



Volume 15: Issue 4

LEXINGTON CHAPTER — June, 2015

<http://lexington.wildones.org>

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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.lexington.wildones.org 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@twc.com.

President's Message...

In mid-May I visited the Mt. Cuba Center in northern Delaware which serves as an education and research facility for native plant gardening. It is located at the former residence of Mrs. Lammot du Pont Copeland who, before her death in 2001, worked for many decades to create an extensive native plant woodland garden which is now open to the public on weekends.



Wandering along its broad mulched paths, I was reminded that a garden, no matter how naturalistic it appears, always differs from a natural area where plants freely compete with each other. At the Mt. Cuba Center, large deciduous trees unfold their leaves at great height just as they would in a forest but the understory is carefully controlled to prevent the woodland floor from becoming too shaded. The floor is covered with masses of familiar wildflowers, all planted and managed in such a way that plants with ephemeral foliage grow in the vicinity of others that can occupy the space their leaves vacate by mid-summer.

Large drifts of woodland phlox, foam flowers and sedum were in bloom. The many species of trillium, which Mrs. Lammot apparently collected, were just coming to an end. The ferns had just begun to send up their delicate fronds. Fringetree, bladdernut and red buckeye were flowering. Native azaleas in pink and white, as well as in every shade of yellow from delicate cream to bright orange, gave me particular pleasure since it is so difficult for us to grow them here in the Bluegrass.

Possibly I saw this garden at the peak of its beauty. However, it was evident that it remains visually appealing throughout the summer and fall. Bottlebrush buckeye, clethras, Indian pinks, asters and goldenrods were getting ready for their moment of bloom.

Visiting the Mt. Cuba Center was both educational and intensely enjoyable. Not that I discovered new plants. In fact I was surprised how many of the ones I saw I actually knew. But I found myself reflecting on the way the plants were arranged to produce a lovely effect. Here seemed to be an entirely satisfying answer to the question that all of us in our movement struggle with—how do we create beautiful gardens with our cherished native plants?

Beate Popkin

Waystation Tour, The Summer Attraction

By Beate Popkin

On Saturday, July 11, our chapter is hosting a garden tour of monarch waystations in Lexington. Of the ten gardens on the tour, six will be private, one is at a business location and three will be public. All are registered waystations and, with one exception, all are located inside New Circle Road. For a list of participating gardens, please consult our website at www.lexington.wildones.org. Click on the link that brings up the garden tour flyer.

The six private properties on the tour range from small intimate gardens to others on half-acre suburban lots. All are lovingly tended by their owners. Moreover, all the owners are involved in their communities and participate in efforts to make their neighborhoods more ecologically sustainable.



The Klausing Group, one of Lexington's premier landscape installation firms, invites our tour participants to view their state-of-the-art rain garden, which is complete with a storm water quality unit that traps debris and improves the retention of pollutants entering storm water in urban areas. Their monarch waystation is planted in the rain garden. Other elements of green infrastructure that can be viewed at the site are a vegetated roof, a rainwater harvesting system and pervious paving that reduces storm water runoff.

Our three public gardens are at St. Michael's Church, Cardinal Hill Hospital, and Wellington Park. These gardens are maintained by dedicated volunteers. The Wellington garden, of course, is our own, planted and maintained by members of our *Wild Ones* chapter.

This garden tour is our main fund raiser for 2015 and it is an ambitious project. The tour is scheduled from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., which will be a long day. Our organizing committee hopes that many chapter members will step forward to help on July 11, either by selling tickets at one of the sites or by serving as a host answering questions. We are dividing the work into three shifts to assure that all helpers have an opportunity to visit the garden sites themselves. Shifts will be 9:30 a.m. to 12 noon, from 12 noon to 2:30 p.m., and from 2:30 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Please contact Tee Bergman if you can help: teebergman@tvc.com.



PLANT PUZZLE (*offered by Deborah Holloway*)



Hqwallbase.com

What shrub grows 6 to 12 feet in height and is covered with fragrant cream colored pincushion blooms in early to mid-summer that mature into ball-shaped fruit by fall?

More hints—it grows in full sun to part shade, does well in wet soil and thereby works to fight soil erosion but it also tolerates drought. You will find this beautiful and useful plant across the U.S., Canada, and even into Mexico. Its flowers attract bees and butterflies.

Native Americans used the bark in solution to treat infections, to stop bleeding, and as a treatment for kidney stones and some of the effects of malaria.

Answer on page 5.

Tropical Milkweed Storm

By Judy Johnson



Tropical milkweed (*Asclepias curassavica*) is a non-native milkweed gaining popularity with butterfly gardeners. It has many assets. Its bright yellow or yellow and orange bi-color blooms brighten any garden. It grows back quickly after being devoured by hungry caterpillars. Its sturdy leaves and

flowers are always ready to support butterflies and its nectar is favored by both hummingbirds and butterflies. Its fatal attraction as we now know—it is a popular host plant for monarch eggs.

Obviously, its non-native status will not win any popularity points with native plant gardeners but why are monarch butterfly advocates also raising concerns when this milkweed seems to be such an ideal source of habitat and nourishment for the monarch? New research is beginning to provide some answers while indicating areas for more study.

Dara Satterfield, PhD. candidate at the University of Georgia, recently co-authored a study of the effects of tropical milkweed on the health of monarchs and their Pan-American migration. This milkweed has naturalized—escaped from cultivation—in USDA hardiness zones 9 and 10, possibly into zone 8. Her team found a connection between the increasing presence of tropical milkweed year round in the southern U.S. and increasing numbers of monarchs remaining there, continuing to breed over the winter months rather than making the traditional migration to central Mexico. They found the sedentary winter-breeding butterflies were 5 times more likely to be infected with parasites than migratory monarchs sampled at their summer breeding sites and the overwintering sites in Mexico.

The parasite of greatest concern is *ophryocystis elektroscirrha* (OE), an obligate protozoan (meaning it cannot complete its life cycle without exploiting a suitable host) which grows and multiplies within only two known hosts—the queen and the monarch butterflies. An infected female monarch carries dormant OE spores on the outside of its abdomen. These spores are scattered on eggs and milkweed leaves. An emerging caterpillar will eat the eggshells and leaves, thus ingesting the OE spores. And so the cycle continues.

Once butterflies are infected, they never recover.

According to the Monarch Butterfly Expert at Journey North, “Potential negative effects on monarchs include 1) continuous breeding on the same plants which can lead to a build up of OE infection and 2) availability of milkweed during a time that it is not naturally available which can impact monarch breeding during the fall migration.”

The Satterfield study looked only at information from the southern part of the U.S. and California. More research is needed to determine full implications for gardeners in Kentucky, however, it might be prudent for us to heed the recommendations of Dr. Karen Oberhauser of the University of Minnesota, another noted ecologist studying monarch migration. Writing for Monarch Joint Venture she points out that “now we understand that monarchs are healthier when milkweed is seasonal and not year-round, we can work to improve monarch habitat.” Some of her immediate suggestions for monarch lovers include:

- Plant native milkweeds whenever possible.
- Learn to identify native milkweeds and protect them.
- Ask local growers to produce native milkweeds.
- Participate in research efforts (Several citizen science programs dedicated to studying monarch ecology and conservation include: *Monarch Health* (<http://monarchparasites.org/>); *Monarch Larva Monitoring Project* (<http://mlmp.org/>); *Monarch Watch* (<http://monarchwatch.org/>); *Journey North* (<http://www.learner.org/jnorth/monarch/>).

Final note: A tropical milkweed fact sheet and a native milkweed fact sheet are available from monarchjoint-venture.org.



A Partnership That Made a Lasting Difference

By Ann Bore

Do you remember Betty Hall's talk about milkweed and monarchs about two years ago? Her well-organized talk, complete with her own beautiful photographs, was delivered with enthusiasm and a challenge. Betty wanted us to plant monarch waystations in our backyards and offered prizes to those who got their waystations certified by her deadline. Betty cast a seed that fell on very fertile ground. There was someone in the audience who grabbed her vision and ran with it.

As Joanna Kirby listened to Betty, she thought, "That's it, I've found it!" Joanna was about to begin her two-year term as president of the Garden Club of Kentucky (GCKY). All incoming presidents must have a project and that evening Joanna's project and passion became monarch waystations in Kentucky.

Two years previously Joanna had worked with *Wild Ones* member Linda Porter to refurbish an old garden at Woodlawn Elementary School in Danville. At that time, Joanna was a vice president of GCKY and Linda was Garden Club of Danville beautification chair. They had a taste of success when this garden won two awards, one from the National Garden Clubs.

Joanna became President of GCKY in May, 2013, and began her monarch waystation project by appointing Linda Porter as project chair. Linda suggested that they reach out to *Wild Ones* to form a joint monarch waystation committee. That committee became a powerhouse of six: Joanne Kirby, Linda Porter, Betty Hall, Tina (Placek) Elliott, Mary Carol Cooper and Mary Turner.

Joanna and Linda hit the road, using Betty Hall's PowerPoint talk in their presentations to schools, libraries, master gardeners, garden clubs, extension offices and state park staff. They logged many miles on their cars, driving, speaking, encouraging and consulting. Mary Carol, retired Education Director at Salato, joined them giving talks and consultations. Tina Elliott, native plant specialist at Springhouse Gardens, offered consultations and plant information and also drew up a general design for a monarch waystation/ pollinator garden. Tina also did research on systemic pesticide use by growers. (Treated plants will kill insects that feed on them and Tina makes sure that the native plants at Springhouse Gardens have not been treated.) Mary Turner designed presentation materials and offered her computer-related expertise.

The waystation idea took on a larger environmental focus. The committee talked about not only monarchs but all pollinators. And not only about plants but healthy soil and the negative effects of the use of systemic and other pesticides.

There are so many success stories from the alliance. Here are just two examples.

First, in August, 2013, Joanna contacted the Commissioner of State Parks, Elaine Walker, to talk about waystations for state parks. Commissioner Walker brought in State Naturalist Ron Vanover and they agreed to the installation of waystations at five parks. In addition to this, every park received an information packet, prepared by the committee and sent out by the Parks Commission. Now, not quite two years later, 26 out of our 49 state parks have had consultations and many are installing their waystation/pollinator gardens this spring!

Second, and here is a fun story, Joanna and Linda were at Cumberland Falls State Park having a bite to eat when Joanna noticed that the dining room had a children's place mat with pictures to color and a kids' menu on it. Why couldn't those place mats, which are used at all state park dining rooms, feature monarch butterfly information, Joanna wondered? Well, now they do!

When this good work was started two years ago, there were 36 waystations in all of Kentucky and just two in Lexington. Now there are at least 240 in the state and 60 of these are in Lexington.

(Continued on page 5, column 1)



Photo of Joanna Kirby and Linda Porter courtesy of GCKY

(Partnership continued from page 4)

Joanna Kirby's determination and passion guided the work of the joint committee, which was awarded two of the highest honors given by NGC at the recent National Garden Clubs Convention. The Award of Excellence recognized the state president's special project "Saving the Monarchs." Joanna Kirby and Linda Porter accepted this honor. Committee work also earned the 2013-15 NGC President's Special Project Making a Difference Award.

At Joanna's request, Governor Steven Beshear proclaimed September 2015 *Monarch Awareness Month* and the joint committee will be hosting their first Monarch/Pollinator Weekend on September 25-27 at Jenny Wiley State Resort Park in Prestonsburg. Joanna, Tina, Linda and Mary Carol will each be giving a talk during the conference. The National Garden Clubs now has a butterfly committee and Joanna will be their monarch waystation representative. Linda is GCKY butterfly, pollinator, and monarch waystations committee chair. Finally, the new NGC national president's project entitled "Leap into Action," is all about pollinators, frogs and saving seeds—a big environmental focus.

So, while Joanna's term as president of GCKY is officially over, the work continues. Each of us can help by adding a monarch waystation/pollinator garden in our yard. We can make a difference – the GCKY and *Wild Ones* partnership is living proof!

June Wild Ones Event

On **Thursday, June 4** at 7p.m. *Wild Ones* members will venture to the Visitors' Center at the UK Arboretum where Todd Rounsville will share the results of his research about that devilish plant, wintercreeper. Wintercreeper is an invasive exotic species from Asia that has become a significant disruptor of Kentucky woodlands.

The presentation will examine the natural ecology of the species and show how recent research activities are shedding light on its behavior, including what that means for controlling it.

Todd Rounsville is the Native Plant Curator for the UK Arboretum.

PLEASE NOTE THE CHANGE OF MEETING LOCATION.

PLANT PUZZLE SOLUTION:

This month's featured plant is the hardy buttonbush (*Cephaelanthus occidentalis*), also known as the honeybell, the honeyball, and the buttonwillow. If your space is limited, a new variety has just been introduced by Proven Winners that grows to just 3-4 feet.



June Calendar

Bernheim Arboretum and Research Forest

Sat., June 20 8:50 p.m. to June 21 6:50 a.m.—**Summer Solstice Welcome at Earth Measure**—unique overnight program. Chairs and blankets recommended for night viewing and small tents may be set up. Cost is \$20 for members; \$30 for non-members. Call 502-955-8512 before 4 p.m. the day before to register.

Floracliff Nature Sanctuary

Sat., June 20, 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.—**Bioblitz and Public Nature Day**—open house event for visitors to learn about Kentucky's biodiversity. Guided and self-guided hikes, interactive stations, field study sites. More information, including schedule of the day's activities at floracliff.org. Preregistration is required. Email info@floracliff.org. The same program will be presented at Maywoods Environmental and Educational Lab on **Sunday, June 21**. For more information on that location, contact Karen Pratt at karen.pratt@eku.edu.

Lexington Council Garden Clubs

Sat., June 6, 10:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. and Sun., June 7, 1:00 to 5:00 p.m.—**Open Gates to Bluegrass Living Garden Tour**. Nine diverse gardens throughout the area will be open. Tickets are \$15 and may be purchased from club members or the following businesses: Best of Flowers, Kings Garden Center, Louis's Flower Power Shop in Lansdowne, Michler's Florist, Greenhouse and Design, and Wilson's Nurseries. Check lexgardenclubs.org for more information.

McConnell Springs

Sun., June 21 at 2:00 p.m.—**First Summer Hike**—Join staff for a hike and dialogue about plants and wildlife along the way. For more information call 859-225-4073.

Additional Offering: This link <http://www.mcconnellsprings.org/education.html> will take you to interpretive guides in pdf format for each of the park's natural features. The documents contain interesting historical, geological, archaeological, and botanical information.

Raven Run Nature Sanctuary

Fri., June 19 at 9 p.m.—**Creatures of the Night**—Learn about their habits and folklore on the night walk in search of wildlife active at night. For information or registration call 859-272-6105.

UK Arboretum

Thurs., June 18 at 10:00 a.m.—**Building a Rain Garden**—Class offers a tour of the many rain gardens at the Arboretum. Learn about the many native plants that thrive in them and the maintenance required to keep to keep them looking great. **FREE** Call 859-257-6955 for information.