

LEXINGTON CHAPTER — August, 2013

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

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The Lexington chapter of *Wild Ones* meets the first Thursday of every month and at other times for special programs. Visitors welcome! Check our website www.wildones.org/chapters/lexington/ for details.

This newsletter is a publication of the Lexington chapter of *Wild Ones*. It is published nine times a year—March through 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@twc.com.

President's Message...

On July 13, our *Wild Ones* chapter visited the grounds of Shakertown. As most Lexingtonians know, the Shakers belonged to a religious group that believed in communal property and thrived for a few decades in the mid-nineteenth century, based on their agricultural entrepreneurship. When the central Kentucky community declined and then ceased to exist in 1921, its lands were leased out or sold to neighboring farmers, and most of its structures stood unused. In 1961 a foundation was formed to raise money for the restoration of the Shaker Village at Pleasant Hill and to transform it into a tourist site. Today, visitors are attracted by the beauty of the buildings and by stories of the simple Shaker life.



Photo of prairie view taken on Shaker Village property by Beate Popkin.

But the original Shaker property consisted of more than the village; it also encompassed 2800 acres of land, most of it farmed. The foundation which now governs the property has wisely determined that honoring the memory of the Kentucky Shakers calls for a more imaginative use of their land than simply leasing it out for modern agricultural production. Thus, at present about 1000 acres have been converted into native grassland for wildlife habitat and passive recreation, above all, hiking and horseback riding. These former fields are now maintained as prairie land.

Establishing and preserving a prairie in central Kentucky is not for the faint of heart. Any field in eastern North America taken out of cropping naturally returns to forest, or at least it will unless invasive plants get there first. To maintain open grassland, fields must be periodically burned, which suppresses the growth of trees and shrubs. Fires also reduce to ashes the annual winter thatch of prairie grasses and forbs and prevent them from shading out newly emerging growth in spring. The land managers at Shakertown burn their prairie plots every two years, in February if possible. A slow burn on intermittent fields gives small animals and birds a chance to escape the fire and find refuge on ground not subject to burning that season.

Most fields we saw had been sown with a short grass prairie mix and stretched before us with the yellow blooms of oxeye sunflower as far as they eye could see in this rolling terrain. One of the oldest fields converted to native habitat was sown in a tall grass prairie mix 20 years ago. During our tour, it was a-bloom with bergamot and grey-headed coneflower. The color combination of lavender and pale yellow covering an acre of land was stunning.

Our visit to the old Shaker property was well timed. The abundant rain of this year's spring and summer caused the fields to look lush and beautiful. It seemed that creating prairie habitats on abandoned land or on land that owners choose to take out of agricultural production makes good sense. The alternative, at least in the absence of annual plowing or mowing, would be the dense stand of bush honeysuckle that we know so well. Prairies are not only good for wildlife and for the environment generally; they are also a feast for the human eye. It is to be hoped that the visitors who come to Shakertown in ever larger numbers will eventually appreciate the landscape that lies beyond the village proper.

Beate Popkin

What We *Wild Ones* Did on Our Summer Vacation



Photo by
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Our “**Beauties of the Bluegrass Garden Tour**” on June 30 provided a wealth of information for the 120 visitors. Our chapter raised over \$400 which will be used for future projects.

Many thanks to all the members who helped with planning, publicity, refreshments and ticket and plant sales (we sold 101 milkweed plugs, a success for the butterflies, too). We especially appreciate Frankie and Oscar Geraldts, Jannine Baker and Eve Podet and Mike Finucane who so generously shared their gardens.



Photo by
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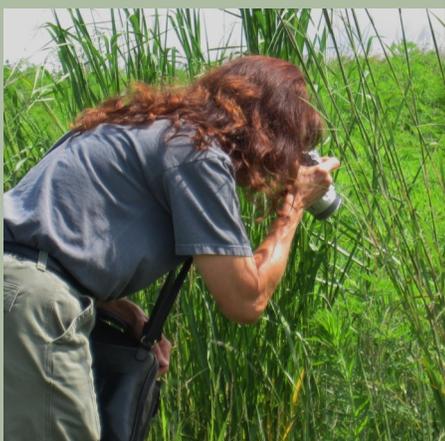
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The July event for our *Wild Ones* chapter was a morning spent learning about the prairie management Shaker Village has undertaken in partnership with the Department of Forestry. Saturday, July 13, turned out to be cool and sunny, just right for a hike!

Ben Robinson guided us across the 1,000 acres of prairie land, explaining the quail recovery program, a switchgrass experiment, the bird observation facility, a variety of native grasses and wildflowers and a shrub protection plan he hopes will prove successful.

We ended the adventure with a visit to the Village’s certified monarch waystation and a tasty lunch!



'Tis the Season for Chiggers!

By Karen Lanier

What and Where... Chiggers are the 6-legged larval form of certain mites. The female lays eggs in clusters and the offspring don't wander far from home.

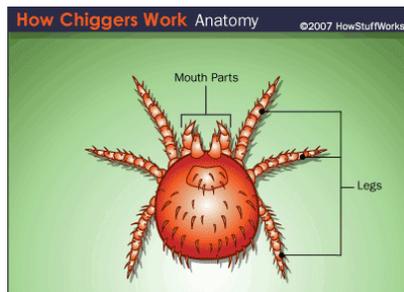
Tall grasses or brushy, overgrown, humid areas are the most likely spots to find a patch of chiggers. They are attracted to the carbon dioxide of a host such as reptiles, small mammals and, yes, even humans. However, if you and a friend are picking berries together, you could get a mean case of chigger bites while your friend could be a few feet away and never suffer a nibble.

Myths and Truths... Chiggers do not burrow into your skin or suck your blood. Unlike ticks, chiggers do not immediately bite when they climb aboard. And you won't feel the itching until hours or even days after they've eaten and run. Itching is caused by your own immune system responding to chigger enzymes that are dissolving your skin cells. Oddly, the adult mite that the chigger will become in a few days could actually be considered an ally, as it stops eating human flesh and turns to mosquito eggs as one of its foods.

Prevention... Long pants, light-colored clothing, and the "socks-over-pants-legs" fashion will make you a less attractive target. While out hiking or gardening, shake yourself off every so often to dislodge any hangers-on since you probably won't know if you're hosting a chigger party. Afterwards, shake out your clothes and wash yourself thoroughly, especially where waistbands and underwear have been tight and sweaty.

Remedies... Medical journals and county extension offices recommend general anti-itch medications, but if you search for information online you will discover a world of home remedies at your fingertips. A cold compress is a logical first step. Tea tree oil may promote healing. Other topical remedies range from a very warm shower scrubbing with Epsom salts to a cool bath with two cups of baking soda added. Afterwards, dabbing skin with diluted bleach or Listerine antiseptic is recommended.

Information about controlling chiggers on your property can be found through your local extension office.



Plants That Thrive in the Shade

By Deborah Holloway



Photo from www.departments.bloomu.edu

Thimbleberry (*Rubus odoratus*) is a great plant for shade, especially if you want a short, spreading shrub. Although it tops out at 3-6 feet in height thimbleberry will spread to widths of 6-12 feet. We saw a very nice specimen at one of the homes on our "Beauties of the Bluegrass Garden Tour."

Thimbleberry is sometimes known as purple flowering raspberry because of its pale purple blossoms which linger from June to August. These flowers are single and showy as well as slightly fragrant. The actual berry is red, tart and edible—similar in shape to a raspberry. When the core is removed the fruit vaguely resembles a thimble. The fruit is eaten by birds and the blooms attract pollinators.

Thimbleberry will tolerate sun but thrives in shade gardens. It prefers medium moist, well drained soil. It should be pruned immediately after fruiting. This is a hardy plant and has no serious insect or disease problems.

Do not confuse this Kentucky native with white blossoming *Rubus parviflorus*, native to the Pacific Northwest and also commonly known as thimbleberry.

Other native shrubs suitable for shade include spicebush (*Lindera benzoin*), red and black chokecherry (*Aronia arbutifolia* and *A. melanocarpa*), wahoo (*Euonymus americanus*), wild hydrangea (*Hydrangea arborescens*), and elderberry (*Sambucus canadensis*).

If you want smaller perennials for shade, consider zigzag goldenrod (*Solidago flexicaulis*) golden ragwort (*Senecio aureus*) and wild geranium (*Geranium maculatum*).

So think about those shady corners of your garden. There are native perennials that will not only add color, texture and fragrance, but also provide nourishment for birds and pollinators.

Thursday, August 1 at 7:00 p.m.—Lexington Chapter of *Wild Ones* Picnic

WHERE: UK Arboretum

WHAT: Bring dish to share and drink of your choice. We will provide water, plates, cups, utensils.

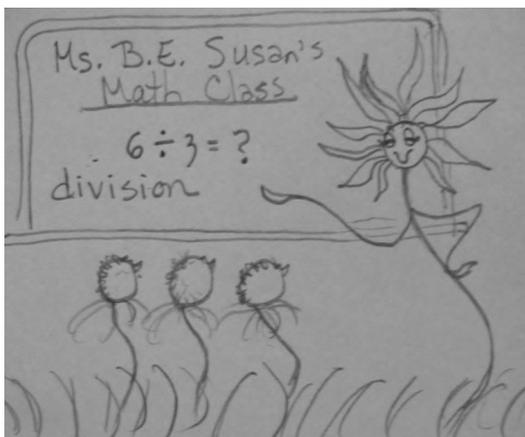


PROGRAM: Tour of one of the native planting areas.

ALL MEMBERS AND FRIENDS ARE WELCOME!

Do Plants Do Math?

By Victoria Ligenza



Original cartoon courtesy of Deborah Holloway

While we are fast asleep at night our plants are wide awake doing math to survive until dawn. This math allows them to use up their starch reserve at a constant rate so they run out almost precisely at dawn. Research investigating this theory is being done at the John Innes Centre in Norwich, England and will eventually be published in the open access journal *eLife*.

Once the sun has set plants must depend on a store of starch to prevent starvation. During the night mechanisms inside the leaf measure the amount of starch stored and estimate the length of time until dawn. The information about time comes from an internal clock, similar to our own body clock. The amount of starch stored is then divided by the length of time until dawn to set the correct rate of starch consumption so that by dawn around 95% of the starch is used up.

To give the plants a “math quiz,” the biologists shut off the lights early on plants that had been grown with 12 hour days and nights. Plunging the plants into darkness after only an 8 hour day forced them to adjust their normal nightly rhythm. Since the plants didn’t have time to store as much starch as usual, they had to recalculate their metabolism.

Even after this day length trickery, the plants aced their exams and ended up with just a small amount of starch left over in the morning. They had neither starved nor stored excess starch.

Birds may use similar methods to preserve fat levels during migration. This would explain how birds can make extreme migrations to their summer or winter habitats and arrive with enough fat reserves to survive only approximately half a day or more on average.

So at night when everything seems quiet and the world has gone to sleep, remember our plants are very busy doing their math.

DEADLINE at hand—

Wild Ones Photo Contest

Entries must be submitted by 4 p.m. on August 3rd, no exceptions.

Contest rules and form available at <http://www.wildones.org/wild-ones-photo-contest/photo-contest/>

AREA CALENDAR FOR AUGUST

Bernheim Arboretum

Wed., Aug. 7 from 10:30 a.m. to 12 noon.—O.W.L.S Rock Run Ramble: **Learning to See Nature.** Hike led by Corinne Mastey, certified interpretive guide. Designed for Older, Wiser, Livelier Seniors. Dress for time outdoors. Cost is \$5 for members; \$10 for nonmembers. **Registration and payment are due by 4 p.m. on the day prior to start of program; call (502) 955-8512.**

Sun., Aug. 11 from 3:00 to 5:00 p.m.—**Reading by poet Ann Townsend, Bernheim Writer-in-Residence.** This is a **FREE** event; \$5 environmental impact fee for nonmembers. For information call 502-955-8512.

Floracliff Nature Sanctuary

EARLY SAVE THE DATE NOTICE—Thurs., Sept. 5, 6:30 p.m. through sunset—Caterpillar and Insect Hunt with Jennie Condra (UK Entomology). Bring a flashlight or headlamp. Easy hike. **This event will not appear on the website and there is no charge because it is a Wild Ones event.**

Pine Mountain Settlement School

Wed., Aug. 14 to Sun., Aug. 18—**In the Footsteps of Lucy Braun Forest Study Workshop.** Field trips, lectures and slide presentations in the study of forest types found in eastern Kentucky. Daily field trips include 4 to 8 mile hikes. Cost \$350 (includes meals, 4 nights lodging and program). Details at <http://www.pinemountainsettlementschool.com>. Click link to Schedule of Events.

Raven Run Nature Sanctuary

Fri., Aug. 16 at 9:00 p.m.—**Voices in the Night.** One mile guided hike exploring woodland edges for small mammals and insects active at dusk. **FREE.** For information call 859-272-6105.

UK Arboretum

Tues., Aug. 6 at 4:00 p.m.—**Vegetable Gardening Tour** led by arboretum horticulturist Jesse Dahlman. Session will assess success of plantings, cover pest issues, summer maintenance and harvesting. Participants will take home some of the unique vegetables. **FREE.**

Fri., Aug. 30, 7:00-10:00 p.m.—**Insect Safari.** UK Entomology Department. Family-friendly games, activities and displays. Bring a flashlight. Cost is \$1 per person. For information call 859-257-6955.

Help a Child Get Wild

By Karen Lanier

“If a child is to keep alive his inborn sense of wonder, he needs the companionship of at least one adult who can share it, rediscovering with him the joy, excitement, and mystery of the world we live in.”

— Rachel Carson

I believe part of what draws us to the wild natural landscape is the freedom to indulge our senses, just like a child exploring the world for the first time. Here are some ways to nurture the sense of wonder in the little wild ones who may join you in your own garden or in nature adventures anywhere:



Get low. If you are able, get down on your belly or knees to see the world from a toddler’s perspective. Hide your child’s toy animals throughout your garden and go on a mini safari to find her favorite creatures.

Go slow. Help your child creep quietly through the garden, stalking real wildlife with stealth and silence. Whoever sees a critter first freezes in a pose to let the others guess what they see.

Go out at night. The magic of lightning bugs, bats chasing mosquitoes and the “who-cooks-for-you” call of the barred owl are good reasons to stay up late during the summer. Notice night-blooming flowers that attract moths and help your child forget any fear of the dark.

Get sensitive. Have your child close his eyes and place objects in his open hands. Ask him to describe and try to identify each object. Or guide your blindfolded child to different textures of leaves, flowers, stems, and do the same with different smells in the garden.

Get creative. Plan spaces in your garden that invite curious minds to explore, such as a vine-covered overhang, stepping stones through dense beds, and patches of dirt with digging tools and pans to make mud pies. Find ways to make garden work fun, like making a big bowl of “crabgrass gumbo” or some other recipe made from pesky weeds.



(Photos by Karen Lanier)