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Wild Ones®

NATIVE PLANTS, NATURAL LANDSCAPES

May | June | July 2017



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COVER PHOTO: Debi Nitka
Hummingbird and monarchs.

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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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Janice Hand
President

Sunny times ahead for Wild Ones

"Is the spring coming?" he said. "What is it like?"... "It is the sun shining on the rain and the rain falling on the sunshine..." (from Frances Hodgson Burnett's "The Secret Garden")

Spring means more sun for plants ... and Wild Ones

Officially, spring started on March 20, spring equinox. Even though the thermometer and the weather forecasts are not aligning very well with that fact, we all see more sun in each passing day. Wild Ones is seeing far more sun, too – as I told chapter officers in a March online brief, we have “turned the corner.” Join me in watching the “seeds” that we planted last fall and winter as they grow this spring and summer. First, look for *Finacialalis solidiforma* (‘Solid Financials’), our most important foundation plant. Then comes *Staffissei rightei* (‘Staff, Right-sized’) to provide ground coverage for our chapters, followed by *Communicatillea wrightii* (‘Lots of Communication’), which will provide an interesting cover, enhancing all that we grow.

I've been basking ...

I've been reviewing 2016 State of the Chapter reports and will admit that they cause me to beam. You'll be reading far more about chapters' activities and accomplishments in THE JOURNAL throughout the year, but I wanted to share a bit of my excitement about what I read with a few snippets:

We love our monarchs ...

Early on, chapters jumped in with both feet on our partnership with Monarch Joint Venture and continued to support this very important pollinator in 2016. Almost all (91 percent) of WO chapters did monarch work last year. In fact, over 70 percent

grew and provided milkweed plants. Further, 40 percent of chapters hosted presentations at local and outside events.

Chapter glitter ...

The Columbus chapter's annual plant sale featured over 640 native plants, all member-donated. With the combination of plant sales and donations, the chapter raised \$1,522! It also gave away more than 800 trees at community events and received a Best Environmental Educational Display award.

The new Dayton Area chapter visited a local prairie that a member watched grow as a child after his father reseeded it on Air Force property many years ago.

The Fox Valley Area chapter held its annual regional “Toward Harmony with Nature” conference – their 20th!

Janet Allen with the Habitat Gardening in Central New York chapter created and piloted a six-session discussion course titled “Caring for Our Piece of the Earth,” intended for groups of eight to 12 people, but also suitable for smaller groups or individuals. It is available for free at <http://hgcnyc.org/learn-course.html>. You can learn more about the course on Page 15 of the May/June/July 2017 issue of THE JOURNAL, which can be found [here](#).

The Illinois Prairie chapter created a “Dirt Crew,” consisting of member volunteers willing to get dirty and help create and restore native gardens on public property around town.

The Oak Openings Region chapter hosted numerous seed collecting and cleaning events, which culminated in giving away over 600 native seed packets at the annual Toledo Area Seed Swap, with additional seed donated to local area conservation agencies for restoration work.

The Rock River Valley Chapter's three native plant sales returned 3,841 trees, shrubs, prairie plants, woodland plants, grasses and sedges back to nature.

The Smoky Mountains Chapter gained great exposure by having a native plant-decorated Christmas tree at Gatlinburg's 2016 Festival of Trees.

Forecast: More sunny news to come ...

Fall and winter seemed especially dim this year, but now that you have an idea of what's to come, please – join me in welcoming a sunny spring!

Janice

Established in 1977, Wild Ones is a national not-for-profit organization of members who teach the benefits of growing native plants and work together to grow and restore natural landscapes.



Wild Ones' definition of a native plant:
A native plant is a species that occurs naturally in a particular region, ecosystem and/or habitat and was present prior to European settlement.

CALIFORNIA

Since early February, more than 800,000 honeybees in more than 8,000 hives have died in eastern and western Fresno County, the Fresno Bee reported.

Dollar losses to beekeepers vary from about \$100,000 to \$1 million.

Agriculture officials say the bee deaths may be the result of a combination of factors, including pesticide spraying, humid weather, and the encroachment of almond acreage into areas that traditionally have been home to tree fruit. They added that it doesn't help when beekeepers don't register their hives with the county. The registration allows the county to let farmers know if there are any bees in the area where they plan to apply pesticides. If there are, farmers are obligated to let the beekeeper know about any planned applications so that they can protect

their bees by covering them or moving them out of the area.

More than 800,000 honeybees have died in California since February. PHOTO: Pixabay



IOWA

The Iowa Monarch Conservation Consortium has released a statewide strategy to support monarch butterfly recovery in Iowa and North America, available at www.iowamonarchs.info.

The consortium's strategy guides the implementation and documentation of a voluntary, statewide effort to support monarchs based on the best available science. The consortium is a diverse group of more than 30 collaborators, including agricultural and conservation organizations, agribusiness and utility companies, county associations, universities and state and federal agencies.

Roughly 40 percent of all monarch butterflies that overwinter in Mexico are estimated to come from Iowa and neighboring Midwestern states. It is hoped that expanding monarch habitat in Iowa will play a major role in the species' recovery.

• • • •

Cedar Rapids' 1,000 Acre Pollinator Initiative has a goal of converting 1,000 acres of unused public land into prairie within 5 years so pollinators can thrive.

"With the agricultural boom around 100 years ago, about 99.9 percent of all the native habitat of Iowa has been lost," says Cedar Rapids Park Superintendent Daniel Gibbins. "When you convert it back to what was originally native Iowa, you're going to help a lot more than just native pollinators," Gibbins told Popular Science. "You're helping birds, amphibians, reptiles, mammals—everything that's native here relies on native vegetation."

Earlier this year, the city converted 170 acres to prairie along the Sac & Fox Trail and at Squaw Creek, Beverly, Noelridge, Wilderness Estates and Seminole Valley parks. Besides parks, Cedar Rapids is also looking to plant prairies on sections of public sewer and water detention basins and right of ways.

NATIONWIDE

The rusty patched bumblebee became the first bee to be named endangered under the Endangered Species Act on March 21 since it is present in scattered locations that cover only about 0.1 percent of the species' historical range.

"Now that the Fish and Wildlife Service has listed the rusty patched bumblebee as endangered, it stands a chance of surviving the many threats it faces - from the use of neonicotinoid pesticides to diseases," said Sarina Jepsen, director of endangered species at the Xerces Society.

TENNESSEE

The fight to keep invasive plant species out of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park is just heating up, after fires in late November burned 11,410 acres, the Knoxville News Sentinel reported.

"When you have a big disturbance like a fire or a flood, then the seeds that are adapted to that kind of habitat can take root," said Kristine Johnson, GSMNP supervisory forester. "You don't worry so much about an intact forest because the seeds might fall and never grow. But, if you have bare soil, many of those seeds are likely to grow."

About 209 points in the burn area had been previously identified as exotic plant sites, which amounts to around 1,200 acres. 🌿

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Pendelton Pond, Neenah	South Park, Neenah
Copps, Neenah	US Venture, Appleton
West Town, Neenah	Nut Hatch Overseed, Sherwood
Sunset Park Overseed, Kimberly	Macco Pond, Green Bay
Amy Ave - McMahon, Darboy	Mike Arien's, Brillion
Springfield Restoration, Darboy	Dewey Street Pond, Manitowoc
Wolf River Bank, Hortonville	
SCA Tissue, Town of Menasha	
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- Raingardens
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Maintenance

- Prairie burns
- Restoration
- Bio-detention
- Weed & invasive species control

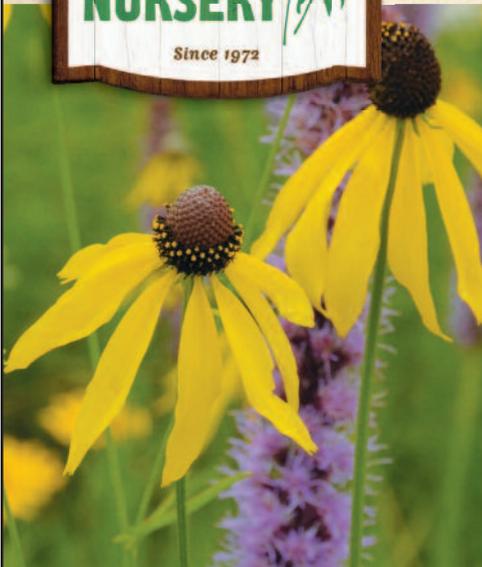
Special Thanks to Stuart at McMahon Engineers for all his professional advice.

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HOW TO START A Student Award Program IN YOUR CHAPTER

By Brittani Furlong

As the school year begins to wind down, there is no better time to reflect on the hard work of students in your communities. Many young people want to make a difference in their world and sometimes only need a little encouragement and direction to flourish. The Oak Openings Region, Ohio chapter recognized this and established a Youth Initiative Committee to help educate young people about the benefits of native landscaping. The chapter has primarily done this through a student award program that offers local students a one-year chapter membership, including the many member benefits, and acknowledges the students at the annual end-of-the-year awards potluck.

Former chapter president Denise Gehring, now national board director, established the Youth Initiative Committee and student award as a way to help the chapter focus its attention on a younger demographic. Since Gehring has taken on more responsibilities at the national level, the Oak Openings Region chapter renamed the award in her name to honor her work. Chapter partner agencies, such as universities or park districts, can nominate a young adult for the Denise Gehring Student Award.

The Youth Initiative Committee is responsible for the student awards. They begin by determining the budget and the number of awards that can be presented annually. Typically, the chapter funds four or five student winners per year, thanks to a partnership with Kroger Community Rewards. As people shop at the popular Midwest grocery store, a portion of their purchase is donated to the chapter.

Next, the committee reaches out to members in partner agencies who work directly with students to see if they have

any nominations. They then collect the nominee information, which includes a brief biography about the work the student has done in relation to native plants, and present the nominees to the board, which then selects the winners. The committee begins this process as early as September to ensure they have time to vote as a board before its annual awards potluck dinner in December. If the chapter has fewer nominees than awards to give out, they go back to the nominators to see if they have any other students they wish to nominate.

Once the final award winners are decided, the committee chairman or chairwoman asks the nominators for contact information so the chapter can



Winners and nominators gather for a picture during the Oak Openings Region Student Award announcement and gathering in 2014. The award has since been renamed to honor the former chapter president Denise Gehring. Author Brittani Furlong is on the far right.

PHOTO: Hal Mann, Oak Openings Region chapter president.

Each student award winner gets a certificate (shown above) as well as a one-year membership to Wild Ones Oak Openings Region.

invite the students to its awards potluck and acknowledge them. The benefits include a free student membership to the chapter for one year, and a small gift bag that typically contains a book, Wild Ones Journal and DVD of Doug Tallamy's 2014 presentations. The committee chair also designs and prints the award certificates, puts together the gift bags and introduces the nominators, who then give a brief biography about the winners at the dinner.

Throughout the year, Wild Ones members stay in contact with students, providing learning and professional networking opportunities. The following year, the committee follows up with the recipients through the Report of Active Membership.

The Report of Active Membership was created to incentivize the winning students to get more involved with the chapter by offering a second year of free membership. This works by giving the winners a report form that is due to the Youth Initiative Chair by Nov. 1 of the following year. The winners must participate in six activities from various categories such as meeting or field trip attendance, stewardship projects, social media outreach, leading or facilitating field trips or member meetings, giving presentations, or other approved tasks. 2017 is the first time the chapter implemented this second-year program, so we will learn later this year how successful the Report of Active Membership form is.

With this second-year membership, the chapter hopes to engage the award winners and encourage them to become active members for years to come. ❁

BRITTANI FURLONG recently graduated from the University of Toledo with her MS in biology. She was a 2014 recipient of the student award and now is an active member on the board of the Oak Openings Region chapter.



Turtles sun themselves on a log in the pond.



Ken and Judy Sikora's property is next to a large marsh that connects to the Bay of Green Bay, which can be seen in the distance.

Penstemon digitalis brightens up one of the Sikora's 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 two or three 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.

Member Garden

By Barbara A. Schmitz



Since 1972, it has been a work in progress. But in that time Ken and Judy Sikora, of Howard, Wisconsin, have transformed their yard once filled mainly with grass into a private nature preserve.

Ken said he and Judy grew up in Michigan's Upper Peninsula where they were accustomed to seeing large patches of lupine, trilliums, mayflowers and other native plants. After moving to the Green Bay area in 1972 and buying the house they still live in, they started adding native plants to their property. The couple will be married 50 years this August.

"The newspaper had announcements for Wild Ones meetings, including news about their plant rescues and yard tours," Ken said. "That really got us going since we have ideal property settings for shade, wetland and upland garden plantings."

Ken said they gradually started planting native species. "We started with trees and shrubs ... and expanded from there. Every year we made an improvement."

Their home is on a 2-acre parcel, but they also own a nearby 2.5-acre site. Those parcels butt up to a large marsh connected to the Bay of Green Bay. In addition, they are working on developing a 2-acre butterfly garden on their church property in Howard.

Ken and Judy said they have many favorite plants, but if they had to choose, they most like wetland plants such as turtlehead (*Chelone glabra*), bottle gentian (*Gentiana andrewsii*) and Michigan lily (*Lilium michiganense*). For trees and shrubs, they are fondest of larches (*Larix laricina*), leatherwood (*Dirca palustris*) and river birches (*Betula nigra*).

About the Yard

- The nearly 5-acre yard is on two parcels adjacent to a large marsh that connects to the Bay of Green Bay.
 - Variety is key in their yard, which includes all Wisconsin native plants: 19 species of shade plants, 29 species of sun plants, 11 wetland species, six types of ferns, nine species of prairie grasses, 27 different trees and five species of shrubs.
- Prairie grasses include big and little bluestem, Indian, Canada rye, switchgrass, bottlebrush and others.

"When I walk through our yard, I begin on a 'shade garden' trail that is filled with wild ginger, bloodroots, trout lilies, trilliums, leeks, yellow bellwort, maidenhair ferns and more," Ken says. "I then work my way past my beehives behind a barn for a quick check of the bee activity and then proceed along the marsh and past some ponds. I have anchored a log in the middle of each pond for the turtles,

waterfowl and large birds to sun themselves and rest on.

"By then I'm at a creek on the far lot, which has wildflower plantings along its bank," he says.

Pathways are an integral part of the Sikora property and total about two city blocks long.



Paths throughout the Sikora property lead visitors to various native plantings.

“This 200-foot wide lot is lined with various trees we planted and filled in between with wildflowers for the full 400-foot length.”

His project this year is to redo some areas that have become overrun with “bossy plants” such as rosinweed (*Silphium integrifolium*) and cup plants (*Silphium perfoliatum*). “Of course, the finches don’t help by feeding on them and

spreading the seeds,” he says. “All of a sudden it shows up in areas where they were not planted.”

Ken recommends using old carpeting laid upside down to kill plants and grass when readying areas for planting. Most mornings he strolls through his property with a cup of coffee in his hands. “If I see something that needs a little work, I’ll just remove this plant or that.”

Most evenings, however, Ken finds a place to sit outside, usually with a beer, to watch nature. “I like to sit somewhere a little hidden and see what comes out,” he explains, adding that deer, muskrats and turtles are common sights. Occasionally, Judy joins him once the dishes are done. “Sometimes we have a bonfire, and just sit and watch,” Judy says. “You have to take time to appreciate what you have.”

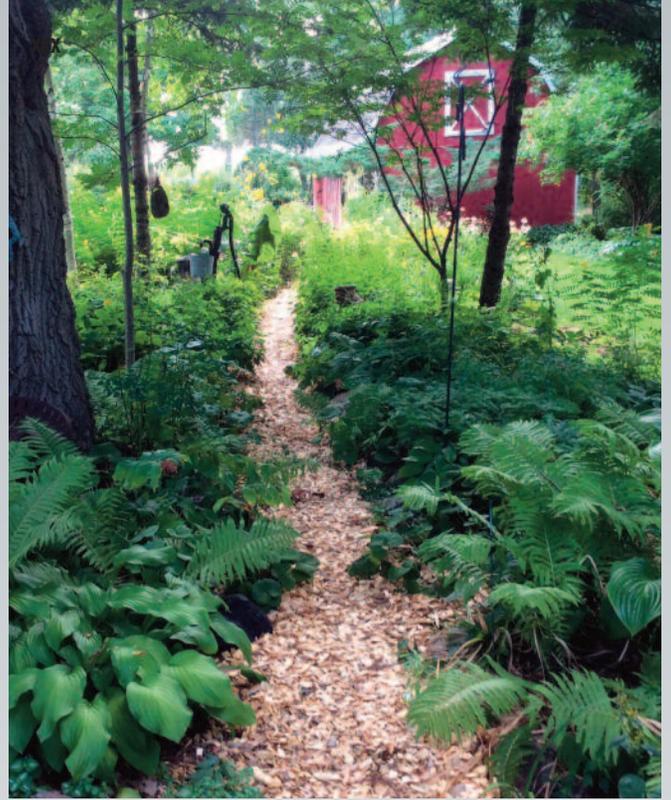
“Some people like to golf or go to their cottage all weekend,” Ken adds. “This is our place, our talent; it’s what we’re good at. We feel very blessed with what God has given us to work with, and that we are able to make improvements to a small portion of our planet, which by the way, keeps us very healthy.”

Ken recommends people read “*Last Child in the Woods: Saving our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder*,” by Richard Louv. “As a beekeeper for over 25 years, I’m worried that our necessary pollinators, birds and insects will not have enough to forage on if generations of young people are not interested enough in nature to plant a garden or any pollinator-friendly plants,” he says.

Both Ken and Judy have advice for those new to natural landscaping. “Make sure the site is well prepared,” Ken says. “You don’t want invasives to be an immediate problem.” Judy encourages people to do their research first. “Go and visit other peoples’ gardens and see what they have in the sunlight and what they have in the shade and decide what you like and don’t like,” she says. “Then look at native plant catalogs to be sure you plant what you really are going to enjoy.”

And it’s best to start small, they agreed. “Start planting in a little corner,” Ken said. “If every house on the block did that, think what an impact it could have.”

If you have questions, the Sikoras encourage you to contact them at kfsikora42@yahoo.com. 🌱



Native shade plants line the pathway to a barn on the Sikora property. Ken keeps his beehives in back of the barn.



One of the Sikora’s newest native planting areas is by a creek where they see a lot of deer and fox.

About the Yard

- Wildflowers planted on the property include bloodroot, wild ginger, mayapple, meadow rue, prairie smoke, purple and yellow coneflower, spiderwort, columbine, prairie dock, compass plant, turtlehead, marsh marigold and others.
- Forty types of birds are regular visitors to the Sikora property, as well as bees, butterflies, frogs, ducks, turtles, snakes and various mammals: deer, raccoons, muskrats, weasels, rabbits, bats and squirrels.

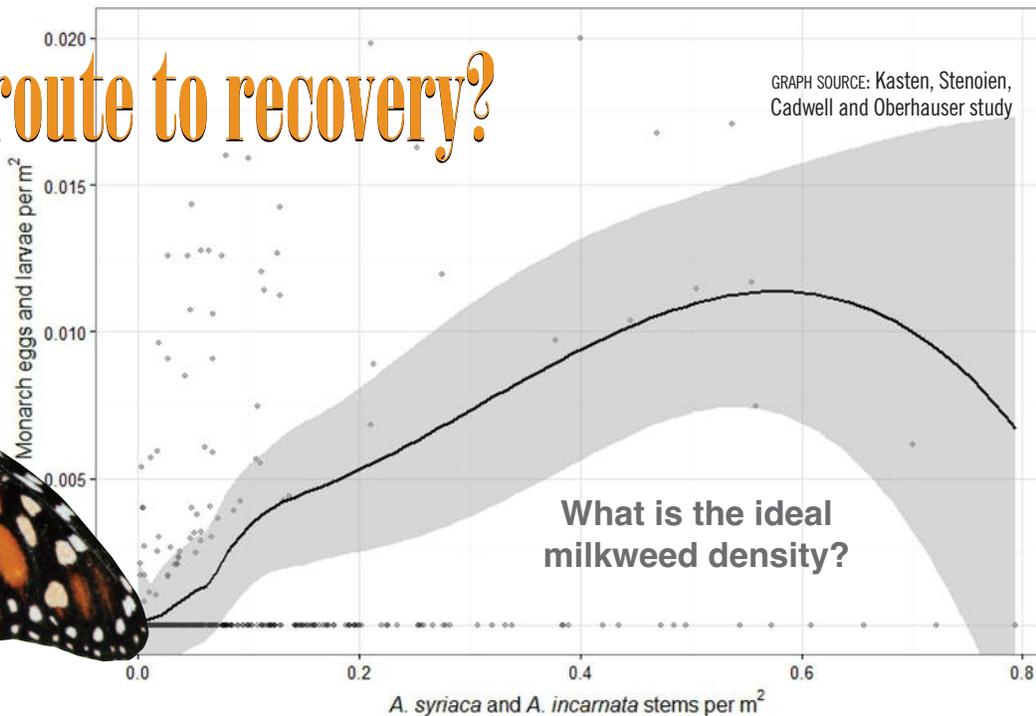


This was a low area of the Sikora property when they purchased the land. It took more than five years, but today this area is a nice wildflower area.

Can roadside habitat lead monarchs on a

A monarch and a bee nectar on *A. incarnata*. PHOTO: Candy Sarikonda

route to recovery?



A sign marks the Ohio Pollinator Habitat initiative, a collaborative effort to promote pollinator conservation. PHOTO: Hal Mann

By Candy Sarikonda

The eastern monarch population has experienced a significant decline over the past few decades. Loss of breeding habitat, particularly the loss of milkweed from croplands, has been implicated in this decline. In an effort to increase the availability of habitat, researchers have been looking at the possibility of creating and restoring habitat along our nation's roadsides. But can roadsides provide habitat that monarchs will utilize?

A 2016 study by Kyle Kasten, Carl Stenoien, Wendy Caldwell and Karen Oberhauser aimed to answer that question. From July-October 2015, researchers documented the presence of milkweed and monarchs at 212 roadside sites located within a 250-mile radius of Minneapolis. They surveyed five transects per roadside site, spaced 1 mile apart. They noted the abundance, distribution and diversity of milkweeds at these sites, as well as the extent monarchs used those milkweeds. They then

compared the number of monarch eggs, larvae and adults found in these roadside habitats with the number of monarchs present in other types of natural habitat.

Within these roadside sites, researchers found seven species of milkweed, including *Asclepias syriaca*, *Asclepias verticillata*, *Asclepias incarnata*, *Asclepias ovalifolia*, *Asclepias tuberosa*, *Asclepias sullivantii*, and *Asclepias exaltata*. Milkweed was found in 59 percent of roadside transects. Common milkweed, *A. syriaca*, was the most abundant of the seven species encountered, occurring on 97 percent of transects with milkweed. Monarch eggs and larvae were found on 23.5 percent of transects containing milkweed, or 91 of 387 transects.

Researchers wanted to see if milkweeds in roadsides were being used by monarchs to the same degree as milkweeds in other natural habitats such as nature preserves, state parks, pastures and old fields. Monarch Larva Monitoring Project sites were selected for comparison with the roadside habitat sites. Overall, immature monarchs were observed in roadsides, albeit in lower densities than MLMP habitat types during the same time period. However, the presence of 5th instars at roadside sites suggests that roadside habitat is capable of producing adult monarchs. The presence of adult monarchs on roadsides was associated with the presence of

milkweed during the breeding period, but not during the migratory period. Adult monarchs were seen in 49 of 240 transects with milkweed and six of 147 transects without milkweed during July 20-Aug. 20. By contrast, from Aug. 20-Sept. 21, adults were seen at 16 of 204 transects with milkweed and six of 131 transects without milkweed. This difference is likely due to a shift from the need for milkweed for reproduction during the breeding period, to the need for nectar sources during the migration period. Thus, the data shows that monarchs can be supported throughout all lifestyle stages in roadside habitat.

Researchers also examined what factors predicted the presence of monarchs in roadside habitat. Backward selection of a model predicting immature monarch density on a per area basis excluded roadside width. In other words, it does not matter how wide the roadside habitat is — monarchs will use the habitat successfully for breeding regardless of its width. Roadside width in this study ranged from 2 to 30 meters, and was not correlated with monarch production. Monarch mortality at roadside sites was not measured in this study, so the correlation between roadside width and adult mortality could not be determined. Furthermore, sites adjacent to forest had significantly higher densities and as well as sites adjacent to corn and soy fields had marginally higher densities of immature monarchs than sites adjacent to grasslands. Researchers suspected this

was due to the fact that the roadside was the only habitat available at sites near forests and cropland.

Monarch density was associated with milkweed density. So the number of immature monarchs present at the roadside site was related to the amount of milkweed present at the site. This makes sense — if you don't have milkweed, you won't have monarchs. But the relationship is a bit more complicated. The milkweed density (number of milkweeds per square meter) did not affect the number of monarchs per plant. This finding makes sense if you consider typical monarch egg-laying behavior. Females tend to lay one egg per plant, and they spread their eggs out over a distance to reduce the chance of predation since it is harder for predators to find scattered eggs. Thus, having dense plantings of milkweed does not necessarily result in more monarch eggs and larvae. Frequent plantings of small amounts of milkweed (low density, high frequency) are better than large clumps of milkweed (high density, low frequency) scattered sporadically throughout a habitat area.

How much milkweed should land managers plant? In this study, the number of monarchs in a given area increased as the number of milkweed plants increased, but only up to a point. Monarchs/square meter were positively affected by milkweed density at low- to moderate-milkweed densities. But at higher milkweed densities, the overall effect became weakened or negative. This suggests a saturation effect, or a point at which adding more milkweed to a habitat will not increase the number of monarchs that can be produced. This point is referred to as the "point estimate." Statistically, when looking solely at the effect of milkweed density on monarch density, the point estimate is 0.4 to 0.6 milkweed plants per square meter. When considering the effect on monarch density of factors such as milkweed density in combination with adjacent land use type, the point estimate of milkweed density becomes 1.40 milkweeds/square meter. Researchers concluded the ideal milkweed density for a monarch habitat is somewhere between 0.6 and 1.4 plants per square meter.

There are often questions about the effect of mowing regimens on monarch activity along roadsides. In this study, researchers recorded if roadside sites were mowed in 2-3 weeks intervals. Because the researchers visited the sites only once, the data do not include follow up information on roadside mowing frequency or succession. "But at no time were more than 15 percent of sites freshly mowed, and

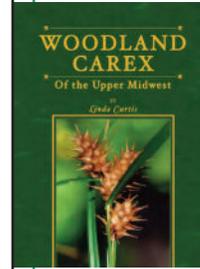
most were mowed during the first and last weeks of August and the first week of October," Kasten said. Researchers concluded the steep drop in immature monarchs that occurred at roadside sites in August in Minnesota was most likely due to the decrease in reproductive activity that naturally occurs with the end of the breeding season — approximately Aug. 15 — in the state. The effects of mowing cannot be determined from this study. However, knowing when monarch breeding and migration activities begin and end can be helpful in determining the timing of mowing at roadside sites. Monarch Joint Venture has provided [mowing guidelines](#) based on Monarch Larvae Monitoring Program (MLMP) data.

Lastly, the researchers made some anecdotal observations that should be considered when creating or restoring monarch habitat along roadsides. Farmers often own lands adjacent to roadsides, and it is important for roadside habitat managers to be good neighbors. Kasten reported that farmers visited him occasionally as he collected data at roadside study sites. He said farmers appeared to be much less concerned with the presence of milkweed in the roadsides than with the presence of invasive plants, especially nonnative thistles. For a roadside habitat restoration project to be successful, there must be buy-in from adjacent landowners. Keeping nonnative invasives under control at roadside habitat sites would be a prudent and necessary practice.

Clearly, roadsides have the potential to contribute to monarch conservation. Roadsides cover more than 10 million acres of land in the United States, and can be a state's largest public land holding. In 2014, the White House's Pollinator Task Force released the *National Strategy to Protect Pollinators and Their Habitat*, with the goal of restoring 7 million acres of land over five years through federal actions and public/private partnerships. Since roadsides offer considerable acreage, efforts to create, conserve and restore habitat along our nation's roadsides have great potential to support the monarch population for generations to come. 🌻

CANDY SARIKONDA is a Monarch Watch conservation specialist and serves on the national "Wild for Monarchs" committee. A member of the Oak Openings Region, Ohio chapter of Wild Ones, 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/cs/>.

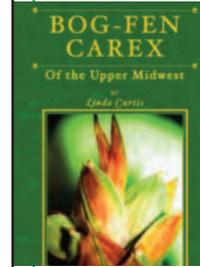
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Got Elderberry?

You might thank yourself later



When birds pluck and eat the ripe elderberries, lacy-looking purple pedicels are left behind.

How to grow NATIVE ELDERBERRY

Wild Ones members can easily grow native elderberry (*Sambucus L. ssp. canadensis*) in semi-shaded areas with moist loam or clay soils, or in rain gardens. Their wild habitat is floodplains, shorelines and edges of swampy woods.

This species has pinnate leaves, each with seven leaflets, and interesting gray bark with lenticles that look like salt on pretzel sticks. The multi-stemmed shrub grows about 6 feet tall with stems of soft wood with large pith. This member of the honeysuckle family (*Caprifoliaceae*) has a rank odor when cut.

Its showy, white, flat-topped flower heads, or cymes, are as large as saucers. They are pollen rich, attracting diverse species of bees, beetles and flies. Once pollinated, birds and small and large mammals relish the numerous ripe fruits, while box turtles may eat the fallen fruits. Take care not to confuse this edible species, American black elderberry, with its cousin, the red elderberry (*S. racemosa*), which is poisonous.



A juvenile sparrow with elderberry juice on its beak feasts in Peggy Bradbury's yard; more than 35 bird species eat elderberries.

Remember your mom warning you against eating berries growing around the neighborhood because the berries were sure to be poisonous? It's one of those blanket instructions meant to keep kids safe. But unfortunately, it gives children the idea that it's "us vs. nature." And, as it turns out, that's not necessarily so.

As anecdotal proof, I offer my daughter. When she was 2, she grew impatient with my weeding the flower garden. "Stop playing with your plants!" she cried.

Well, I kept weeding. After a while I noticed she had a daylily leaf dangling from her mouth and green dribble running down her chin. "I'm a beetle eating your plants!" she declared.

Of course I warned her against munching on any plants anywhere, anytime. But, as I found out later, she occasionally snacked on unknown plants and berries, and lived to tell me the tale.

I don't know if she ever ate black elderberries, but *Sambucus nigra L. ssp. canadensis*, or American black elderberry, is indigenous to our yard, which goes way back. Because they would grow so big, I used to weed out elderberries along with pokeweed (*Phytolacca americana*), even though I admired pokeweed's exotic hot pink stems with sinister-looking purple berries in the fall.

When I turned to native gardening, however, I began to let some of the elder and pokeweeds grow. The elder gifted my yard with handsome foliage and cymes of fragrant white flowers. You could see the flower heads a block away.

One day, when the elderberry clusters ripened to purple, a young robin started gobbling them up, calling so exuberantly between bites that I worried a hawk would whisk him away.

Text and photos by Peggy Bradbury

Three days later the berries were gone and the robin family took off, nesting season over.

About this time the Ebola scare hit the news. As it happened, I was reading Stephen Harrod Buhner's "*Herbal Antivirals: Natural Remedies for Emerging & Resistant Viral Infections*," in which Buhner reports that elder — a term he prefers to elderberry — is an important medicinal plant effective not only against influenza, but likely to prove effective against Ebola.

That caught my attention. I harvested some elderberries and stored them in my freezer, just in case. And I read more in Buhner's.

Buhner's books on herbal medicines, "*Herbal Antivirals*" and "*Herbal Antibiotics: Natural Alternatives for Treating Drug-resistant Bacteria*," are in a class (pun intended) by themselves. While popular books on herbalism typically provide a page or two on the medicinal uses of each included herb, they rarely cite scientific studies. In contrast, Buhner provides 23 pages of text just on elder in "*Herbal Antivirals*," much of it on the plant's chemistry and what's known to science. And that's *all text*, no photos — you have to look up images elsewhere.

For each plant he cites, he explains when and what part of the plant to harvest, how best to prepare and use the different forms of medicines, and the known side effects and contraindications. He also touches on ways that related species are used in other countries and cultures, and he details information on human and clinical trials. In those sections he's clearly laying out facts to entice researchers; a medical dictionary or education is needed to follow the information. As you might expect, his books have exhaustive bibliographies.

So the following information is guided by Buhner's writings with the exception of any mistakes, which are mine.

Elder, a native of Europe and grown in North America with relatives in Asia and Australia, has been used worldwide and forever for a variety of ailments.

Blossoms from *Sambucus nigra L. ssp. canadensis*, an American black elderberry, surround a birdhouse in Peggy Bradbury's yard.



(J.K. Rowling fans may recall that the most powerful wand in the wizarding world of Harry Potter was made of elder.)

It's not just the berries that are used for medicine, says Buhner – poultices made from leaves, bark and root can be used for topical pain relief and wound healing, and in Asia, decoctions are used to treat broken bones and arthritis. The name elder, it is said, comes from its ancient reputation that if you regularly ingest elder medicine, you will live to *be* an elder, which is at odds with elder's relatively modern reputation as poisonous.

But in North America, typically only the berries and flowers are used medicinally or in scientific studies. The rest of the plant has been neglected, something Buhner blames on “phytohyteria.”

Buhner writes that elder is “a narrow-spectrum antiviral primarily effective against enveloped viruses,” such as influenza, herpes viruses, poxviruses, hepatitis B and D, flaviviruses (West Nile, dengue and tick-borne encephalitis), corona viruses, retroviruses (HIV), and others. The entire plant contains compounds that are active against certain viruses, and the compounds are much stronger in the leaves, bark and roots, he stresses. In addition, elder's medicinal action includes antibiotic, antifungal, analgesic, anti-inflammatory, anti-cancer and antioxidant properties, to name a few. And, the berries have more antioxidant strength than vitamins C and E.

Elder is usually not a poisonous plant, but it may make you sick. The plant's self-protective compounds make it an emetic, which helps to discourage foraging. Before you could eat enough to be harmed, you'd vomit.

Buhner stresses that people should be cautious about eating the berries raw. While some people can eat them by the handful, others get nauseous with just a nibble. The berries are relatively safe, but their tiny seeds contain cyanogenic compounds. The trick is to detoxify the berries before using them in a tincture or pie. Start with cold water (don't break this rule) and then boil the berries for 30 minutes.

continued

Native plants have varied medicinal purposes

By Barbara A. Schmitz • Photos by Janice Stiefel

Even though I grew up in Plymouth, Wisconsin, I never knew Janice Stiefel despite living only blocks away. However, as editor of the WILD ONES JOURNAL, I've found I am learning from her, even after her 2008 death.

In 2010, her husband, John, published a book, “*The Inside Story*,” which includes 66 articles that Janice wrote for the Wild Ones newsletter, then called *The Outside Story*, between 1990-2002. When I'm looking up background information on native plants, it's one of the first references I go to. And when the idea came up to do something on medicinal plants, it seemed only appropriate that I share Janice's work once again. Naturally, medicinal information should not be used for any medical problems without first consulting a physician.

While her stories include information on habitat, plant description, name origin and more, here are just a few interesting tidbits on how native plants were or are used medicinally:

Common Elderberry

The fresh root of the *Sambucus canadensis* has been found to be extremely poisonous, producing death in children within a short time after eaten. However, the heat-thickened juice of elderberries forms an invaluable cordial for coughs and colds. A dose of hot elder wine before going to bed induces sleep and promotes perspiration to help ward off the ill effects of a chill. Elderberry also resets the body's temperature. For women who have frequent hot flashes or night sweats, 25 to 50 drops of fresh Elder blossom tincture several times a day could bring rapid results.

Marsh Marigold

The leaves of *Caltha palustris* were used to treat anemia because they contain a high amount of iron. They should be cooked first since they could be poisonous if eaten raw. Rubbing the leaves on insect bites or bee stings was thought to alleviate pain and itching.

New England Aster

The Shakers used *Symphotrichum novae-angliae* to clear their complexions and the ancient Greeks used it as an antidote for snakebites. As early as 1830 the plant was used for eruptive diseases of the skin, and some claimed it would “remove the poisonous state of the skin caused by poison ivy.”

Purple Coneflower

During the early and mid-19th century, Winnebago medicine men would use *Echinacea purpurea* for an incredible feat of endurance. They would chew the raw herb in order to numb their mouths so they could insert burning pieces of hot coals, as if by magic, to the astonishment of their tribes. This amazing feat, with no apparent injury, made tribal members fear their supposedly great power. The juice from this plant acted as a preservative against inflammation.

In addition, the Plains Indians used root poultices on insect bites, wounds, stings and snakebites. Other tribes used the plant for colds, coughs, rabies, smallpox, measles, mumps, arthritis and rheumatism. German studies since the 1950s show *Echinacea* to have significant anti-viral, anti-bacterial, anti-fungal and anti-protozoan properties, lending credence to its uses in wound healing and treatment of the common cold, flu and other infectious diseases.

Wild Columbine

Aquilegia canadensis contains prussic acid and may have a narcotic effect on some people. The root contains alkaloids that were important in folk medicine, but they can also make the plant poisonous. Even so, the entire plant was used by ancient herbalists to treat a variety of ailments, such as jaundice, abdominal pains, measles and smallpox, and to reduce swelling in the liver.

Wild Geranium

Geranium maculatum has long been known as a strong astringent. The part used is the knobby rhizome, dried and made into a chocolate-colored powder. This was used as a mild infusion for sore throats and ulcerated mouths. The high tannin content of the root was the secret ingredient. A tea brewed from the leaves was a treatment for dysentery and the powdered roots was used to help the blood coagulate and to prevent hemorrhages.

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Poke develops spikes of deep purple berries and brilliantly hued stems and leaves in the fall.

Another native plant with a reputation for poison berries, and which is listed as medicinal in Buhner's works, is pokeweed. In "Herbal Antivirals" Buhner writes: "Poke root, *Phytolacca americana*, has a number of similarities to elder including its medicinal actions and the hysteria about being poisonous. The plant (leaves, roots and berries) contains a tremendously potent antiviral compound, pokeweed antiviral protein (PAP), which is broad-spectrum against a wide range of viruses. Used in its purified form, it has inactivated the HIV virus in mice, making them HIV-free.

"The poke plant itself could very well be a broad-spectrum antiviral and it should be examined in some depth for this use," he writes. "As well, the root is a very strong lymph system herb ... so it also helps clear the lymph system of viral and bacterial debris and potentiates the action of the nodes, spleen and so on ... [which] would make it a primary plant for viral encephalitis."

Elder and poke are not the only native plants included in Buhner's books that we might also have in our gardens. He also writes about the medicinal qualities of skullcap, boneset and New Jersey tea, and red root.

New Jersey tea (*Ceanothus americanus*) and Prairie red root (*C. herbaceous*), along with the 40-50 other species of *Ceanothus*, and *Eupatorium* or boneset, are effective against influenza and other viral diseases, and they are antibiotic as well. All species of red root and most bonesets are indigenous to the Americas. Buhner reports that German researcher Mareike Maas's in-depth research on *Eupatorium* shows "the plant has a much wider range of antiviral actions than was formerly understood."

The root of Chinese skullcap (*Scutellaria bicalensis*) contains a broad-spectrum antiviral effective against pandemic influenzas and encephalitis. Buhner considers Chinese skullcap among the planet's top antiviral plant medicines, and he thinks it's likely that our native skullcap species may be just as effective. However, little research has been done and none of it on the

root, the most active part of the plant. (Many of us grow Downy skullcap, or *S. incana*, in our gardens.) Native Americans used both the aerial parts and roots from eight species of American skullcaps to treat or prevent an eclectic variety of ailments, including smallpox.

Although herbalism is often considered controversial in conventional U.S. medical circles, in most other countries this is not the case. For example, in Germany physicians routinely advise the use of hawthorn berries and leaves to strengthen and regulate the heart, while here, hawthorn (of which we have native species) is best known as just another ornamental tree.

"Herbalism is widely accepted and used in South America, Central America (wherein I include, though I geographically shouldn't, Mexico), all of Asia, all of Africa, and most of Eastern Europe and Russia," Buhner explained in an email. "The only places it is not widely accepted is in North America and the western EU countries, though to be fair the UK has the oldest herbal association in the western world due to the grant of practice given by Henry VIII and Elizabeth I, and in Germany ... herbs are part of standard practice medicine. In total, not including the U.S. and the EU, that means some 6.2 billion people use herbs, often daily, generally for their primary health care."

As a trip to the local grocery store shows, herbal use is becoming more popular in the U.S. judging by the growing bounty of commercial teas for everything from stress relief to combating colds and insomnia. More books and popular magazine articles also tout boosting one's health with phytonutrients, following Aristotle's reputed advice, "Let food be thy medicine."

If you are intrigued by native plants in your garden with medicinal qualities and want to know more about historic uses and current research, look for classes in your area's botanical gardens, or check out the Healing Plants page of the New York Botanical Garden website. 🌸

PEGGY BRADBURY is a writer living in St. Charles, Missouri, and a former member of St. Louis Wild Ones who's now with the Mid-Missouri chapter. Her grandmother, Effie Mae Tucker of Pottsville, Arkansas, was a gardener who loved native wildflowers and knew how to make plant medicine.

BOOK REVIEW

"*The Hidden Life of Trees: What They Feel, How They Communicate*" was published in 2016 by Greystone Books. It can be purchased at most bookstores or online.

By Mariette Nowak

"*The Hidden Life of Trees: What They Feel, How They Communicate*" is a remarkable book that describes many amazing things about forest trees that research has revealed in just the last few decades. Author Peter Wohlleben, a German forester with many years of experience, writes in a warm, engaging narrative. We learn that trees "talk" with one another. They "smell" and "taste." They "learn" and "remember." They "wrinkle" with age, (think bark fissures). They even "care" for their young and for sick neighbors.

Some scientists have criticized the author's use of such anthropomorphic language, such as his use of the word "talk" rather than "communicate." But that precisely is the point, Wohlleben says. He wants to humanize trees to help people relate to them as sentient beings.

An anthropomorphic approach, once universally disdained, is becoming more widely accepted by many researchers today. Ethologist Frans de Waal, for example, believes that by avoiding anthropomorphism, "We risk missing something fundamental about both animals and us." I believe that de Waal's words can also apply to plants. Wohlleben's humanized descriptions can help us to better appreciate, understand and value the trees around us as species worthy of respect, not simply as resources for our use. Moreover, he includes 76 scientific citations in his book for those who prefer the drier, more technical language or who may want to check his references.

Trees "talk" to one another (or communicate) by smell and taste. When attacked by predators or insects, they emit ethylene, a colorless, gaseous hydrocarbon that promotes the ripening of fruit, into the air. Nearby trees "smell" this and quickly release toxic substances to ward off insects. Trees can also "taste" insect saliva and then respond by releasing pheromones that attract specific predators of these insects.

Trees can "learn" to be more frugal with water after a drought year.

Mimosa, also called sensitive plant, has the same ability; it learns to disregard the regular dripping of water that initially caused the plant to quickly close its leaves.

How do trees “know” when to start their growth in spring? They “count” and “remember” the hours of daylight until it is optimal for their species. In addition, they “count” and “remember” the number of warm days (degree days) that pass in spring before they start budding out.

Even more astounding, trees “care” for their young and sick. Mother trees are dominant forest trees linked with their kin through a wide network of underground roots and fungi through which they provide sugar and other nutrients to their young. Healthy trees similarly “support” sick members of the community affected by disease or insects through these same underground pathways. In some cases, forest trees even nourish old stumps for centuries, although the reasons are unknown.

Transmission of carbon between trees and fungi was studied by Suzanne Simard, professor of plant ecology at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver. Through her research in the rainforests of western North America, she found vast networks of fungal mycelia in the soil beneath the forests, interconnecting the trees with one another. Using mass spectrometers and scintillation counters, she was intrigued to find that carbon and other nutrients were being transmitted back and forth between the trees through this underground Internet “like neurotransmitters firing in our own neural networks.” Her results were published in 1997 in the journal *Nature* and appropriately called the “wood wide web.” Since then, similar mycelium networks have been discovered beneath forests in Europe. Shrubs and herbaceous plants also use this underground web, although cultivated plants seem to have lost the ability to do so.

All these discoveries have transformed our understanding of trees. They are no longer seen as single, selfish organisms competing with other trees in the forest. Rather, they are now known to be members of a cooperative

community. When German researchers in the Harz Mountains uncovered these incredible interchanges between trees, they concluded that forests are superorganisms with interconnections much like ant colonies.

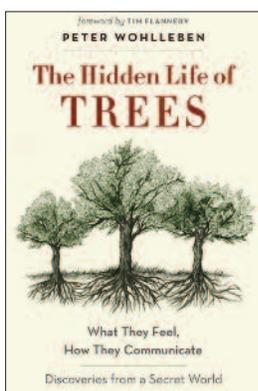
This is not a new idea. In the 1930s, based on their observations of above-ground associations, both American ecologist Frederic Clements and British ecologist Arthur Tansley described ecological communities as superorganisms interconnected through the transfer of materials. In his classic “*Vegetation of Wisconsin*” (1959), John Curtis discusses ephemeral woodland wildflowers and their complicated adaptations to the growth patterns and timing cycle of forest trees. He shares the work of Tansley (1949) “that the plant community is a quasi-organism, with interrelations between its member

species at an organized level nearly comparable with that between various organs of a single individual plant.” These herbaceous plants blossom and set seed within a few weeks in early spring before the canopy of tree leaves shuts out the light they need. Wohlleben too marvels at this, saying, “It’s a small miracle they can pull it all off in just a month or two.” And that was long

before anyone knew about the intricate connections below the ground!

You’ll never look at a forest in the same way after reading this fascinating book. Trees, it turns out, are a lot more like us than we knew. Every reader is sure to want to go for a walk in a forest — and hug a tree while they visit. 🌿

MARIETTE NOWAK is the author of the book, “*Birdscaping in the Midwest*,” and is the past director of the Wehr Nature Center in Milwaukee County, where she served for 18 years. In addition, she is founder and president of the Kettle Moraine Chapter of the Wild Ones, as well as a board member of the Lakeland Audubon Society and past board member of the Wisconsin Society of Ornithology. She also serves on the Park Committee in Walworth County.



Fascinating facts from the forest

from

The Hidden Life of TREES



- ☞ The oldest tree in the world is a 9,500-year-old spruce in Sweden.
- ☞ Fungi are the largest known living organisms on earth. A 1,000-year-old honey fungus in Switzerland covers nearly 120 acres. A 2,400-year-old one in Oregon covers 2,000 acres and weighs 660 tons.
- ☞ A single oak can have more than 100 species of fungi on its roots.
- ☞ A square mile of forest trees release about 29 tons of oxygen into the air each day in the summer. That’s enough for about 10,000 peoples’ daily oxygen needs.
- ☞ About 27 square yards of leaves and needles blanket the tree canopy in every square yard of forest during the growing season.
- ☞ Up to half of the biomass of a forest is below ground in its roots.
- ☞ The West Coast of Canada harbors some of the most ancient forests where Sitka spruce trees are at least 500 years old.
- ☞ One-fifth of all animal and plant species depend on dead wood.
- ☞ The foliage in a square mile of forest filters out 20,000 tons of soot, pollen, dust and pollutants from the air each year.
- ☞ One quaking aspen in Fishlake National Forest, Utah, has grown more than 40,000 trunks covering over 100 acres.
- ☞ A square mile of alder forest can extract up to 87 tons of nitrogen from the air each year, providing fertilizer for themselves as well as their neighbors.

Learn more: Listen to TED Talk, ‘How Trees Talk to Each Other’

Forest ecologist Suzanne Simard, whose research is referred to in the book, “*The Hidden Life of Trees*,” gave a [TED Talk](#) on the topic. TED Talks are short videos from a variety of expert speakers in a variety of fields. The 18-minute TED Talk, filmed in June 2016 and titled “How Trees Talk to Each Other,” can be viewed [here](#).

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Lorrie Otto SFE grant recipients named for 2017

Out of 36 applications received, Wild Ones awarded 11 projects with Seed for Education grant money this year. Since 1997 when the SFE grant program was started, Wild Ones has given out \$72,012 in awards for educational native garden projects. Thank you to all of the groups who participated.

Congratulations to the recipients of the 2017 Lorrie Otto Seeds for Education Grant Program:

- **Besser Elementary School**, Alpena, Michigan
“Besser Elementary Schoolyard Habitat”
- **Brunswick Area Historical Society**, Lakewood, Ohio
“Heritage Farm Pollinator Patch”
(Wild Ones Northeast Ohio Chapter)
- **College of the Atlantic**, Bar Harbor, Maine
“The Secret Sunken Garden”
- **Colonia High School**, Woodbridge Township School District, Colonia, New Jersey
“School Courtyard Community Classroom”
- **F.R.E.S.H. New London**, New London, Connecticut
“Edible New London”
(Wild Ones Mountain Laurel Chapter)
- **Hawkins Elementary School**, Toledo, Ohio
“Hawkins Toledo Proud Pollinators”
(Wild Ones Oak Openings Region Chapter)
- **Mental Health Center of Denver**, Denver, Colorado
Dahlia Campus for Health and Well-Being Native Garden
(Wild Ones Front Range Chapter)
- **Montana Natural History Center**, Missoula, Montana
“Nature Adventure Garden”
- **Natural Science Technology Center**, Toledo, Ohio
“NSTC Toledo Proud Pollinators”
(Wild Ones Oak Openings Region Chapter)
- **Ruffner Mountain**, Birmingham, Alabama
“Connecting People and Pollinators Through Alabama’s Native Plants”
- **Rush Intermediate School Ecology Club**, Cinnaminson, New Jersey
“Cinnaminson Outdoor Classroom”

If you reside in the area of any of these grant winners, please don’t hesitate to lend a hand to help them successfully establish and maintain their new SFE learning projects. 🌸

Thank you to SFE committee, judges

Wild Ones would like to thank the Seeds for Education judges who ranked the 36 SFE applications according to Wild Ones criteria. National President Janice Hand led the program this year with significant assistance from Karen Syverson, who did initial research and evaluation of grant applications, and Denise Gehring, who provided extra judging where judges’ opinions were inconsistent.

The 2017 SFE judges included:

Barbara Velez Barbosa
Columbus, Ohio chapter
Candice Meyer
Fox Valley, Wisconsin chapter
Caron Wenzel
Northern Kane County, Illinois chapter
Charles Schwenk
Green Bay, Wisconsin chapter
Cynthia Nelson
Rock River Valley, Illinois chapter
Dan Segal
National Board Member & PAL,
New York
Denise Gehring
National Board Member
Oak Openings Region, Ohio chapter
Jan Hunter
National Board Member
Oak Openings Region, Ohio chapter
Janis Solomon
National Board Member
Mountain Laurel, Connecticut chapter
Julia Gehring
Oak Openings Region Board Member,
Ohio chapter
Karen Syverson
National Board Member
Fox Valley, Wisconsin chapter
Marissa Grant
Illinois Prairie, Illinois chapter
Michael J. LeValley
Mid-Mitten, Michigan chapter
Mike Brondino
Milwaukee North, Wisconsin chapter
Rick Webb
PAL, Pennsylvania
Rob Krain
Oak Openings Region, Ohio chapter
Wanda DeWaard
Tennessee Valley, Tennessee chapter

Thank you all for being involved in a very worthwhile and educational program. 🌸

Northern Kane County Wild Ones wants to remind members that Illinois passed a law last year to create a special monarch decal for state license plates. Proceeds from the decal will fund the development of pollinator habitat along roadsides in Illinois and aid the recovery of monarchs. Sign up to be one of the 2,000 people needed to trigger the Secretary of State to design and print the monarch decal. Click for the [order form](#).

On April 11, the **Menomonee Area Chapter** (Wisconsin) presented a program, “If You Plant It, They Will Come! Planting to Benefit and Attract Wisconsin Bats.” Christa Drost, a conservation biologist and naturalist educator for River Bend Nature Center, discussed the great bats of the Badger State, what threatens their survival, and how a garden supports their dietary needs.

The **Greater Cincinnati** (Ohio) Wild Ones will be selling milkweed at **The Plant Sale at Civic Garden Center** on May 5-7. Volunteers will staff the milkweed booth and educate the public about the importance of growing milkweed in their home landscapes.

Oak Openings Region (Ohio) will get together on May 16 at The National Center for Nature Photography at Secor Metropark in Sylvania, Ohio for a presentation by Dean Babcock called “Native Bees in a Post Wild World.” He will present homeowners with strategies for creating pollinator-friendly habitat in their yards. They will also host the Blue Week Native Plant Sale on May 20-21.

Wild Ones **Arrowhead** (Minnesota) volunteers will host an informational display table at the **2nd Annual Duluth Monarch Festival** from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. May 20 at the Coopertop Church. Adults cost \$5 and children are free. There will be drop-in sessions, kids’ activities, information booths, milkweed and pollinator plants and monarch items for sale.

Wild Ones **Rock River Chapter** (Illinois) is sponsoring a lecture and natural landscape tour. The theme of this year’s event is “Inviting Nature Home: The Pollination of Native Plants.” On July 13, there will be a 7 p.m. lecture by Heather Holm, nationally renowned bee and pollinator scholar and the author of books on the subject, at Northern Illinois University – Rockford. On July 15-16, eight yards and landscapes will be open for tours.

A celebration of *Pinus strobus*

By Denise Gehring



There are two tall white pines in our front yard that bring back sweet memories of the first birthdays of our daughters. For each, our family gathered outside to help the little one plant a white pine sapling as her special birthday tree.

As they became older, the girls could readily match their own growth to that of their fast-growing white pines — one four years older than the other; one larger in sun, the other slender in the shade.

Early on, the girls discovered the pine's soft wispy needles were perfect for tickling and sniffing piney resins. When preschoolers, the girls discovered the white pine offered fun lessons in counting and spelling. Its needles, grouped into clusters of five, are like five fingers, and it spelled its own name: W-H-I-T-E. Once mastered, there were high fives all around.

When the trees grew to about 15-feet tall, they attracted new wildlife to the front yard. The girls watched the show starring feisty red squirrels leaping and dashing along the tree's springy limbs. Then one day, another pine loving "co-star" took the stage. It was the tiny red-breasted nuthatch, an energetic bird working up, down and around the trunks for insects. Remarkably, just two pines had created a mini-northwoods, a distinctive habitat, unlike the rest of the yard. Where the oaks and maples border the garden, the bigger fox squirrels and white-breasted nuthatches dominated. When the pines reproduced at about 12 years old, the following fall we saw the black-capped chickadees switch from feeders to the fresh seeds hidden in the cones at the tops of the two trees. The squirrels and chipmunks came by to cache seeds for food throughout the year.

While on vacations, our family would spot solitary windswept evergreens that towered well above the canopy. Open silhouettes reached out to the sky. Some were snags, others with craggy branches pruned by ice and snow; clearly, white pine. Designated as the state or provincial tree in Michigan, Maine and Ontario, white pines are a cultural symbol of the north. Eastern white pine (*Pinus strobus*) was recognized as the tallest species (up to 250 feet) in eastern North America. Current record trees are in North Carolina (185.5 feet), Pennsylvania (180.9 feet) and Tennessee (178 feet).

Left: *Pinus strobus*' slender leaves are arranged in sheathed bundles called fascicles. The soft, wispy needles are grouped into clusters of five.

Inset: This white pine grows at the Hiram College Field Station in Michigan's Upper Peninsula.

PHOTOS: Denise Gehring

Some summers, we'd exit I-75 north of Grayling to make a favorite stop at [Hartwick Pines State Park](#). There we could experience a rare treat — a forest of white pine giants. This 49-acre site is the only old growth white pine stand preserved in Lower Michigan. Over 300 years old, these relics of the great northern forests are inspiring at 155-feet tall with diameters of 40-50 inches. In Wisconsin, [Cathedral Pines Natural Area](#), just 80 miles north of the WILD Center, is another old growth site worth visiting.



The slender cones of white pine do not have prickles on the backside of their scales, as many pines do. PHOTO: Denise Gehring



The pollen-bearing staminate (male) yellow flowers of white pine emerge with the new shoots (candles) in mid-spring, and fertilize the nearby pistillate (female) flowers that become immature pinkish cones. PHOTO: Wikimedia

Sometimes called "the tree that built America," white pine grew in New England, the Great Lakes region, New York, Pennsylvania, and along the Appalachian Mountains. Early land surveys noted a high concentration growing on well-drained sandy soils, especially along streams. In their range, white pines grew in several forest community types, typically with hemlock, red pine or oak.

Intensive logging of the white pine started in New England in the 1700s and moved west to the Great Lakes by the mid-1800s. These tall accessible trees were the first to be cut, with billions of board feet harvested, and floated to sawmills or market. The wood was greatly prized — lightweight and versatile with straight grain for interior and exterior building needs. Before the American Revolution, the highest quality white pines were made into masts for British naval ships.

In the wild, the dominance of white pine severely decreased from pre-settlement to present day. The immense logging of white pines caused a shift in the ecosystem. Now only a minor component, they are found growing in slightly acidic soil, where there are gaps in the woods from disturbances. White pine is also a pioneer species in old farm fields sprouting up in open sandy soils. In Minnesota, the [White Pine Society](#) estimates only

2 percent remain in the state. Their website features research by U.S. Forest Service Biologist Lynn Rogers. He found that in the past 30 years, 80 percent of Minnesota's bald eagle nests and 77 percent of osprey nests were located in these native white pines. In Wisconsin, old growth white pines are being used as great blue heron rookeries.

White pines are wind pollinated with separate male and female flowers on the same tree. Every three to five years, they can produce an abundant seed crop. White pine seeds mature in the cone by their second year, but then they are short-lived, surviving only 1-2 years. These oily seeds make good pickings for wildlife. Some fallen seeds feed wild turkey, bobwhite quail, brown thrashers, towhees and juncos.

continued

When the mast of seeds rain down, they can disperse up to 700 feet by wind. Once on the ground, the seeds may grow into a dense carpet of tender seedlings. Despite heavy browsing by deer and rabbits, the prolific number of seedlings can colonize areas and grow into single species stands.

Following the logging in Michigan during the late 1800s, intense fires scorched the former white pine areas. That resulted in low regeneration by white pine seedlings and favored the growth of fire-tolerant oaks. In Northwest Ohio where I live, white pines have thrived in some oak savannas and woodlands. Curiously, this species was not part of the native vegetation. In *"Flora of the Oak Openings,"* Edwin Lincoln Moseley (1928) described the complete absence of conifers in the Oak Openings Region of Ohio as "peculiar." Soils are similar to that of Michigan and Northeast Indiana, only 50 miles away where white pines were historically abundant. Likewise, the associated understory is similar with blueberries, bracken fern, wintergreen, sweetfern and clubmosses. The USDA Plant Database confirms this void in the native range of white pine as well. Ecologists later detected charcoal in the soils, and determined the fire history from the fire scars in black and white oaks using increment-borers. The landscape had definitely burned frequently and intensely. It is believed that wildfires were started by lightning and set by prehistoric and historic Indians regularly. Evidence from archaeological studies support this as well.

If not indigenous, how did white pines get established in this ecosystem? Since 2001, [Scott Abella](#), assistant professor in the School of Life Sciences at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, has researched how the white pines colonized the Oak Openings Region. From 1933 to 1942, the Civilian Conservation Corps planted white pine plantations in the U.S. as a lumber crop on public lands and to stabilize the blowing sand after failed farming attempts and droughts. Abella found that a new generation of seedlings became established when the plantation pines were 27 years old, during a six-year wet period that favored the growth of seedlings. His research demonstrated that the white pine's ability to spread successfully also appeared to be related to reductions of fire frequency in the Oak Openings



Before a prescribed burn in the Oak Openings Region, an inter-agency burn crew of the Oak Openings Green Ribbon Initiative attend a safety session and review the burn plan. (Note white pines in the background of the burn unit.)

PHOTO: Lindsey Reinarz, courtesy of The Nature Conservancy



***Pinus strobus* is known for its distinctly whorled branching pattern.** PHOTO: Denise Gehring



The forked pine on the left shows damage in the primal leader at the top, probably by the larvae of the white pine weevil (*Pissodes strobi*) when the tree was younger. PHOTO: Denise Gehring

ecosystem. His [research](#) showed seedling invasions were found to be the greatest in areas with a history of low fire frequency.

From the 1940s until the early 1980s, fires were suppressed in parks and forests. Land management policies stated, "Let nature take its course and allow succession to proceed." Where suppression and succession followed, the fire-adapted prairies and oak savannas lost biodiversity. They degraded into low quality, shady woodlands with sub-canopies of slender red maple, sassafras and white pine. Abella's recent research demonstrated that since the early 1980s when prescribed burns were introduced for restoration in the Oak Openings area, no new significant invasions of white pine have occurred. Numerous fire-adapted native species, many of which are rare, have grown up from the seed bank. In 1988, there was a drought that stressed white pines. In 2010, a tornado blew down 150 acres of trees, mostly white pines. Would the land return as oak savanna and prairie, or white pines? Long-term plant monitoring will document the results, but it's certainly a complex story of ecological changes.

Today, there's great diversity of nature nearby to explore and conserve — prairies, dunes, oak savannas and a few often-photographed white pines in the Oak Openings region. When our daughters first arrive home to visit, they stop to check on their birthday pines, now over 30-feet tall. They search for wildlife in their trees, hoping to discover new white pine specialists like the imperial moth or feeding flocks of pine siskins and crossbills from the northwoods. [Click here](#) to learn more about Eastern White Pine. ❀

DENISE GEHRING is a *Wild Ones* national director, and past president and program chair of the Oak Openings Region chapter. She enjoys volunteering for The Nature Conservancy and Metroparks, and works as a native plant consultant, and a field botanist for Ohio Natural Areas & Preserves. Denise retired in 2008 as the director of environmental programs for the Metroparks of the Toledo Area. She has been recognized for her work by the Roger Tory Peterson Institute, National Association for Interpretation, National Recreation & Parks Association, Environmental Education Council of Ohio and other conservation organizations.

PAL spreads word about natives, Wild Ones everywhere he goes

By Barbara A. Schmitz

In the library, at the hospital or at church. At a nature center, a school, or in a meeting. No matter where you see Marnell Scheeper, it's likely the Lowden, Iowa, man has Wild Ones brochures and pamphlets ready to hand out and inform you about native plants.

A Partner-at-Large with Wild Ones since 2014, Scheeper has made it his goal to inform, educate and excite people about Wild Ones and natural landscaping.

"I believe native plants are the most beneficial in nature," he explains.

He's also doing his part to ensure pollinators, insects and other animals have a place to call home. Scheeper purchased some property along Highway 30 that he calls "Nature's Place." He started planting natives in 2012, and the land is already a certified National Wildlife Federation habitat area.

Scheeper first started by cleaning out the area of all nonnative plants, and then purchasing native bare roots plants and forbs from Prairie Moon Nursery. Each year since he has added plants and beds. One June, he planted 2,500 plugs, forbs and 44 species by hand. He's hand-seeded 6,000-square feet with 61 forbs and six grasses. He's added burr, red, white and swamp oak trees. Shrubs, such as buttonbush (*Cephalanthus occidentalis*), elderberry (*Sambucus canadensis*), hazelnut (*Corylus americana*), serviceberry (*Amelanchier arborea*), nannyberry (*Viburnum lentago*) and others now line the outside edge of the property.

Last year he added a 1,650-square-foot hummingbird garden and a 16 by 20-foot butterfly garden, both filled with 64 plants such as swamp milkweed, ironweed and yellow phlox. Altogether, he added hundreds of varieties of native plants to the property.

He's already added one pond, and is thinking about adding another. This spring, he plans to add in some pocket gardens here and there, as well as some native grasses and various forbs.

"It's young yet, but it's quite encouraging," he says. "Someone has to do something for nature. You go on garden walks and sometimes you don't see one native species. Peoples' gardens are filled with ornamental plants."

Scheeper says he found out about Wild Ones when he was doing research on the Internet. He soon realized that the organization and he had similar goals. He called the national office, and asked if they would send him brochures to pass out. They did.

"You can't win them all over," he says about the people he meets as he is promoting native landscaping. "But I strongly believe it is the right way to go. The benefit to nature is tremendous. I don't do this for the attention. I do it for nature and nature's creatures."

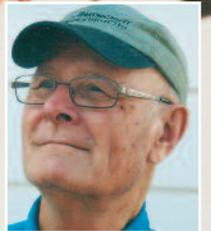
Scheeper is hopeful that others will follow his lead and see that insects depend on native plants. Plus, the flowers are colorful and beautiful.

"Choose your native plants depending on color, height or when they bloom," he says. "By planting native plants, you're doing something good for nature."

Children, like his 10-year-old grandniece, Lillia, understand the connection. "She's my nature girl. She doesn't like to be inside. I'll give her a digital camera and tell her to go out and shoot. She's not intimidated by nature; she's learning about nature on her own."

Too many people have a golf course grass mentality, he says, and then wonder why they don't have birds and butterflies. "I'm just doing my little part to educate, to pass out information from someone who is the real deal," he says. "Sometimes, you only get one chance to talk to people. I don't want to turn people off. But I'm a salesman. I like native flowers. I know I'm just one Wild Ones member. But when you add in the other members who are helping to spread the news, we can make quite the difference." 🌸

Scheeper:
'We can make quite the difference'



Female ruby throated hummingbird on *Asclepias tuberosa*.

Inset: Marnell Scheeper is a Partner-at-Large with Wild Ones who has made it his goal to inform, educate and excite people about Wild Ones and natural landscaping.



A monarch on *Liatris punctata*.

Below: Marnell Scheeper has created "Nature's Place" to ensure pollinators, insects and other animals have a place to call home.



Signs at "Nature's Place" make it clear that the property is a pollinator friendly place.



Learn to

Love



dead trees

By Charlotte Adelman



Illustrations of
cavity using birds
were painted by
Louis Agassiz Fuertes.

CARVED TREE HEART PHOTO:
Amada44; Wikimedia Commons

**Do you have snags
or hollows on your property
that are teeming with life?**

**Send photos and stories
about interesting activities
these features produce to
Barbara A. Schmitz,
Wild Ones Journal editor,
at write2us@sbcglobal.net.**

It is hard to believe, but dead trees actually provide habitat for wildlife. Standing dead and dying trees, called snags, and fallen dead trees, logs, are important for wildlife in both natural and landscaped settings. Over thousands of years, Midwestern wildlife evolved in unmanaged forests where dead trees and dead parts of live trees were vitally important parts of their environment. About 85 species of birds in North America nest in dying and dead trees, and they provide vital habitat for more than 1,000 species of wildlife nationwide, like flying squirrels, bats, raccoons and bears, according to a [National Wildlife Federation](#) blog.

Stressed and dying trees attract many insects, particularly beetles that breed in crevices, behind bark or deep within the tree. Insects are the primary diet of many birds, such as woodpeckers, chickadees and brown creepers. Ruby-throated hummingbirds devour insects and feed them to their offspring. In fact, most birds feed their nestlings a diet of insect larvae. A single woodpecker can consume thousands of insects daily, thereby reducing pest populations, according to The [Cavity Conservation Initiative](#). Great numbers of beautiful and interesting bird visitors are attracted to a dying tree's wealth of insects.

Felling a tree for whatever reason alters wildlife habitat. Some people believe leaving dead trees in the forest to rot is a waste of resources. But conservationists know that as snags, logs, fallen trees and other woody debris are recycled into the soil, they create a fantastic array of microhabitats and are favorable for the growth of new trees and other seedlings.

According to [Trees for Life](#): "There is a breathtaking range of *saproxyllic* (dependent on dead or decaying wood) organisms including fungi, lichens, invertebrates, mosses and birds, many of them having very specific requirements, and some specializing exclusively on one particular microhabitat." The rotting wood offers refuge to many species from firefly larva, salamanders, ants, snakes, to the nutritious grubs sought by bears. Loose and peeling tree bark provides winter shelter for a few adult Midwestern butterfly species like the mourning cloak and



Wildlife tree signs help to educate people about the importance of dead trees in our ecosystem.
PHOTO: Charlotte Adelman

Eastern comma. In fact, about 40 percent of woodland wildlife is dependent on this aspect of the forest ecosystem.

My backyard gardening scheme has included dead and dying trees for decades. Generations of cardinals, goldfinches and robins use birdbaths conveniently placed on logs. Countless chickadees and wrens raise babies in birdhouses hung on snags or use old woodpecker cavities. A nocturnal screech owl, well camouflaged, may peer from a tree cavity. Some of my snags enhance the backyard landscape as dramatic architectural elements. They remind me of the Orkney Islands' ancient Standing Stones. To ensure continued growth of living trees, I plant a native oak next to each newly created snag.

Recently, I discovered The Cavity Conservation Initiative. Promoting "the safe retention of dead and dying trees to



Cavity using birds left to right: Eastern bluebird, downy woodpecker, wood ducks, screech owls, red-headed woodpecker, northern flicker, chickadee.

preserve cavity-dwelling species and their habitats,” this remarkable initiative embraces the term “wildlife tree” and produces inexpensive aluminum garden signs that they sell online. Putting up wildlife tree signs is an easy way to educate the public about why a dead tree has been retained. In my yard, the wildlife tree signs provide daily validation and make me smile. For the gardener who “has everything,” the signs make great gifts that keep on giving.

“All dead trees will lose limbs and fall eventually, so it is critical that safely retained trees not be considered safe forever, but be scheduled for re-evaluation by an arborist trained in tree-risk assessment,” cautions Gillian Martin, Cavity Conservation Initiative director. “Doing so prior to the onset of periods of wet weather, snow and ice storms is particularly important.”

The Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History recently embraced the wildlife tree concept by “giving a second life” to a declining pine tree into an ornamental and ecologically productive snag. According to the Smithsonian Gardens’ website, “Through creative thinking the Smithsonian Gardens’ staff discovered a great opportunity to turn what could have been a significant loss to gardens into a valuable resource.”

“Wildlife trees offer a one-stop, natural habitat feature,” the Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife states. “In short, snags ‘live on’ as excellent wildlife trees for all to enjoy!” ❁

CHARLOTTE ADELMAN, a retired attorney, along with her husband, **Bernie Schwartz**, are co-authors of “*The Midwestern Native Garden: Native Alternatives to Nonnative Flowers and Plants*” and the recently released “*Midwestern Native Shrubs and Trees, Gardening Alternatives to Nonnative Species, An Illustrated Guide.*”



Charlotte Adelman stands next to a snag, a wildlife tree sign and a wren house where wrens were nesting in the Adelman/Schwartz backyard.
PHOTO: Bernie Schwartz

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Back in the late 20th century, Americans discovered yogurt and its health benefits. But it was a bit too tart for the American palate. The solution? Add sugars and flavorings. Manufacturers added not just fruit, but jam; not just a sprinkling of nuts, but bits of candy; not just flavors from real food, but artificial flavorings and unnatural colors.

Today, grocery stores devote a whole wall of the dairy section to the many varieties of sweetened yogurt. Want just plain yogurt? It's there, but you'll have to search for it.

We've turned what had been an ancient, health-sustaining food into just another unhealthy dessert. Yet it's a dessert we feel virtuous in eating. After all, it's yogurt, right?

But why am I writing about food in a plant journal?

Because we're doing to plants what we've done to yogurt and other foods. We're taking life-sustaining "plain" plants — our native species — and "sweetening" them beyond recognition. Novelty-seeking humans like lots of extra petals, unnaturally garish colors and fewer "messy" berries. Industrial horticulture has flooded conventional nurseries with these profitable creations.

We know that excess sugar doesn't support human health, and we're now finding that many cultivars of native plants — known as nativars — don't provide healthy food for wildlife or the benefits of genetic diversity.

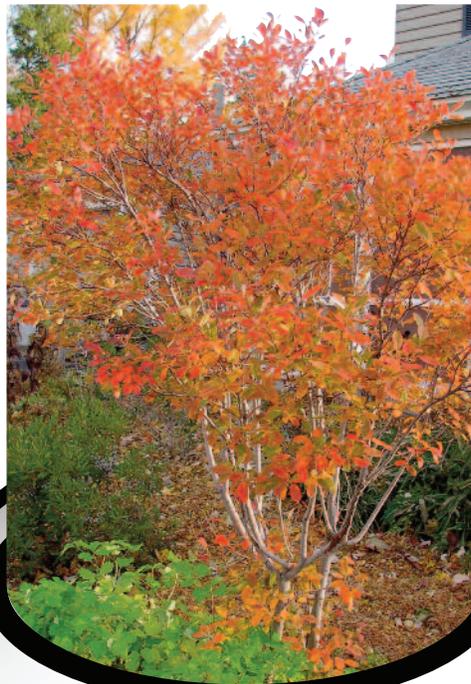
Does it matter that a plant is technically native if it has so many petals a bee can't reach the nectar? That its nectar guides — invisible to people, but essential cues for pollinators — have disappeared in our race to create novel colors? That flowers haven't produced seeds birds need in fall and winter?

But as with eating yogurt, we have a virtuous feeling when we plant a nativar. After all, it's native, right?

People who have chosen to eat unprocessed foods have been rewarded with better health. Many even discover that their taste buds adapt and formerly favorite foods now taste sickeningly sweet. Our reeducated taste buds can actually enjoy the clean taste of simple yogurt, a piece of fresh fruit or a simple vegetable dish.

We can similarly rethink our choice of planting nativars. Sure, just as occasionally indulging in a dessert-y yogurt won't destroy our health, planting an occasional nativar (especially one similar to the species) won't destroy all the benefits of a natural landscape. But we can reeducate our horticultural "taste buds" and come to appreciate the simple elegance of the species, the variations we see in plants when they reseed, the charm of subtler colors.

You find out what's in your yogurt by reading the label, and you can identify nativars by reading plant labels. The serviceberry nativar in this photo is labeled *Amelanchier canadensis* 'Glenn Form.' The scientific name *Amelanchier canadensis* is italicized and represents the genus and the species. 'Glenn Form' represents the cultivar name. It's written in regular type and is bounded by single quotation marks. As the Missouri Botanical Garden points out in its description of this cultivar, "Less than 10 percent of the flowers produce mature fruit." Sorry, birds. Were you expecting the usual serviceberry feast? This plant is for decoration only.



Even more, we can revel in the life native species support. We can enjoy watching a bee zeroing in on a nectar-rich flower or a bird devouring nutritious seeds left to overwinter on spent stalks. We can hope that some of the genetically varied seedlings our species produce will be able to adapt to a changing climate or survive attacks by exotic pests and diseases.

In an increasingly industrialized society and threatened environment, we can know that we're doing one of the most important things an individual can do to support life on earth: planting native species. 🌱

JANET ALLEN is co-founder of the Wild Ones chapter, Habitat Gardening in Central New York. She has written numerous articles about habitat gardening for various publications and frequently gives presentations to garden groups or at conferences. Allen is creator and webmaster of Our Habitat Garden and Our Edible Garden. Her yard is certified as Monarch Waystation by Monarch Watch and a Certified Wildlife Habitat by the National Wildlife Federation.

Learn more about nativars

Wild Ones Nativars Position Statement

Native, or Not So Much? Native plants transformed into flashy "nativars" may look pretty, but are they good for wildlife?

By Janet Marinelli

The Nativar Conundrum: New Research on Natives vs. Native Cultivars with Dr. Doug Tallamy

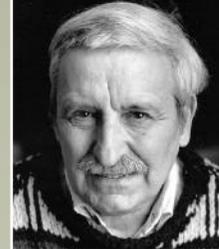
By Kim Eierman

By Janet Allen

Yogurt's

Lessons on nativars

Annual meeting, conference moves to new location



Early Wild Ones contributor inducted into Hall of Fame

By Donna VanBuecken

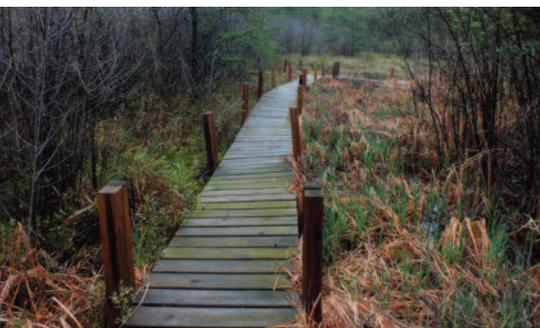
The Wisconsin Conservation Hall of Fame, the only such Hall of Fame in the U.S., inducted Hugh Iltis during an Earth Day ceremony.

Iltis was a major force in a number of conservation endeavors in Wisconsin, and was also called upon by Wild Ones to share his knowledge of botany during the early days of its formation. His technical bulletin, "Atlas of the Wisconsin Prairie and Savanna Flora," was published in 2000 and is still being used today.

In 1955, he joined the UW-Madison Botany Department and for many years served as Director of the UW Herbarium. In 1960, Iltis co-founded The Nature Conservancy in Wisconsin and championed its efforts to protect natural areas by serving on its Board, providing technical and scientific advice on acquisitions, and working with landowners to protect some of Wisconsin's most unique ecosystems such as the Baraboo Hills and Chiewaukee Prairie. He was a collaborator with Lorrie Otto and many other conservationists to ban DDT in Wisconsin and in America.

Nationally and globally, Iltis is best known for his efforts to protect biosphere reserves in Mexico and South America, and his plant studies, including the discovery in Mexico of *Zea diploperennis*, a perennial wild relative of corn, now being used for plant breeding.

In 1996, the WILD ONES JOURNAL ran a cover story, "Iltis on Nature." He died in December 2016 at age 91.



Trails lead visitors through 131 acres of woodlands, prairies and wetlands at the Seno K/RLT property.

The 2017 Wild Ones Annual Meeting and Chapter Leadership Conference will be held Aug. 19, 2017. Wild Ones is partnering with Seno K/RLT (Kenosha/Racine Land Trust) Conservancy to host this annual conference in southeastern Wisconsin.

This site features 131 acres of woodlands, prairie and wetlands set in Wisconsin's farm country between Burlington and Lake Geneva. Meetings will be held in Seno's picturesque, rustic Wisconsin barn, which has been converted for education and event space.

On Friday afternoon, Aug. 18, the National Board will hold its August meeting, followed by an informal workshop and dinner. Chapter leaders are welcome to attend.

Information about speakers, workshops and events for the daylong chapter conference on Saturday will be posted on the Wild Ones website in May. Chapters will also be invited to register for the conference via email. Options for lodging, camping and meals will be offered.

The Wild Ones Annual Meeting will be held from 1-2 p.m. Aug. 19. **All Wild Ones members are welcome to attend the Annual Meeting, even if not registered or participating in the rest of the day's events.**

Seno is located 5 miles south of Burlington and 7 miles north and east of Lake Geneva on County Highway P. We hope to see as many of you as possible for this event. 🍀

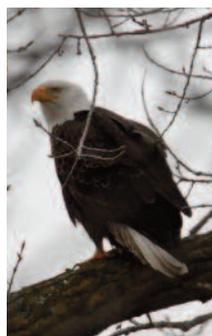


The Wild Ones Annual Meeting will be held in a barn converted for education and events on the Seno K/RLT property.

WILD CENTER UPDATE

You can always tell when spring comes to the WILD Center. That's because the many feathered friends that make their home here also come back to live. It's a great time to be working at the WILD Center, where just by looking out the window, you'll see bald eagles, sandhill cranes, turkeys, robins, red-winged blackbirds and more.

PHOTOS: Elaine Krizenesky





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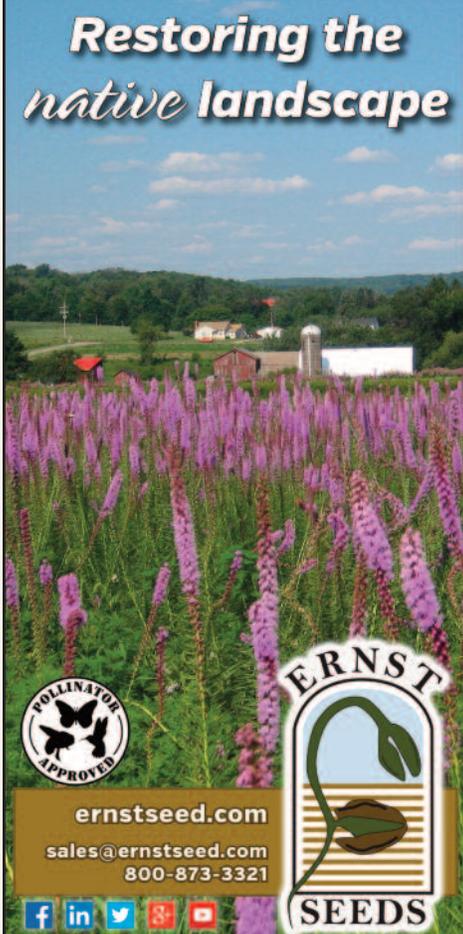
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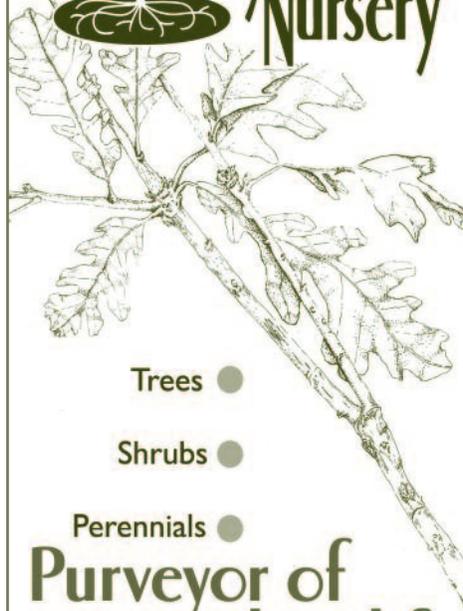
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- 13 years - Habitat Gardening in Central New York, NY
- 16 years - Door Peninsula, Wis.
- 17 years - Gibson Woods, Ind.
- 17 years - Southeast Michigan, Mich.
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<https://www.epa.gov/wetlands/may-american-wetlands-month-learn-explore-take-action>

May 1-7, 2017

National Wildflower Week

Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center

June 18, 2017

Michigan BeePalooza

East Lansing, Michigan
<http://www.beepalooza.org/>

June 19-25, 2017

National Pollinator Week

<http://pollinator.org/pollinatorweek/>

July 28-30, 2017

Midwest Native Plant Conference

Dayton, Ohio
<http://midwestnativeplants.org/>

August 19, 2017

Wild Ones Annual Meeting and Chapter Leadership Conference

Seno K/RLT Conservancy
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