

LEXINGTON CHAPTER — October, 2012

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

Wild Ones **October Meeting**

Thursday, October 4, 7 p.m., at St. Michael's Episcopal Church, 2025 Bellefonte Drive—Rob Paratley, the curator of the UK Herbarium, will teach us to identify deciduous trees and shrubs based on their winter appearance.

Rain Garden Tour at Coca-Cola Plant

By Beate Popkin

Our September meeting took place at the Coca-Cola property on Leestown Rd., where Russ Turpin explained the design and function of the two rain gardens that EcoGro—the firm he works for—had installed there.

The older rain garden, which dates back to 2008, captures storm water runoff from a nearby parking lot. Shaped in the form of an old Coca-Cola bottle, its 3000 square feet were planted in a mixture of perennials and grasses. Some of the less competitive species seem to have disappeared by now, notably red and blue lobelia and orange milkweed. Others have vigorously asserted themselves, like purple and grey-headed coneflower, black-eyed susans and an early-blooming goldenrod. Having reached maturity, the rain garden shows how the plants transcend the original design that had clustered them in deliberate groupings and create their own way of living together based on competitive advantages. The appearance of the rain garden will undoubtedly continue to change in the years to come.

The second rain garden on the property was completed in 2011 and has treated over 1 million gallons of runoff since last November. At the moment it drains a portion of the facility's roof, but the long term plan is to direct rain water from a much larger portion of the roof into a greatly expanded infiltration area with more plantings.

This project explores new concepts in rain garden design. It contains no perennial flowers and only one grass, namely little bluestem, planted in a long drift (representing the white wave on the old Coke bottles). The other plants here are trees and shrubs placed far apart in anticipation of their mature state when the spaces between them will have filled in. Throughout the length of the basin and paralleling the little bluestem wave, an attractive pavement of large ornamental slabs guides the viewer's eye and foot. This rain garden is beautiful due to the simplicity of its design and it holds great promise for the future when it will have reached maturity.

It was fascinating to hear and see how a large organization can ameliorate the problem of storm water runoff that its facilities produce. Russ's explanations were very instructive and hugely appreciated by all who attended the meeting.



Beate Popkin took this photo of the little bluestem wave in the second rain garden.

Coming Soon...Member Survey

Later on this month we will be emailing you a newsletter reader survey. Completion will be quick...online...easy! Just ten questions. Your feedback will help us provide you with a newsletter that suits your needs. So please, take a moment and tell us what you think!



GENISTA CATERPILLAR

Uresiphita reversalis

By Victoria Ligenza



The genista caterpillar is the larval stage of the genista broom moth. While native to our area, these caterpillars can become a pest in the garden. Outbreaks are sporadic, perhaps associated with the abundance of host plants present. Watch for them on your false indigo (*Baptisia australis*); they can defoliate a plant very quickly.

The female moth lays its cream colored eggs in overlapping clusters on the undersides of leaves. When the caterpillars hatch they spread through the host plant, usually feeding in groups. They produce webs throughout the branches, a defense strategy that makes it more difficult for predators to find them. The caterpillars can be a greenish yellow or a darker orange with raised black and white spots and white hairs. They are about one inch long. In Kentucky there are two generations each year.

It is believed that the larvae absorb alkaloids from host plants making them unpalatable to predators such as birds. Other possible predators are the milkweed assassin bug and the wheel bug.

The genista caterpillars can be found on baptisia and honeysuckle (*Lonicera spp*), also on the non-native crape myrtle. They feed on young tender leaves or new growth and buds. While a larger mature plant may recover from the damage caused by an infestation, a smaller or newly established plant can show extreme stress. The above picture was taken of an infestation of a false indigo plant which was about two feet tall. Approximately 50 caterpillars were removed over a period of four or five days.

HEARTS A BURSTIN

Euonymus americanus

By Victoria Ligenza



Hearts A Burstin, also known as Strawberry Bush and Hearts Burstin With Love, is an airy, deciduous native shrub that grows to 12 feet in height. In April to early May it is covered with small pale yellowish green flowers with purple stamens which produce red fruit capsules. In the fall the leaves turn shades of orange and red before falling off and the showy capsules burst open in four or five sections. Each section will have a shiny red seed dangling from it.

Hearts A Burstin does well in shady areas—even full shade—but it will also tolerate sunny areas. Once established, it is very drought resistant. This plant is usually found in the forest under-story. Hearts A Burstin prefers moist areas that are well drained with humus soil slightly on the acid side. However, it can also be found in areas with poor soil.

There are several ways to produce more Hearts A Burstin for your natural landscape. Green wood cuttings taken early in the season will root readily. Seeds will germinate after cold stratification of three months. Root clumps can be divided. (This is best done in winter.) Finally, stems that come in contact with the ground will easily root.

Many species of birds eat the fruit and deer love the foliage but all parts of the plant should be considered poisonous as the bark and seeds act as powerful laxatives.

This is truly a unique plant to consider for your native plant garden.

Fall—A great time for planting!

By Ann Bowe

Although spring and summer have zoomed by, you haven't missed the opportunity to add to your landscaping this year. As you may have heard, fall can be a good time to plant, but do you wonder why that would be so? The mellowness of autumn benefits newly installed plants in a number of ways.

The first benefit: **extra root growth**. One of the most important factors leading to successful planting is root growth. During the fall, when a plant's leaf and flower production is slowing down and approaching dormancy, the plant can focus its energy on root production. Root systems will keep growing even when the soil temperature cools to 45°F.

The second benefit: **the plant requires less water**. As days shorten and nights lengthen, the rate of photosynthesis decreases and the need for water diminishes. A new plant will always need a good initial soaking but it will require less supplemental watering in the fall. However, keep in mind that any new planting should be watered during a dry spell.

This benefit extends into the following summer. Though both fall- and spring-planted trees and shrubs need regular watering for at least their first two years (and in a drought), those planted in the fall will have more extensive root systems that are better able to forage for water and withstand the heat stress of their first summer than those planted in the spring.

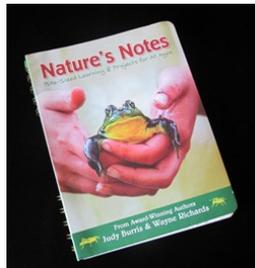
We need more native trees, shrubs and perennials in our landscape. Now's the time, so get busy!



Read All About It!

Books Reviewed by Betty Hall

I've thoroughly enjoyed reading Judy Burris and Wayne Richard's newest book, **Nature's Notes: Bite-Sized Learning & Projects for All Ages**.



After looking at **Nature's Notes**, my eight-year-old nephew proclaimed, "I *like* this book!"

Another friend said, "Every household with kids needs a book like this."

I agree. I'm inspired by Judy's and Wayne's photography and their ideas for exploring nature. I'll be trying several of their suggestions in our backyard.

Judy and Wayne are a unique Kentucky sister/brother team and superb naturalists. Their first book, **Life Cycles of Butterflies**, is one I wholeheartedly recommend for butterfly enthusiasts. I refer to my copy often!

Their second book, **The Secret Lives of Backyard Bugs**, documents the life cycles of more than 40 common insects. I've found the many photographs and easy-to-read text quite helpful.

All three of these publications have won Teacher's Choice Awards. In addition, **Backyard Bugs** won the National Outdoor Book Award.

Wayne writes that through their work the team "hopes to stimulate more serious thought to natural habitat conservation and responsible, poison-free management of their own backyards to support native flora and fauna for future generations to enjoy."

I appreciate all that Judy and Wayne are doing to encourage a deeper understanding of and greater appreciation for our natural world and I'm glad they are in Kentucky. I've found their books make great gifts for kids of all ages.

You can check out their website at **ButterflyNature.com**.



Night Creatures—Helpful or Harmful?

By Victoria Ligenza



Penitent Underwing Moth

Have you ever wondered just what goes on in your garden at night while you are tucked securely in your bed? What is moving around out there unseen by you? What beauty could you be missing or what scary creature might be skulking around?

We are going to explore just what that unknown might be—from moths, bats and bugs to toads, owls and other animals. We will see what interesting facts we can learn about these creatures and how they affect our gardens. Are they beneficial or detrimental?

This month my topic is moths. Now a moth might seem like a rather dull creature unless it is the lovely luna moth. No one really notices the less showy ones. But all moths have some very unique abilities.

As caterpillars they can barely see, having simple eyes that only differentiate between dark and light. As mature moths they have compound eyes and can see ultraviolet rays that are invisible to us.

Moths also navigate two different ways. They can use the moon and stars—this is called transverse orientation—or use geomagnetic clues when the sky is obscured. We do not know why moths are attracted to artificial light at night. However, there is some indication that transverse (celestial) orientation may be the cause.

Moths vibrate their wings to warm up their flight muscles since there is no sunlight to do the job for these nocturnal creatures. The caterpillar stage can be destructive to many plants but moths are better pollinators than butterflies because of their fuzzier body structure.

The moth is attracted to long necked flowers such as petunias, honeysuckle, buddleia, red valerian, verbena, jasmine, lilacs and phlox. Certain flowers, like jasmine, seem to be made just for moth pollination. Their pale color and sweet scent, which becomes stronger at night, is a moth magnet.

Adult moths are prey for birds, bats and spiders but their speed and body camouflage provide an effective defense. Moths also have a sense of hearing that can pick up the ultrasound emitted by bats. The tiger moth can even emit a clicking noise that confuses bats' echolocation.

So you see even the humble moth can surprise us. I hope these few paragraphs encourage you to investigate further the wonders of these night creatures. A good website for more information is www.butterfliesandmoths.org.

Reminder from the Ladybird Johnson Wildflower Center—October is prime time to:

- Plant fall season plants and transplants
- If little fall rain, irrigate before planting
- Mulch new transplants (2 inches thick)
- Turn and toss your compost pile to keep it moist and decomposing
- Plant wildflower seeds

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.

OCTOBER EVENTS



Raven Run

- **Sun., Oct. 7 at 1 p.m.—Fall Wildflowers.** No charge. Call 859-272-6105 to register.

Pine Mountain Settlement School

- **Fri., Oct. 12 to Sun., Oct. 14—Nature Photography Weekend**
Dr. Thomas G. Barnes, award-winning author, nature photographer, UK Extension wildlife specialist and professor in the Dept of Forestry, will lead a nature photography workshop designed for beginning and advanced photographers. For details, please go to www.pinemountainsettlementschool.com/events.php?view=details&id=119.
- **Fri., Oct. 12 to Sun., Oct. 14—Drawing from Nature**
Betty Beshoar, visual artist, and Heather Housman, former botanist with the Kentucky State Nature Preserves Commission, team up to conduct this nature journaling workshop. During walks on Settlement School property, they will describe and answer questions about trees, plants, birds and insects found on the way. With this information, participants will create their own nature journals, which include writing, drawing and watercolor. For details go to www.pinemountainsettlementschool.com/events.php?view=details&id=125.
- **Fri., Oct. 19 to Sun., Oct. 21—Fall Color Weekend**
Features include hikes, multi-media presentations, special music and the opportunity to enjoy some of Kentucky's most beautiful natural areas and stunning autumn foliage. **Mary Carol Cooper**, *Wild Ones* member and retired native plant coordinator at Salato, will present “Attracting Fall and Winter Birds to Backyard Habitats.” For more info: <http://www.pinemountainsettlementschool.com/events.php?view=details&id=43>.

Floracliff Nature Sanctuary

- **Sat., Oct. 13, 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.—Mary Wharton’s 100th Birthday Celebration**
Dr. Mary Wharton was the founder of Floracliff – she is indeed someone to celebrate! There will be hikes, a silent auction and presentations. \$10 fee. Check it out at <http://www.floracliff.org/newsroom.html>.

The Arboretum

- **Sat., Oct. 13 at 10 a.m.—Plant Exchange**
Plants must be delivered at 9 a.m. Exchange begins promptly at 10. Cost is \$1; free to Friends.
- **Sat., Oct. 13 from 4:30 to 6:30 p.m.**
Family event featuring pumpkin painting, face painting, leaf etching, insect displays and much more. Admission is \$3; Kentucky Children’s Garden members, \$2.
Docent Led Tours (no charge)
- **Sun., Oct. 14 –The Oak Collection**
- **Sun., Oct. 28 – Fall Color Walk**
All tours start at 2 p.m. at the Visitor Center and last about one hour. Pre-registration not required.

Bernheim Forest

- **Sat., Oct. 27 and Sun., Oct. 28—Mastering Fall Landscape Photography**
Intermediate to serious photographers, capture the essence of the natural landscape at this two day digital photography workshop with acclaimed nature photographer Allen Rokach. Workshop includes training in “after capture” photo editing techniques. More info at www.bernheim.org/event_detail.htm?id=1073.