

LEXINGTON CHAPTER — November, 2012

<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 judylex@insightbb.com.

President's Report...

At the end of December 2012, I will have served on the board of the Lexington chapter of *Wild Ones* for four years, the last two as president. I have been asked to reflect on those years, which I am pleased to do.

In 2008, when Betty Hall asked several other native plant enthusiasts, including myself, to serve on the *Wild Ones* board, she expressed the hope that under new leadership the Lexington chapter would grow into an organization that could promote native plants vigorously and consistently. And indeed, all of us who joined the board at that time took that goal very seriously. We met monthly, developed a website, set up the means to communicate with members and friends via email, and created a display board to attract attention to our organization at garden- and nature-related events. Above all, we worked hard putting together programs for our monthly membership meetings: we recruited speakers for power point presentations, hosts for garden visits, and leaders for nature walks and the occasional workshop.

To our astonishment and delight, the Lexington chapter grew from about 30 to over 90 members. Our membership chair (now co-chair), Linda Porter, deserves much of the credit. She maintains our membership roster in meticulous order, makes new members feel welcome and issues reminders when it's time to renew. She also keeps our "friends" list updated so that we can stay in touch with those who have expressed an interest in our work. In 2011 Linda was invited to speak about chapter growth at the annual conference of *Wild Ones* National in Wisconsin and to facilitate a group discussion on the subject. We felt honored to have Linda and our chapter recognized in this way and her reporting back to us about the conference and about the National Headquarters has helped us to develop a better understanding of the larger organization under whose umbrella we function.

At the end of 2011 our board spent two Saturdays in long and intense meetings with a facilitator who helped us respond constructively to our chapter's success. As a result we have set up committees, chaired by board members but staffed by chapter members, to assume many of the functions of governance that had previously fallen to the entire board: Programs, Marketing and Communications, Finance, and Membership. Our marketing committee has been the most active and has created a monthly e-newsletter (in which the present article appears).

Aside from engaging our members to share in the board's organizational work, we aim to make our chapter more visible in the Lexington community and beyond. Several of our members are available to give power point presentations about native plants to interested groups. Last year we sponsored a highly successful tour of three native gardens for the general public, and this year we organized a public rain garden tour together with the Bluegrass Rain Garden Alliance. We hope to provide guidance and financial support for native plant projects in our region. This fall we are making a donation of perennial plants to McConnell Springs to increase the diversity of the grassland below the board walk and enhance its visual appeal.

It has been gratifying for me to experience the growing interest in native plants in our area and to help stimulate and focus that interest. I would like to thank all *Wild Ones* members and especially those of you who serve or have served on our chapter board for your work done on behalf of native landscaping and for the support you have extended to me during my presidency.



Beate Popkin

Native Viburnums

By
Victoria Ligenza



If you're looking for an easy shrub with great seasonal interest, then one of our native viburnums would be a good choice. Showy flat to rounded flower heads are followed by berries and great fall leaf color. These shrubs also offer critical nesting cover for many birds and other wildlife. The berries provide food for birds and some viburnums are a larval host and nectar source for butterflies.

Viburnums belong to the honeysuckle family. There are approximately fifteen native to North America. Here are some that are native to Kentucky: rusty blackhaw (*V. rufidulum*), blackhaw (*V. prunifolium*), arrowwood (*V. dentatum*), possumhaw (*V. nudum*), hobblebush (*V. lantanoides*), Kentucky viburnum (*V. molle*) and mapleleaf viburnum (*V. acerifolium*).

Some cultivars of the various viburnum species have been developed, perhaps for smaller size or increased berry production. Some of these cultivars require another cultivar close by to produce fruit. Even varieties that are self-fruiting produce more abundant fruit if they are cross-pollinated with other cultivars.

There are two main groups of viburnums: one prefers marshes and bogs, the other upland woods. But they all thrive in rich, evenly moist soil. Many viburnums are cane growing shrubs. New canes are produced each year, so to rejuvenate the plants, remove declining canes every few years.

Our native viburnums have few pests and disease problems and, although deer will eat the foliage, they tend to prefer more succulent plants. Powdery mildew is the most common problem but plants are more susceptible when drought stricken.

A relatively new pest problem is the viburnum leaf beetle (*Pyrrhalta viburni*) introduced into Canada in 1947 from Europe, but not detected in breeding populations until 1978 in Ottawa, Canada. It has now been found in many northeastern states, including small parts of Ohio and Pennsylvania. To date this pest has not been detected in Kentucky.

To learn more about viburnums, both native and non-native, take a look at "*Viburnums: Flowering Shrubs for Every Season*" by Michael A. Dirr.

Sometimes Litter is a Good Thing!

By Victoria Ligenza



Wildlife in backyard habitat thrives if you leave leaf debris and dried flower heads untouched for the winter months. Dried seed heads may look unkempt but they provide food for birds such as finches and sparrows that stay here during the colder months. And many insects like spiders and roly-pollies that hide in litter provide a meal for wrens and other insect loving birds.

Moths, such as the luna moth, overwinter in the pupae stage. An exception is the "wooly bear". This Isabella tiger moth is unique because it spends the winter as a caterpillar hiding under debris in a warm spot.

Butterflies can overwinter in any of their four life stages. Most butterflies survive the winter by going into what is called diapause where their metabolism slows and they hide out until the weather warms. Swallowtails wait out the winter in the chrysalis stage in a protected location. Tawny emperor caterpillars spend the winter hiding in a group among dead curled leaves. The mourning cloak, question mark and eastern comma survive in the adult stage hiding under loose bark or inside tree cavities.

So, remember, that morning cloak you see next summer may be up to 11 months old having survived the winter hiding in your yard. Peeling tree bark, perennial plant debris, logs or old fences are all inviting places to overwinter. Check your garden now to see what you can leave behind.



URGENT!

Next *Wild Ones* Events

Nov 1 (Thursday), 7:00 p.m. - 9 p.m. at St. Michael's Church, 2025 Bellefonte Rd—

Dr. John Hartman, retired UK professor of plant pathology and current president of the Friends of the Arboretum, will present a talk on “Disease Threats to Native Woody Plants in Kentucky.” Dr. Hartman is extremely knowledgeable about fungi that are hosted by our native plants. He will help us understand that not all fungi are destructive. We are immensely pleased that John has agreed to speak to our group!

Nov. 10 (Saturday), 1 p.m. at Floracliff Nature Preserve—

Rob Paratley will lead a *Wild Ones* winter tree identification hike. More details available soon.



Dec. 1 (Saturday) Save the date for our Holiday Party and Potluck Dinner! Watch for an email with details as this is the last newsletter of the year.

“Flight of the Butterflies”

Don't miss this film currently playing at the IMAX theatre in the Louisville Science Center, 727 W. Main St. It is the story of the monarch butterfly migration and the man who spent 40 years trying to discover exactly where these beautiful butterflies went on their southbound winter flight.

Showings run from Oct. 7 to Jan. 18. For details and tickets check the website: <http://www.kysciencecenter.org/site/imax-article/october-7,-2012---january-18,-2012.html>.

Winter Break Coming Up

Your newsletter committee is taking a three-month hiatus during the winter months, returning in March, 2013. During our time off we will be on the lookout for native plant events and when we find them, we'll send out an **Events Email** with the details.

Have a wonderful winter and holiday season and we'll look forward to getting back with you in the spring!

So What's the Big Excitement About a TWIG, for Heaven's Sakes!!!

By Mary Carol Cooper

Rob Paratley, Curator of the University of Kentucky Herbarium, explained the significance of twigs in his talk on “Identifying Trees in Winter” Thursday night, October 4 at St. Michael's Church.



Rob Paratley (l) checks resources to answer question from Harry Hall (r).

Habit, the growth form of a tree, can be seen better in the winter when the leaves are gone. Many trees have a distinctive habit—coarse branching, thick twigs, weeping branches or a “witch's broom.” In addition, fruits, nuts, leaves on the ground and the bark of a tree are all good identifying winter characteristics. But...the nitty gritty of winter tree identification is the TWIG.

These magnificent structures have buds with varying numbers of scales—leaf scars that are arranged on the twig either alternately or opposite—and have a varying number of bundle scars, lenticels (small dots on the twig), stipule scars, thorns, spines, prickles, and short shoots. Pith, odor and color may vary also. All of these identifiers have distinct functions for the tree and they also allow us to identify a tree in winter.

The audience was captivated by Rob's helpful PowerPoint program that covered all of the many different twig structures. How many people actually look at a twig closely and see all of these many aspects and clues? Many of us *Wild Ones* who saw Rob's program will from now on!

I'll have to admit that I was skeptical about doing successful tree identification far removed from a nature setting but I will have to hand it to him...he did a wonderful job. Many people stayed afterwards with lots of questions and comments. **NOTE:** Rob will lead a *Wild Ones* winter tree identification hike on Saturday, November 10 at 1 p.m. at Floracliff Nature Preserve. More details to come.

Rob is also giving a two day workshop on conifers at Floracliff on November 3 and 4 and Beverly James, Floracliff preserve manager, is leading a winter tree hike on December 1 for those who want to hone their identification skills in the woods. If you are interested in either of these events there is more information on the Floracliff Nature Preserve webpage (www.floracliff.org/events.html).

End of Year Garden Reflections

By Ann Bove

Fall has special meaning for gardeners, I think. When I look out my back window, I see the fluffy blooms of the native grass, prairie dropseed, sparkling in the autumn light, set off by a blazing red backdrop of chokeberry leaves. The dogwood leaves are on fire, the spicebush is a brilliant yellow, and purple aster blooms add their own color splashes. Goldfinches perch to nibble on seed-heads, and all is right with the world. Or is it? It seems that a gardener's work is never done!

So, as I look out my window, what else do I see? I see exotic daylilies that I have finally decided to purge. And I see the stark white of Japanese anemone blooms that just don't work with the soft yellow and purple blooms of the native fall season. My garden is about 75% native and I can see that it will get to about 85% some time very soon. Not just because I think I should make this change but because it feels so right.

Garden design flaws attract my attention as well. Some plants grew taller than I thought they would — surprise! — and need to be moved farther back in the garden. I enjoy using stepping stone pathways within larger garden beds and I am going to improve one such path by using larger stones. Sitting in your garden provides a delightfully different perspective and I plan to add a bench at the very back.

Then there are all of those seed heads. Much as I want to leave them all for the birds, I know that I will pay the price in the spring when self-seeded plants pop up everywhere. So I cut off the seed heads that will be the most aggressive, such as wild senna and blue sage. And then there are the exceptions. Brown-eyed Susan seeds like crazy, but once I saw the goldfinches feeding on it, what could I do?

Not that long ago I learned about the importance of leaf litter to overwintering butterflies and other insects so I now look forward to mulching with fall leaves. I run over them once with our mulching lawn mower and then a second time with the bag attachment in place. These chopped up leaves enhance the garden and create habitat at the same time.

A gardener's work truly is never done so it's a good thing that, for the most part, it feels like play. If you knock on my door and I don't answer, come round back. I'll be in the garden!

Beneficial Creatures of the Night

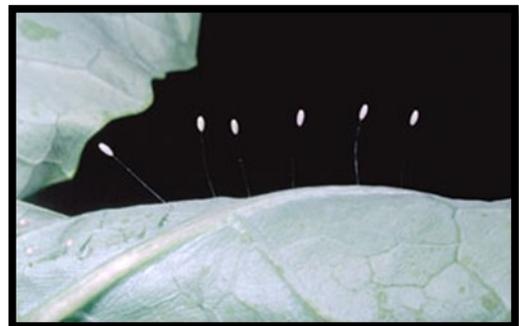
By Heather Wilson



Continuing this month with our focus on night creatures as beneficial insects, I wanted to talk a little bit about green lacewings (*Chrysoperla rufilabris*), also known as aphid lions. This insect develops through four stages on its journey from egg to adulthood. Each spring, adult lacewings (which are generally not predators) lay their eggs on the tops of foliage. These tiny eggs are suspended above the foliage on tiny, hair-like filaments that are very hard to see with the naked eye. The larvae that hatch from these eggs are voracious predators. Plant pests most often consumed by lacewing larvae include aphids, thrips, spider mites, mealybugs and leafhoppers; as well as the eggs and caterpillars of most pest moths. The larval stage lasts for up to three weeks.

Adults emerge from silken cocoons spun by the larvae after about five days and can live for about six weeks. Green lacewings have soft green bodies, lacey appearing wings and golden eyes.

If they are not already residents in your home garden, it is quite simple to provide them with habitat. Many of our favorite native plants encourage population growth of these tiny little insects. Some of these plants include yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*), Angelica (*Angelica spp*), prairie sunflower (*Helianthus maximiliani*), and coreopsis (*Coreopsis spp*) to name only a few. Their eggs are also commonly found on the leaves of many of our favorite shade trees!



All photos by: R. Bessin, University of Kentucky, Department of Entomology

NOVEMBER EVENTS

Floracliff Nature Sanctuary—Call 859-351-7770 to register for all hikes and workshops.

- **Sat., Nov. 3 and Sun., Nov. 4**—**Conifers** workshop with Rob Paratley of UK. Classroom work plus field trips to Lexington Cemetery and the Daniel Boone National Forest. There is a charge for this class.
- **Sat., Nov. 10 at 10 a.m.**—**Long Hike** to see more of the preserve than other hikes permit. Rated difficult because of length (about 4 mi.) but with opportunity to do only half the length. Very popular so early registration again encouraged.
- **Sat., Dec. 1 at 1 p.m.**—**Winter Tree ID** with Preserve Manager Beverly James. Hiking level moderate.

The Arboretum

- **Wed., Nov. 7 at 6 p.m.**—**Plant Breeding: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly**—**FREE** presentation on the techniques used by amateur and professional breeders.
- **Wed., Nov. 28**—**Program at 11:15 a.m. and Winter Tea at noon. Preregistration REQUIRED. Cost \$25.** Check the website http://www.ca.uky.edu/arboretum/calendar_events.php for menu.

Fayette Co. Ag. Extension Office

- **Thurs., Nov. 15 at 6:30 p.m.**—**Attracting Birds to the Garden** with Horticulture Agent Jamie Dockery who will discuss ideas for habitat, nesting sites, water and feeders that will bring birds to your yard. **Cost is \$10.** To pre-register call 257-5582.



Sometimes Overlooked, Blackgum Is Versatile Tree

By Heather Wilson

Photo by Yvonne Cunningham,
Country Gardener



Often known commonly as water tupelo, or blackgum, *Nyssa sylvatica* is one of the most overlooked, yet amazing native trees in our area. This tree grows to about 40 feet tall in urban conditions with an upright pyramidal habit when young. Blackgum can trick you, though, and change from upright to spreading, depending on site and environmental conditions. In the forest this tree often survives in the understory for much of its young life, then as an opening arises grows to overstory size. The glossy dark green leaves are generally elliptical in shape, forming a drip tip at the end of each leaf. One of the first trees to signal the changing of the fall season, its leaves turn a brilliant mix of scarlet, orange and yellow toward the end of September. Fruits are small, dark colored and fleshy, ripening in September and October, and are readily eaten by many birds and squirrels.

Growing in a variety of landscapes in its native range (from ME to FL, and the Carolinas to TX), *Nyssa sylvatica* has been documented as the oldest living temperate species in North America (679 years, Pederson 2012). As a specimen tree in our urban landscape it is expected to be a long lived tree. Planting should be done any time other than autumn and plenty of care should be taken to make soil amendments ahead of time. This species prefers evenly moist, deep, acidic soils in full sun in our urban landscape.

For more information about blackgum, please read the article from *The Lady Slipper* (link following) written by Dr. Neil Pederson. This is truly an amazing tree and the article does a great job telling the story of Nyssa. http://www.knps.org/newsletters/Summer2012_Vol27No2.pdf

TELL US WHAT YOU THINK...PLEASE! By the time you read this, you will have a link to our newsletter survey. We have enjoyed offering a monthly newsletter to our chapter members but now we need to know what YOU think. Please take a moment to complete this survey on line. Answer ten quick questions, click DONE, and that's it! Thank you!