

LEXINGTON CHAPTER — JUNE, 2012

<http://wildones.org/chapters/lexington/>

LOCAL CHAPTER JUNE EVENT

- **Thurs., June 7, at 7 p.m.—Tour of McConnell Springs wetlands.** McConnell Springs Park is located at 416 Reberman Lane, off Old Frankfort Pike. The tour will be led by Ken Cooke of the Friends of Wolf Run. He will explain the reasons for the constructed wetland project and how it works.

Our Chapter's Website

By Ann Bowe

Wild Ones member and former board member, **Eve Podet** created an excellent webpage for our chapter and maintained it for several years. This task has now been taken over by **Ann McCarthy**. Thank you!

Our webpage contains event information, plant sources, places to visit and books and blogs to read.

Each month our Chapter President, **Beate Popkin**, writes a timely piece that is illustrated by her own beautiful photographs. I never miss reading these little gems. This month she speaks to a quote from *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek* by Annie Dillard: "Nature is, above all, profligate." How does this relate to the author's own native plant garden? Go to <http://wildones.org/chapters/lexington/> to find out!



More on the 4th Annual Midwest Native Plant Conference

By Ann Bowe

This is the fourth annual Midwest Native Plant Conference. I attended the first three and, if you attend, you will not be disappointed. These conferences have everything: a fantastic location, many vendors selling native plants, a trade show, excellent speakers and the Sunday field trips are always terrific.

The keynote speakers for this conference are topnotch. **Marielle Anzelone** is a highly regarded and widely known urban ecologist who will speak about her efforts to green NYC. **Ian Adams** is a legend in the world of natural history photography. His program, entitled "Gossamer Wings: The World of Dragonflies and Damselflies", will be full of dazzling images. Then there is "Mr. Caterpillar", **Dr. David Wagner**, who will weave a fabulous tale about the interactions among plants, caterpillars and people.

Truly, there is never a moment without something interesting happening. Each year we participated we would arrive on time for the Friday afternoon field trip, then dinner followed by a keynote speaker. Saturday is filled with a choice of workshops, an evening keynote speaker and often an evening outdoor event. Sunday morning, another great keynote speaker followed by the field trips. This is a great opportunity to learn and it's such fun to hang out with other native plant geeks!

Registration is now open. Check it out at <http://midwestnativeplants.org/>.

Invasive Plant of the Month

By
Victoria Ligenza

JAPANESE BARBERRY—*Berberis thunbergii*—AND TICKS



New research has shown that one invasive species, Japanese barberry, is affecting the natural environment in unexpected ways that can have an impact on human health. Introduced to the United States in 1875 it wasn't considered a problem until the 1980s when it began to spread and take the place of native plants. Current research at the University of Connecticut Forest in Storrs has resulted in some interesting findings. They have discovered that barberry has a negative impact on the forest ecosystem in unexpected ways. Barberry provides the perfect humid environment for the ticks that carry Lyme disease and other tick-borne diseases.

The results of three different habitats are: uncontained invaded forest areas had 120 infected ticks per acre; areas such as garden contained plantings had 40 infected ticks per acre; and areas where there were no barberries had 10 infected ticks per acre.

The barberry provides a favorable environment for mice which act as vectors to spread the immature nymph stage of the tick. It is estimated that the nymphs are responsible for 90 percent of the transmission to humans.

The tick population is growing in most states and could be a result of climate change or the invasive species. Also natural predators that might eat the tick, such as ground dwelling birds are no longer as numerous due to loss of habitat and, possibly, being objects of prey for house cats.

To read more about this research, go to: <http://today.uconn.edu/blog/2012/02/controlling-japanese-barberry-helps-stop-spread-of-tick-borne-diseases/>.



Critter of the Month

SUMMER TANAGER – *Piranga rubra*

By
Victoria Ligenza

The Summer Tanager is the only entirely red bird in North America. Pairs are usually hidden in tall treetops in deciduous woods, making it difficult to spot them. Their diet consists of bees, wasps, wasp larvae/pupae other insects but they also will eat fruits and berries, especially during the late breeding season and while migrating. They are excellent flycatchers able to seize adult bees and wasps in mid-flight.

Their song is similar to a robin's but less melodious. They also have a three note call that sounds like a quick 'pit-i-dock'. During nesting the male occasionally feeds the incubating female and, after the chicks hatch, both parents feed them a diet usually consisting of whole insects.

Interesting facts – When the Summer Tanager catches a bee or wasp it will land in a tree and wipe the insect on a branch to remove the stinger before eating it. The females, which are usually olive on the back and orange yellow on the under parts, can become all red with advanced age making them look like males. The first year male can have the color of both the male and female making it difficult to identify.

A WALK IN THE WOODS

By Beate Popkins

On Saturday, April 14, about 15 members of our Wild Ones chapter participated in a hike at the Sally Brown Nature Preserve led by Jim Alrich of the Nature Conservancy. Although spring brought early blooming this year, the forest floor was still covered with Miami mist (*Phacelia purshii*), ragwort made golden patches under the trees, and cupleaf, though not a showy bloomer, was valiantly fighting it out with the garlic mustard.

We admired crossvine blooms high up in the tree and were delighted to discover bladdernut and blackhaw viburnum in bloom. When Jim pointed out spicebushes, rough-leaved dogwood, blue ashes with their quadrangular stems, pawpaws, basswood and many other plants, we truly came to appreciate the natural richness and diversity of the Kentucky River Palisades.

We returned from our hike to the home of Wild Ones members **Ken** and **Vicki Brooks** to eat our lunch on their deck, enjoying the magnificent view overlooking the Preserve and a vast stretch of Bluegrass country beyond.

The Brooks property constitutes a buffer between the Sally Brown Preserve and the privately owned farm and residential areas typical of our region. Ken and Vicki own their land under the conditions of a conservation easement, which means the use and resale of their property is restricted to safeguard the unique ecosystem of the Preserve. The Nature Conservancy offers such buffer properties for sale to conservation-minded buyers. Details of the program are available at <http://www.nature.org/ourinitiatives/regions/northamerica/unitedstates/kentucky/howwework/conservation-land-buyer-program.xml>

Ken and Vicki are also very involved in restoration of natural habitats in the Sally Brown and Crutcher Preserves. They welcome any volunteers willing to join the fight against invasives on the two Preserves. They can be contacted at **859-229-8579**.

Plant Exchange 2012

By Beate Popkins

Our chapter held its fourth annual plant exchange on Thursday, May 3. As in years past, the event was lively and well attended. While some of the species offered for exchange appeared in great abundance, others were represented with only one or a very few specimen. But none of this mattered, for there was, as always, a taker for every plant.

Many participants seemed happy to take home the white beardtongues, black-eyed susans and wild ginger that were offered in large numbers; others were pleased to find Indian Physic or wild quinine or something else unusual. Again, there were practically no rejects. Last year, after everybody had left, just two small pots remained with little sticks in them that later turned out to be redbud trees, and this year one very large ragwort was left behind in its plastic bag. Otherwise, by 9 p.m., the ground that had accommodated hundreds of plants only an hour before was completely bare.

As in the past, Salato Wildlife Center offered plants to our exchange and this year we also had donations from two business members: Springhouse Gardens and Shooting Star Nursery. These plants were well rooted in their pots and sure to take off when put in the ground; they also contributed to the variety of species represented. We are very grateful to all three organizations for their donations.

Not only were the plants at our exchange exciting and varied, but so were the culinary offerings. For this was not simply a plant-luck, it was also a pot-luck and the eating and drinking – not to mention the talking – went on alongside the scouting and (indeed!) grabbing.

Finally, the plants went home with new owners. Hopefully, they all found suitable places in new gardens and will live there happily to the delight of their owners and to the benefit of the insects that seek them out.



Healthy Garden—Mycorrhizae Help Feed Your Plants

An excerpt from article written by Greg Quinn for Fine Gardening Magazine

One of the most valuable organisms your soil can have is a fungus known as mycorrhiza, which means “fungus root” in Greek. Mycorrhizae are fungi that establish a graceful, symbiotic relationship with the roots of most plants. They invade the roots of vegetables, flowers, shrubs, and trees; connect them, one to the other; and then send out their filaments, called hyphae, as much as 200 times farther into the soil than the roots they colonize. Mycorrhiza has the ability to better mine this wider area for water and nutrients, especially phosphorus, which it transmits back to the roots. The plant pays for this service with the glucose the fungus needs.

This extended feeding area makes mycorrhizae-associated plants just plain healthier. They have better root formation as well as fewer root diseases and other soil pest problems. They also require less moisture and fertilizer, while showing an increased tolerance to salt.

The key to this wonderful, subterranean environment is the undisturbed labyrinth of hyphae. Tilling and even simple hoeing can rip apart this delicate lace, which can then take months or even years to reestablish. Too much synthetic fertilizer can also damage the fungus, as can pesticides and, of course, fungicides.

Soils high in organic matter are where mycorrhizae flourish, so adding compost is one of the best ways to encourage the establishment and growth of the fungi. Lay the compost on top of the soil and let it naturally decay into the soil.

Mycorrhizal inoculants are available from several companies, but adding these to your soil is usually not necessary unless the soil microbe population has been damaged. Often, the products will contain a mix of many different fungi in the hope that one will match your plant.

Meet the American Yellowwood

By Heather Wilson



The American yellowwood (*Cladrastis kentukea*), from the *Fabaceae* family, is a medium sized tree native to the limestone regions of Kentucky. This tree can reach 30-50' in height with a broad rounded crown. Each characteristic of this species is noteworthy.

The leaves of the yellowwood are pinnately compound, meaning that each individual leaf has 7-11 leaflets. The leaves hold a bright bluish-green in the summer, then turn beautiful orange-yellow in the fall. Reminiscent of the American beech tree, the bark is smooth and gray often with wrinkles where the branches meet with the trunk. This bark always puts me in mind of elephant legs. Flowers of the yellowwood are strongly fragrant and white; forming in large drooping branched clusters (10-15" long). These flower pannicles can cover a mature tree. This display usually occurs in May, though, like with just about everything else this spring, flowering occurred about a month early. For those of you not familiar with this tree, make sure to be on the lookout for this display next spring. Although an individual tree may not bloom for the first 8 to 10 years, when it does, this display is something to search out. In late spring, the flowers give way to flat, brown seed pods which mature in early fall. A great place to look for yellowwoods is Gratz Park.

The American yellowwood is a low maintenance tree, preferring full sun and providing great shade. Its water requirements are low and it does very well in average, medium, well-drained soil. There are no serious disease or insect problems that face this tree, making it great for urban plantings. Please note, however, that pruning should be done in winter to avoid 'bleeding' that can occur when the tree is active.

JUNE EVENTS

Springhouse Gardens Native Plant Event

- **Sat., June 2**
Dr. Tom Barnes will give two talks:
9:45 a.m.—“Using Native Plants in the Garden”
11 a.m.— “Attracting Hummingbirds”

Watch this column next month for
Details about the 4th Annual Butterfly
Weekend.

Dropseed Nursery Plant Sale

- **Sat., June 2, 9, and 16, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.**
Directions: <http://dropseednursery.com>

Floracliff Lecture Series

Programs held indoors at the Winifred W. Haggart Nature Center and should last 60 to 90 minutes. Call **859-351-7770** or email floracliff@aol.com to pre-register and get directions.


- **Tues., June 12, 7:00 p.m.**
Rob Paratley, UK
“Eastern Deciduous Forest Through the Eyes of Lucy Braun”
Rob will explore the contributions of E. Lucy Braun, early to mid-20th century ecologist and botanist, author of *Deciduous Forests of Eastern North America*.
- **Tues., June 26th, 7:00 p.m.**
Brian Yahn, KY State Nature Preserves Commission
“Plant Communities of the Bluegrass”

Bernheim Arboretum/Research Forest

- **Sat., June 16, 1 to 3 p.m.**
“No Lawn Landscaping”
Explore creative approaches to reduce your lawn and replace it with a more dynamic space.
\$10 Members and \$15 Non Members.
Pre-registration required. Call 502-955-8512.

WATCH FOR JULY ISSUE

 Interview with Marianne Hunt, *Wild Ones* member and owner of Shooting Star Nursery.

 Details about *Wild Ones* chapter visit to Shooting Star Nursery on Thurs., **July 6** at 7 p.m.

Check out Shaker Village 3,000 Acre Backyard

Sat., June 2, Free Adventure Day

Selected highlights

- 8:30 a.m.— Birdwatching**
 - 10:00 a.m.—Wildlife Hike/Birds of Prey**
 - 10:30 a.m.—Walk through Time**
 - 1:00 p.m.—Tree ID Hike**
 - 1:30 p.m.—Natural History Hike**
 - 3:30 p.m.—Shaker Heritage Hike**
- Check website shakervillageky.org for
Special Events Calendar.

This newsletter is a publication of the Lexington Chapter of The Wild Ones organization. It is published nine times a year: March, April, May, June, July, August, September, October, November as an electronic newsletter.

If you have any questions, suggestions, or information for future editions, contact Ann Bowe, chair of the Marketing and Communications Committee, at annbowe@annbowedesigns.com or Judy Johnson, newsletter editor, at judylex@insightbb.com.