

LEXINGTON CHAPTER — AUGUST, 2012

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

An Evening at Shooting Star Nursery

By Mary Carol Cooper

On Thursday evening, July 5, forty-two brave souls decided to forget the heat and head out to Shooting Star Nursery for the *Wild Ones* event. We were delighted that there were a few sprinkles and the evening cooled off very nicely. At this point in the summer, my gauge for being comfortable outside is not sweating and this was a “no sweat” evening!

Marianne Hunt, co-owner of Shooting Star, gave us a grand tour of the nursery including all of the beautiful wildflower gardens that they have planted over the years. We wound our way around rock bordered beds inspecting hundreds of happy plants. Although the area has experienced an unusually dry period, none of the plantings were stressed—all were robust and thriving. Marianne explained that some areas were planned but that often the plants really seemed to decide where they wanted to grow and multiply.

The nursery’s price list catalogs more than 800 native varieties and we saw so many of them! There are long tables of sun loving plants and sheltered areas for the shade lovers. Our guided tour of the grounds was a wonderful way for us to see how various native plants will look in our yards.

Everyone seemed to really enjoy both the tour and the guide. Members asked many questions and Marianne had answers for all of them.

After the tour, members had an opportunity to purchase plants they had seen and couldn’t leave without. The evening ended with refreshments and conversation.

NOTE: The Shooting Star Nursery catalog can be accessed at <http://shootingstarnursery.com/catalog/>. During the summer months the nursery is open Friday and Saturday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and at other times by appointment. It is located at 160 Soards Road, Georgetown, KY. Phone number is (toll free) 502-867-7979.



ABOVE: Marianne Hunt (in gray cap) shares information about a garden bed.
BELOW: A friendly catalpa moth caterpillar dropped in...and, oops, we should not have handled it (chemicals on our hands could be harmful to it).



LOCAL CHAPTER AUGUST EVENT

On Thursday evening, August 2 at 6:30 p.m. *Wild Ones* will meet for a picnic at the Arboretum (500 Alumni Dr.). Please bring a dish to share as well as your own plate, cup, and utensils. The chapter will furnish drinks. We will meet at the picnic tables under the large wild cherry trees by the parking lot.

After we eat there will be an opportunity to take a guided tour of one of the native plant areas in the Arboretum.

COMMON BONESET

Eupatorium perfoliatum

By Victoria Ligenza



Eupatorium is a genus of flowering plants in the aster family. There are twenty-eight species of *Eupatorium* with fourteen listed as native in Kentucky. These plants are from about 2 feet tall to over 6 feet tall and a few are shrubs. Common boneset is from 2 to 4 feet tall and unbranched except for the flowering side stems. The plant flowers from July to September and has a pleasant floral scent. The root system produces rhizomes and can form vegetative colonies.

This plant prefers full or partial sun and wet to moist conditions with soil that contains considerable organic material. Boneset can withstand flooded conditions for short periods of time but it is not an aquatic plant.

Its foliage is bothered very little by disease. It is an important nectar source for butterflies and bees and the caterpillars of various moths are known to feed on different parts of the plant.

Boneset was used by Native Americans for several medical conditions including colds and fever but its general popularity diminished with the advent of aspirin. The 19th botanist Rafinesque noted that it cured “the kind of influenza called breakbone fever ...whence its popular name, boneset, came.” (Planet Botanic, a website of the Canadian herbalist Douglas Schar).

Common boneset continues to be used by herbalists today.

RED-SPOTTED PURPLE BUTTERFLY

Limenitis arthemis astyanax

By Victoria Ligenza

The Red-spotted Purple Butterfly is in the brush-footed butterfly family and enjoys open woods and wood edges. Its wing span averages 2 1/4 to 4 inches. It has blue iridescent wings with bright orange spots on the underside of the wings. This butterfly has two defenses against predators. The taste of the butterfly is not very appealing to predators and it also mimics the pipevine swallowtail which can be toxic.

Some host plants are: basswood, birch, hawthorn, hornbeam, oaks, serviceberry, wild cherry and willows. Red-spotted female butterflies prefer to lay eggs along the tips of willow and cherry leaves near water courses or along power or gasoline right of ways near forest edges. Males perch 3 feet or more above the ground on trees and tall bushes and rarely patrol for females.

Nectar plants include milkweed, native spirea, and native viburnum. They also feed from sap flows and even carrion and dung.

Potential predators of the butterfly are praying mantises, lizards, birds and frogs.

To encourage these beauties to visit and stay around longer in your garden you can put out a tray of rotting fruit besides planting nectar flowers.



Adult Red-spotted Purple Butterfly photographed by Victoria Ligenza.

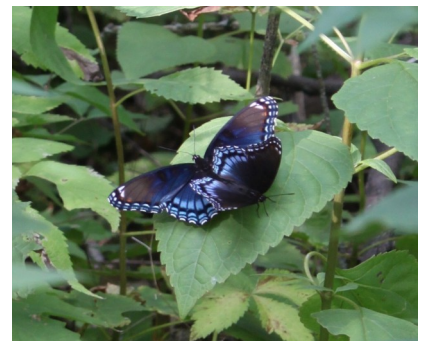


Image of two adult Red-spotted Purple Butterflies mating captured by Beate Popkein.

My Perfect Lawn

By *Connie May*

My lawn wasn't always perfect. I never *hated* my "lawn"—it was (and is) diverse and interesting-- but we had a troubled relationship. The grass would grow and I would have to drag out that noisy, stinky machine and cut it. *Again.* Even when it was too hot to think about dealing with a stinky machine and I felt guilty about the fossil fuels I was using and the noise and air pollution I was causing, even when I didn't want to, I **HAD** to cut the grass. *Again.* I told myself I had to cut the grass to keep the chiggers and ticks at bay. And that is partially true. But the real truth lies deeper. Somehow I felt an obligation to keep the entire yard trimmed and tidy. I live in a cabin down a long driveway so I wasn't worried about being judged by my neighbors, but I somehow felt guilty when the grass got too long and I'd have to drag out that stinky machine. *Again.*

This spring I was away from home for several weeks and the grass got quite long. Dreading pulling the stinky machine through all that tall grass, I decided to only mow paths and a small front yard and leave the rest. This year I've mowed far less and the rewards have been tremendous.

Previously, my lawn included plantain, violets, dandelions, sedges (some native, some not) but they were mowed before they could bloom. Now that I'm only mowing paths through the "meadow" it is filled with beautiful grass flowers and seed heads and a few wildflowers. Goldfinches and other small birds are foraging on the seed heads and pollinating insects and butterflies visit the "weeds" that have appeared in the unmowed lawn. I found a pearl crescent caterpillar munching a "weedy" aster and a tiger moth caterpillar on nice big (unmowed) plantain leaves.

My troubled relationship with my lawn has turned into one of joy and discovery. Simply because I am mowing less and observing what happens. I love my used-to-be lawn and my relationship with my lawn is much less stressful now that I can mow it in about 15 minutes.

Not all of us can stop mowing large parts of our lawn, but all of us can examine our motivation for mowing our grass and make informed decisions. Reducing the size of your lawn can save time, money and natural resources. It will almost certainly increase biodiversity in your landscape. And you may find yourself enjoying your yard in a way you never have.

If you decide to reduce the size of your lawn by mowing less or by transforming part of it into a natural landscape the *Wild Ones* website offers plenty of help and advice. I wish you luck and hope you will share your experiences with our chapter of *Wild Ones*.

Go Native!



Above is a sample of natural lawnscaping posted on the website carolynsshade-gardens.com. This site is an informative and helpful resource for anyone ready to follow Connie's lead.

“A Chemical Reaction: the Story of a True Green Revolution”

Did you know that it is illegal to apply synthetic lawn chemicals such as Roundup or Weed 'n Feed in most of Canada? Or that the Supreme Court of Canada upheld municipalities' rights to ban lawn and garden chemicals by a 9-0 monumental verdict? The award-winning film, “A Chemical Reaction,” tells the inspirational story of the most successful community action initiative in North American history. *Wild Ones* member **Connie May** will speak after the film presentation.

Date & Time: Tuesday, August 28, at 6 p.m.

Location: Lexington Public Library, 140 East Main Street, Farish Theatre on the first floor

This event is part of the free film series sponsored by the Good Foods Co-op Market and Café.

How “Mother Trees” Perpetuate the Forest

By Carolyn Holmes

The casual hiker in the woods, consumed by the wonders within view, may be confounded by the unseen wonders beneath the forest floor – an active underground web of fungi that connects trees and plants in an interactive community of sharing and support. Dr. Suzanne Simard, a forest ecologist and a professor in the Department of Forest Sciences at the University of British Columbia, helped make this major finding (first reported in the journal *Nature*) that plants communicate.

Writing of Simard’s research in *Canadian Geographic*, Cori Howard says that “Simard noticed brilliant white and yellow fungal threads in the forest floor. Through microscopic examination and experimentation, she realized the fungi were transporting carbon, water and nutrients between trees,” allowing them to help one another survive. Simard explains that the “fungi scavenge for nutrients. The tree sends down its carbon. It goes through the root system and then into the fungi, interfacing between the roots’ fungi cells where the exchange goes on. Meters away you can have a plant connected to another plant . . . shuffling carbon back and forth according to who needs it.”



Suzanne Simard



Graphic by Daniel Mosquin UBC Botanical Gardens

The big, old, dominant trees in the forest, “Mother Trees,” says Simard, “have an enormous network associated with them, with all of the trees around them” regardless of species. The smaller trees act as bridges. The big trees “subsidize the younger ones through fungal networks. Without this helping hand, most seedlings wouldn’t make it . . . The mother tree leaves its legacy to the younger trees. Even dying trees move resources to the next generation like a passing of the wand.”

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To apply to our own gardens Simard’s description of how fungi work in the forest, note how fungi-rich garden soils can benefit us close to home. The same mycorrhizal (literally ‘fungus’ –‘root’) fungi work in garden soils as well, establishing a mutually beneficial relationship between themselves and plant roots. The fungi extend root systems, increasing their ability to absorb water. They break down soil nutrients for easier absorption by plants. They build plant resistance to drought, stress and disease. If properly encouraged, then, mycorrhizal fungi are a significant part of our soil. Some common practices, however, degrade the mycorrhizae-forming potential of soil. Among such practices are tilling, top soil removal, erosion and some chemical use. Once lost, it can take years to repopulate the soil with these fungi.

(For a lively video/demo of Simard in the forest, google **VisionShare: Mother Trees**. On the website you will visit below the colorful header for VISIONSHARE A PHOTOBLOG OF LOU GOLD AND FRIENDS you will find the link to the video by Dan McKinney entitled MOTHER TREES. Meet Prof. Simard and listen to her explain her work.)

AUGUST EVENTS

- **THE ARBORETUM** is offering free, docent-led tours of the gardens. Meet at the Dorothea Smith Oatts Visitor Center at 2 p.m. Tours last 45-60 minutes. August tours:

Saturday, August 11—Pennyryle Region: The Gateway Prairie Gardens

Saturday, August 25—The Pollinator Garden

- **BERNHEIM FOREST** has a lot going on this month! Pre-register by calling (502) 955-8512. There is a charge for these events.

Wednesday, August 1, 10 a.m. – noon—The Big Prairie, Haven for Wildlife—

Join Bernheim's Certified Interpretive Guide and Volunteer Naturalist **Corinne Mastey** for an exploration of the Big Prairie.

Wednesday, August 1, 9 p.m. – 10:30 p.m.

Friday, August 31, 8:30 p.m. – 10 p.m.

Nighttime Hikes—

Discover an evening of mystery and magic.

These programs weave together stories about the night ecology, moon lore, history and nature at night.

Friday, August 31, 6:30 – 8:30 p.m.

Movie Screening—

“Green Fire” explores the life and legacy of famed 20th century conservationist Aldo Leopold. The evening includes a special reception and discussion led by **Dick Dennis**, Bernheim Volunteer Naturalist and Leopold Land Ethic Leader.

- **YEW DELL BOTANICAL GARDENS**
6220 Old LaGrange Road, Crestwood, KY
Saturday, August 25, 3pm – 6p.m.
Hummingbird Festival—\$7 at the door

Learn about these amazing little birds, how to attract them and what makes them tick. Local experts will catch and band birds, so you'll see them up close. Hummingbird photographer **Russ Thompson** will be on hand to offer photography tips, so bring your camera!

- Remember: **Wild Ones Photo Contest** deadline is **4 p.m. on August 31**. Go to <http://for-wild.org/photocontestrules/> for details.

Tree of the Month

By Heather Wilson

The Kentucky coffeetree, *Gymnocladus dioica*, known by many names including the American coffee bean, American mahogany, chicot tree, and stump tree, is a hardy specimen with strong, decay resistant wood. The coffeetree obtained its name as the seeds that were gathered from its pods were used by early settlers to make a beverage similar to coffee. Today the seeds are no longer used to make coffee, as they can be poisonous if ingested in large quantities, but can be gathered and strung together to make winter chimes.



The only member of the genus *Gymnocladus* native to North America, the coffeetree is a unique specimen found in the limestone rich soils surrounding our Central Bluegrass Region. Due to overharvesting for timber, the coffeetree is also considered rare, and its numbers are declining.

One of the last trees to leaf out in the spring, the Kentucky coffeetree often appears dead until most other species have already expanding canopies. Once bud break finally occurs, leaves are large and bipinnately compound with 9 to 15 individual leaflets per leaf, presenting a large fan-like appearance. In the fall these leaves turn a golden yellow and drop early.



The Kentucky coffeetree makes a great tree for planting in and around the Bluegrass not only because it is a unique specimen, but also because it has very few pest or disease problems in this area.

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 judydex@insightbb.com.