flourishes in my garden, spreading quickly by rhizomes and seeds. It does, however, need a well-drained situation – it won’t survive in clay soil.

Cut back tall asters by one-half at the end of June and again at the end of July to make them branch out and inhibit their tall growth somewhat. ❀

PAT HILL is a Wild Ones member with the Northern Kane County chapter in Illinois, writes a blog, *Natural Midwest Garden*, and is author of the book, “*Design Your Natural Midwest Garden.*”



Symphyotrichum ooleniangiense [Sky Blue Aster] pairs up beautifully with the autumn copper-colored Little Bluestem at Morton Arboretum. PHOTO: Pat Hill



Symphyotrichum laeve [Smooth Blue Aster] PHOTO: Pat Hill



Monarchs nectar on **Symphyotrichum novae-angliae**. [New England Aster] PHOTO: Pat Hill



A buckeye on **Symphyotrichum oblongifolium** [Aromatic Aster]. PHOTO: Pat Hill

... asters are also butterfly magnets.



A downed tree damaged a bridge on the WILD Center property.

WILD CENTER UPDATE

Text and photos by Elaine Krizenesky

A bridge constructed by a Boy Scout as part of his Eagle Scout project last year was damaged recently when a tree fell on it during a storm. The WILD Center bridge was built to help us get our lawnmower across a ditch without getting stuck. We are trying to locate a Boy Scout, Girl Scout, Venture Crew, or pack of beavers in need of a service project to remove the offending tree. We are also working on connecting with the troop that constructed the bridge to see if they would like to repair the bridge as a community service activity.

• • • • •

We are currently evaluating our merchandise options, and will be unveiling potential items at the Aug. 19 Annual Meeting and Chapter Leadership Conference so members can choose their favorites.

• • • • •

Grounds consultant Dave Edwards discovered an uncommon red trillium on the WILD Center grounds. Unfortunately, I heard about it at the end of its blooming cycle, but I’ll be watching for it in April 2018, when it should be ready to show its beauty again!

• • • • •

When summer arrived in northeast Wisconsin, birds, bees and bugs became regular visitors to the WILD Center. But perhaps our most regular guest was Mrs. Turkey. She had no qualms about strutting right across the walkway in the late morning. Someday soon I expect her to come up the ramp and peck at the door to come in and see what’s new at the WILD Center! ❀

ELAINE KRIZENESKY is the manager of marketing and membership for the Wild Ones.

This turkey is one of the most frequent visitors to the WILD Center.



ODOT Pollinator Habitat Education Center installed at I-75 rest area

By Candy Sarikonda

It's official! Ohio's first combination of a travel center and educational pollinator garden opened just in time for Fourth of July travelers. Located on southbound I-75 near Bowling Green, this newly renovated rest area features a formal pollinator garden that will serve as the prototype for future Ohio Department of Transportation planting projects at six other rest areas statewide.

As a founding partner of the Ohio Pollinator Habitat Initiative, ODOT is one of the leading departments of transportation in the nation working to restore public land to native prairie. Educating the public about this restoration effort is critical to ODOT's success, and the rest area renovation presents an opportunity to reach out to the public and educate them about the importance of pollinators and the need to create pollinator habitat.

The rest area was temporarily closed in 2015 to facilitate the widening of I-75, and ODOT took that opportunity to renovate the plumbing, roof, interior and mechanical systems. The Ohio Tourism Board approached ODOT with the idea to also install an educational pollinator garden at the site, designed to showcase native Ohio wildflowers that support pollinators and inform visitors about the plight of Ohio's pollinators.

ODOT's District 2 began the planning and installation of the pollinator garden. Kim Roessner, transportation administrator for District 2 who was in charge of the Pollinator Habitat team, worked to gather and coordinate a group of volunteers to design, install and maintain the .35-acre garden site. Dan Parratt, a horticulturalist for Bowling Green Parks Department and Wild Ones member, designed the educational garden, selecting plants that serve as nectar and host plants for bees, butterflies and hummingbirds found in the area. Volunteers from ODOT's Wood County garage, Wild Ones, Monarch Watch, Ohio Certified Volunteer Naturalists and Wood County Parks planted more than 1,500 native plants, donated by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Toledo Zoo. The Ohio Department of Natural Resources and Monarch Watch also provided technical expertise.

Each plant species was installed en masse, creating a formal garden appearance that should please both pollinators and humans alike. Joel Hunt, program administrator for ODOT's

Highway Beautification and Pollinator Habitat Program, supervised the creation of educational signs for the site. The signage provides a map of the garden design, along with brief information about each plant species featured.

Hunt explains, "With agriculture being Ohio's largest industry, worth \$105 billion a year, pollinator habitats not only secure our food supply but they also secure our state's economy." The garden project works to educate the public about ODOT efforts to

create pollinator habitat, and visitors are encouraged to create pollinator gardens in their own backyards. Visitors can purchase seed packets from vending machines in the travel center. These seed packets contain many of the same plant species ODOT is currently using along Ohio roadsides.

Additional plans for the renovated rest area include a roadside prairie planting adjacent to the garden. Plant species featured in the educational garden will be included in the prairie installation. This will enable visitors to learn about prairie plants and view them in a more naturalized setting, as well as in the formal garden.

The ODOT pollinator habitat team is currently working to establish prairie plantings along roadsides in several Ohio counties, with the long-term goal of having a planting project in every county. These roadside prairie installations will help ODOT by reducing mowing and maintenance costs, while also assisting the state in providing pollinator habitat to support native ecosystems and the agricultural industry. It is estimated that Ohio has more than 19,000 miles of roadsides. With so much public land available for pollinator habitat creation, ODOT is well positioned to make a significant contribution to pollinator conservation throughout the state.

Read more about the garden and renovated rest area in [The Toledo Blade](#). 🌸

CANDY SARIKONDA is a Monarch Watch conservation specialist and serves on the national Wild Ones Wild for Monarchs committee. A member of the Wild Ones Oak Openings Region chapter, she enjoys monarch research, habitat restoration, writing and photography, and hopes to use those interests to leave this world a better, healthier place for generations to come. For more information, go to <http://monarchwatch.org/>.



Volunteers from a variety of organizations including Wild Ones planted the new formal, educational pollinator garden at the I-75 rest area. From left: Kim Roessner, Dan Parratt, Ellen Bernal, Dean Babcock, Candy Sarikonda and Chris Barry. Not pictured are Lynn and Don Godfrey.

PHOTO: Vivian Vasquez, Ohio Department of Transportation, District 02



Joel Hunt of the Ohio Department of Transportation and Corrine Jansing of Cardno Nursery stand by the Pollinator Habitat Education Center, located at the rest area on southbound I-75 near Bowling Green, Ohio.

PHOTO: Candy Sarikonda

Thank you

for your contributions

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North Oakland
Environmental Chairperson

FOREVER WILD

LIFETIME MEMBER

Julia Vanatta, Twin Cities

Chapter Anniversaries

- 2 years – Smoky Mountains, Tenn.
- 2 years – Tupelo, Ill.
- 4 years – West Cook, Ill.
- 4 years – Front Range, Colo.
- 10 years – River City-Grand Rapids Area, Mich.
- 15 years – Lexington, Ken.
- 16 years – Central Upper Peninsula, Mich.
- 16 years – Greater Cincinnati, Ohio
- 17 years – Arrowhead, Minn.
- 17 years – Central Wisconsin, Wis.
- 19 years – St. Cloud, Minn.
- 19 years – St. Louis, Mo.
- 20 years – Menomonee River Area, Wis.
- 22 years – Madison, Wis.

Mark Your Calendars

August

National Water Quality Month

August 19, 2017

Wild Ones Annual Meeting and Chapter Leadership Conference

Seno K/RLT Conservancy
Burlington, Wisconsin
<http://www.wildones.org/blog/wild-ones-conference-annual-meeting/>

September 10, 2017

National Swap Ideas Day

If your chapter has done something amazing to make a difference, email details to administration@wildones.org

October 18-21, 2017

**North American Association for Environmental Education
46th Annual Conference**
San Juan, Puerto Rico

 www.facebook.com/wildones.nativeplants.natural-landscapes

 <https://twitter.com/WildOnesNatives>

 pinterest.com/wonational/

 www.linkedin.com/company/wild-ones-native-plants-natural-landscapes

 www.youtube.com/user/WildOnesNPNL



The Meeting Place

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Wolf River Chapter — Shawano Area
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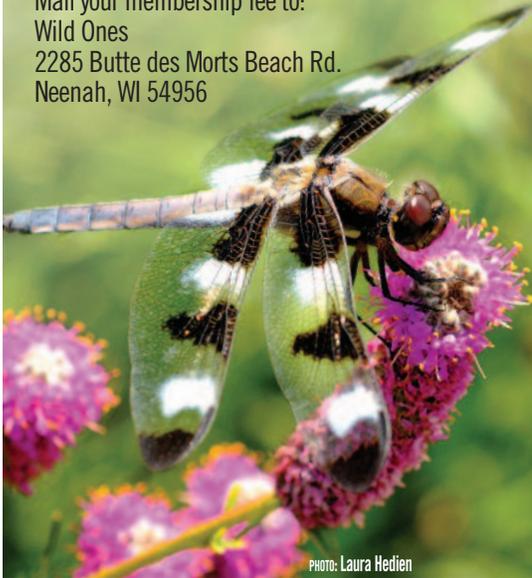


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A Gift that Saves the Earth?

Wild Ones Gift Memberships

A graphic of a blue and green globe with a large orange gift ribbon tied around its top. The globe is placed inside a white box with a green and white striped pattern and the 'Wild Ones' logo on the side.

How about a gift for:

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 - **Local inspectors** who decide what is/isn't a "weed"
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5th in a series

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