

## LEXINGTON CHAPTER — JULY, 2012

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

### LOCAL CHAPTER JULY EVENT

On **Thursday evening, July 5 at 7:00 p.m.** *Wild Ones* will meet at Shooting Star Nursery, 160 Soards Road, Georgetown, KY, for a tour of the plantings and opportunity to purchase native plants. (**DIRECTIONS:** Either I-64 or Leestown Rd to Midway exit. R on Georgetown/Midway Rd, also identified as #341, to dead end at Ironworks. Left about .2 mile to Soards Rd. Right on Soards. Nursery is about 1 mi. out Soards.)

*Shooting Star (Dodecatheon meadia). The smooth, oblong to spoon-shaped leaves, up to 10 inches long, occur in a cluster at the base of the plant.*

*The cluster of flowers droops at the end of a long stalk. The individual flowers have 5 petals that flare backwards to expose the stamens, which form a beak or cone pointing downward, giving the flower the appearance of a rocket.*



*Thomas Barnes and S. Wilson Francis,  
"Wildflowers and Ferns of Kentucky"*

### Meet Marianne Hunt of Shooting Star Nursery

*By Adele Robertson*

Most of you *Wild Ones* are probably already familiar with Shooting Star Nursery at 160 Soards Road (which is actually closer to Midway than its Georgetown address suggests). I, however, made my first visit there last November before becoming a *Wild Ones* member. I was taking advantage of an unseasonably warm fall to select plants for a rain garden. **Marianne Hunt**, the owner, was gracious enough to take the time to help this novice gardener choose the “right stuff,” she even drew a map on a paper plate (which I still have): hibiscus centered, slender cattail here, blue flag iris there, dwarf horsetail interspersed.

Needless to say I was duly impressed, and grateful. In the end she assured me that my garden would look good the following spring—and she was right. I ventured back this past April to interview her for this article.

When I arrived Marianne was giving advice to a client over the phone and simultaneously wrapping plants for shipping. After she finished taking care of business, we sat down to talk.

Marianne explained she had always loved ephemerals and found them difficult to get here in Kentucky. When Shooting Star Nursery came up for sale early in 2000, she interviewed owner Marc Evans. They closed the deal on April 1 of that year.

Marianne and her husband own the nursery and employ three women and two teenagers, one of whom is their son, all knowledgeable about their stock. About 70% of their business is either online ([www.shootingstarnursery.com](http://www.shootingstarnursery.com)) or by phone (502-867-7979) which, she said, saved them the year of the drought by giving them markets in unaffected areas.

When asked to name her biggest challenge, Marianne replied, “The business end—I’d rather be out in the garden—you know taxes, insurance, packaging costs, etc. That, and keeping the plants looking good. Natives don’t want to be in pots, so keeping them in a greenhouse is a challenge. You have to know what customers will want—and know it a month before they do.”

Shooting Star sits on seven acres of land, three of which are occupied by greenhouses. So there is room to grow. And with owners who take each task to heart, Shooting Star is definitely living up to its name! The July *Wild Ones* chapter meeting will be a great time to explore this outstanding nursery.

# Butterfly Gardening

By Vicki Ligenza



The "Butterfly Lady" Linda Porter

It was recently announced that in 2012, The Garden Club of Danville won first place awards from the Garden Club of Kentucky, the South Atlantic Region of Garden Clubs and The National Garden Club, Inc., for its work to install butterfly gardens that assist in the preservation of butterflies and in the education of the public on the importance of butterflies. The endeavor which won this recognition was a garden at Woodlawn Elementary School in Danville, KY.

In the early 1990s a garden had been installed at the school by students, teachers, and parents. In 2010 the Youth Committee of the Garden Club of Danville volunteered to help restore the original garden. When *Wild Ones* member **Linda Porter**, a retired teacher, heard that a butterfly garden was planned as part of the renovation, she offered to help. She drew up a landscape plan that included a variety of native plants. Another *Wild Ones* member, **Mary Carol Cooper**, was director of the native plant program at the Salato Wildlife Education Center in Frankfort at the time. Mary Carol donated 25 native plants to the garden as part of the Center's Backyard Habitat Program and the enthusiastic students planted the contributions.

Butterflies flocked to both the annuals and the natives. The milkweed attracted both monarch butterflies and tussock moths. Teachers asked for more information about butterflies to be provided to their students. In the fall of 2011, with advice and support from *Wild Ones* member **Betty Hall**, Linda presented lessons to eight classes, from preschool to first grade, on the life cycle and growing of butterflies.

The school has now taken over the maintenance and future of the garden. Linda is serving as a Garden Club consultant to the Curriculum Committee that is in charge of the garden. Plans are now underway to extend the butterfly education program to third grade classes through the study of both butterfly life cycles and migration.

Butterfly Garden at Woodlawn Elementary in Danville



# Fantasy Forest

By Ann Bove



Helpers create and tend the Fantasy Forest

Picture a city block, stripped of houses because it flooded. Rather a bleak image. Then imagine it full of native trees and shrubs and hear the sounds of children at play and learning about the natural world. *Wild Ones* member **Connie May** had this vision and is making it a reality.

Connie secured a USDA 'People's Garden' grant provided through a national organization called the Alliance for Community Trees. The transformation of the corner of Second and Logan in Frankfort has begun with the planting of a couple of hundred native trees and shrubs – dozens of species.

Connie calls this Fantasy Forest, "a place where children and adults can connect with nature through native plants and the beautiful, fascinating diversity of life they support."

Planting was done by community volunteers, under Connie's supervision. She is seeking organizations to support her vision of four 3,000 square foot islands linked by mowed walking paths. Each island will have plants that will illustrate various aspects in the life of an ecosystem.

Congratulations on your success, Connie! And kudos to the Frankfort community for supporting this wonderful project.



## Wild Ones Membership Meeting at McConnell Springs

By Beate Popkin

On Thursday, June 7, our *Wild Ones* group met at McConnell Springs and learned about the storm water treatment structure installed there in recent years. McConnell Springs is a small city-owned park located in the midst of Lexington's most industrial area. The land was originally set aside as a park for historical reasons: the first European settlement was presumably established near these springs. To many of us, who had not been there for several years, the more recent developments were a great and pleasant surprise. In addition to the beautifully designed structure for the visitor center and covered picnic area, the new water treatment structure can be viewed from a magnificent semi-circular board walk.

Rain water from a mostly industrial area within the Wolf Run watershed passes through four consecutive basins where debris is captured and toxic materials settle to the bottom before the water moves on into Wolf Run Creek, Elkhorn Creek and, eventually, the Kentucky River. The purpose of this facility is to filter pollutants from our urban environment out of rain water as it takes its natural course toward our rivers. Ken Cooke, from the Wolf Run watershed alliance, and Dr. David Price from the LFUC Department of Environmental Quality explained to us how the facility works and provided data to prove that pollutants are indeed being filtered out.



The edges of the water basins, or ponds, are planted with grasses and some wildflowers. Ken Cooke invited our group to generate ideas on how this planting could be enhanced by introducing a greater variety of species, including shrubs and even trees. Not only that, he encouraged us to consider undertaking a service project with the goal of adding to the diversity of plants in the immediate vicinity of facility's ponds. Since McConnell Springs is a public park, it is, like all our city parks, in need of the help of citizen groups, and this appears to be a project for which the expertise of our *Wild Ones* group seems particularly well suited.

## Tree of the Month

By Ann Bowe



The pawpaw (*Asimina triloba*) is a multi-stemmed shrub or small tree that is the only temperate member of an otherwise tropical tree family. It has large leaves for such a small tree, 6 – 12" long and half as wide. In a sunny spot, such as their location at the Arboretum, they have short trunks and their branches form a dense pyramidal or rounded-topped canopy. At the Red River Gorge, in the understory, they look quite different with an open, rather airy, form.

The pawpaw is the only host plant of the larvae of the zebra swallowtail butterfly. A chemical in the leaf makes the butterfly unpalatable to predators.

The pawpaw fruit is delicious. George Washington would agree; chilled pawpaw fruit was one of his favorite desserts.

This tree can be difficult to find, but good news! Go to Springhouse Gardens where you'll find them in 3 gallon pots, about 3 1/2' tall, selling for \$59.99.



## Milkweeds—We Can't Have Monarchs without Them

By Betty Hall

I'm attracted to all butterflies, but if I had to choose my favorite it would definitely be monarchs. I am amazed at the monarch migration story. These seemingly fragile creatures fly to Mexico for the winter and then get back to the states in spring! I'll never forget seeing masses of them covering trees in Mexico.

Milkweeds are essential for the survival of monarchs since it is the only plant their caterpillars can eat. As land is developed, fence rows cleared, and pesticides used, there are fewer milkweeds in the wild. However, we can help counteract this trend by including milkweeds in our gardens.



Monarch on Common Milkweed

Seven years ago I saw a monarch laying eggs on my small Common Milkweed plants, and I raised some of the caterpillars indoors. I watched them grow and change into lovely green chrysalises, finally emerging as beautiful butterflies. I wish everyone could witness this process. My tips for raising butterflies are available on my website: [www.bettyhallphotography.com/resources/butterfly-resources/](http://www.bettyhallphotography.com/resources/butterfly-resources/).

We have five different milkweeds in the backyard, and I've seen monarch caterpillars, and adults nectaring on all of them. The Common Milkweed (*Asclepias syriaca*) blooms in early summer. It has a fragrant pink blossom that has attracted a wide variety of butterflies including Mourning Cloaks and other pollinators. Some folks see it as a coarse invasive plant. I find it quite attractive. After it blooms and begins to get scraggly, I cut it back. It does spread by underground roots (rhizomes), but I find it easy to pull up shoots that appear where I don't want them.

Swamp Milkweed (*Asclepias incarnata*) has finer-textured foliage, blooms later than common milkweed, and also has attractive pink blossoms that attract a variety of pollinators. Purple Milkweed (*Asclepias purpurascens*) is a handsome plant with dark-green leaves with purple veins and purple blossoms. I wish more folks would try it.

In sharp contrast, Butterfly Milkweed (*Asclepias tuberosa*) has attractive bright orange blossoms. While other milkweeds grow in full sun or partial shade, this plant needs full sun. It tolerates poor soil but requires good drainage. I've tried it in different spots with only moderate success, but I like it a lot and will keep trying.



Purple Milkweed



Tropical Milkweed

Last year I planted nonnative Annual Milkweed, sometimes called Tropical, or Louisiana Milkweed (*Asclepias curassavica*). I saw several caterpillars on it, and it attracted adults, especially in October as the monarchs migrated south. However, these milkweeds were the source of a scary experience and a valuable lesson. When cutting some food for caterpillars, I accidentally got some of the milkweed sap in my eyes and by the next morning, I could hardly see. During a doctor's visit we discovered that the milkweed sap was the problem and with the help of steroid drops my vision was fine in a couple of days. Some online research found other people have had similar experiences, and the sap of all milkweeds is somewhat toxic. I plan to continue growing all of these milkweeds, but I'll be cautious when cutting them.

I've recently registered our backyard as a Monarch Way Station with [www.MonarchWatch.org](http://www.MonarchWatch.org). There are only thirty-three gardens registered in Kentucky and two in Lexington — ours and Sayre School. Maybe increasing this number would make a good *Wild Ones* project? It's relatively easy to be certified and I'm guessing that many *Wild Ones*' gardens will qualify with little or no extra work.

If you already have milkweeds in your landscape, good for you! If you don't, I hope you'll plant some so that you, too, can enjoy the flowers and their visitors, especially monarchs.

## JULY EVENTS

### \* Tuesday, July 10 at 10:00 a.m.—Arboretum

For the vegetable gardeners among us: Dr. Rick Durham, Extension Professor of Horticulture, will discuss how to keep your summer garden productive. Suggestions will be given on selection and planting times for fall crops to extend your harvest season. Free.

### \* Tuesday, July 10 at 6:30 p.m.—Floracliff Lecture Series at the Winifred Haggart Nature Center

Roberta Burnes from the Kentucky Division for Air Quality will talk about *Plants as Bioindicators* – nature’s early warning system. Please call 351-7770 to preregister and get directions.

### \* Saturday, July 14 at 10 a.m.—Springhouse Gardens Third Annual Butterfly Weekend

This will be a kid friendly event, so bring ‘em along! Look for the Butterfly Table, full of host and nectar plants. And lots of native plants including mapleleaf viburnum, pawpaws and dwarf chinquapin oaks! Check [www.springhousegardens.com](http://www.springhousegardens.com) for more details closer to the event date.

### \* July 27, 28, 29—Midwest Native Plant Conference in Dayton, Ohio

This fantastic conference is coming very soon! You will be delighted, don’t miss this opportunity to learn, hang out with like minded folks and have a lot of fun. Chapter members could carpool. Please email [annbowe@annbowedesigns.com](mailto:annbowe@annbowedesigns.com) if you’re interested in attending. For more info go to <http://www.midwestnativeplants.org/>.

### \* SPECIAL!!! Wild Ones Photo Contest

The *Wild Ones* Annual Photo Contest is the perfect chance for you to show off your creativity and photographic talents, while inviting us in for a look at your unique view of native plants and natural landscaping.

You don't have to be a professional photographer, you don't have to have a fancy camera, and you don't even have to be an expert on native plants. All you have to do is follow the contest rules, snap some good shots, and send in your entries. **Deadline is 4 p.m. on August 31.** Go to <http://for-wild.org/photocontestrules/> for details.

## PLANT OF THE MONTH



Blazing Star also known as gayfeather (*Liatris spicata*) thrives in full sun and does best in moist, fertile well-drained soil. There are several species of Blazing Star that could fit into anyone’s garden scheme.

This plant grows 2 to 4 feet high and 9 to 18 inches wide, blooming in midsummer. The purple flower rises from a basal clump of grasslike leaves. Another eastern native Blazing Star species is Rough Blazing Star (*Liatris aspera*). It grows 1 to 4 feet tall and blooms from August to October. If you are looking for something a little smaller there is Dwarf Blazing Star (*Liatris microcephala*). It is only 18 to 24 inches tall and blooms from August to September. These perennials are members of the aster family and are hardy to minus 40 degrees.

Good drainage is important for all Blazing Star species. These hardy flowers can be found growing in rocky to sandy soils. They can tolerate clay but do not tolerate standing water, especially during the winter months.

The Cherokee and folk medicine practitioners used the bulb-like root for several medicinal purposes.

These flowers are attractive to both bees and butterflies. Once established they are fairly drought tolerant.

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](mailto:annbowe@annbowedesigns.com) or Judy Johnson, newsletter editor, at [judydex@insightbb.com](mailto:judydex@insightbb.com).