

LEXINGTON CHAPTER — May, 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...

So, you have decided to take out the grass in your front yard and make a native plant habitat garden. How, you wonder, will this work aesthetically? You know that moral rectitude does not automatically translate into visual beauty, yet you are committed to bring the two together. Here are some thoughts that might help.



Consider the edges. There are probably quite a few of them in your front yard, mostly created by pavement:

the edge between the grass and the driveway, the grass and the sidewalk, the grass and the walkway to your house. These stretches of pavement are currently comfortable to walk on because the grass along their edges is short and does not obstruct the human foot. Once your coneflowers and asters lean into your paths, your garden may be much less inviting to visitors than you would like it to be. Work hard at assembling a list of short plants (up to 1 foot high) for the first 20 inch strip along your edges. Beyond that, plant another strip of 1 ½ to 2 ½ foot high plants. The tall ones can go to the far side of that second strip.

Consider the woodies. Traditionally, front yards contain trees and foundation shrubs. In principle this is good, for such plants can provide winter structure as well as habitat for wildlife. However, the propensity for evergreens in conventional garden design greatly diminishes the ecological usefulness of woody plants. Very few evergreens are native to our region, and while we can use those in our front yard designs, a good native plant garden will judiciously incorporate deciduous trees and shrubs. We have so many native trees in all sizes available to us, and the same is true for shrubs. Taller shrubs can serve as foundation plants between windows or at the corners of the house while the shorter ones can go under windows or in flower beds.

Consider ornaments. Birdbaths, ceramic pots, gazing balls, boulders, sculptures, benches and many other objects that have passed through flea markets and garage sales will help create focal points for your design and thereby make it easy for a visitor to enjoy your garden. Avoid “kitsch” if you can, but don’t obsess too much about that. Some ornaments make a strong visual impact, especially those with large smooth surfaces; others speak when seen close-up. Use both kinds and place them in such a way that they don’t visually compete with each other.

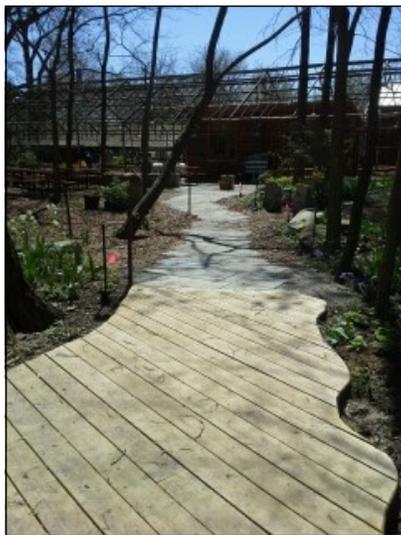
Above all, experiment, experiment, experiment! Remember, the journey is the goal.

Beate Popkin

Michler's Kentucky Native Café—An Urban Oasis

Article and photos by Deborah Holloway

The café at Michler's Florist and Greenhouses will open soon. Many people know some of the history of this business. Robin Michler is the fifth generation to work in the family operation. It is hard to believe now, but when the place was built in 1901 by Carl Michler, the area was on the outskirts of town. Now it is surrounded by homes and other businesses. It has been a resource for Lexington gardeners for many years. The addition of a café will make it an even more enjoyable destination. Both Robin and his father John want people to come and linger in the remains of an old greenhouse set among tall locust trees.



The café area has been extensively landscaped to feature numerous native plants, as the name implies. It is a lovely space with winding bluestone paths leading from the new café parking area (off High Street, next to L.E. Gregg between Ransom and Arlington Avenues). Enter through a gate in an artfully painted fence and you will see wooden tables set in the garden amid the rustic greenhouse ruins and on the bluestone patio surrounding the new café. When the site is finished, there will even be a sandbox to entertain small visitors.

The café itself is built in a more modern style with horizontal wooden slats, ceramic art walls and classic lighting. The architects chosen for the project, David Biagi, David Mohny, and Bruce Sweatnum, are all from the University of Kentucky School of Architecture.

Robin and John explained that the café will concentrate on serving fresh, mainly vegetarian, dishes that will showcase home grown herbs. Soups, salads and sandwiches will be available for lunch and dinner and, hopefully, Sunday brunch can be added later. Coffee and tea will be served and there will be four beers on tap.

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The management of Michler's has had a strong interest in native plants for quite a while. One of their projects to foster interest in natives has been supplying gift kits for public schools that want to create monarch waystations. The kits include a seed packet and a milkweed plant as well as helpful instructions.

Opening day for the café has yet to be named pending licensing so stayed tuned. John and Robin told me they hope people will enjoy spending time in this new space, relaxing in a natural setting, which is truly an urban oasis.

Michler's Florist and Greenhouses is located at 417 E. Maxwell Street. The website is Michlers.com. They are open Monday-Friday 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday closing time is 2 p.m. Extended summer hours will be posted soon.



Wild Ones Plant Exchange and Fundraiser

By Beate Popkin

On Thursday, May 7, our Lexington chapter will have its annual plant exchange. This event has grown in popularity since it started six years ago. Most participants bring plants from their own gardens and take others home with them. Some only contribute plants, having no need to make additions to their garden. Those who are new to native plant gardening may have no plants to donate but hope to take home a stash to get their garden under way. We ask the latter to contribute something to eat or drink. And then, of course, there are those who come for the food, the drink, the talk, the party.

Exchange Rules:

1. It's best if donated plants arrive in pots, but if they are dug up on the day of the exchange, they may be wrapped in wet paper and plastic.
2. Every plant must be labeled, either by common or scientific name.
3. All plants must be native to eastern North America though we do accept cultivars and selections of natives. We will disqualify non-natives.

We lay out the plants in categories: forbs, shrubs, trees, grasses and sedges, seeds, other. The forbs (herbaceous flowering plants other than grasses) make up the largest group by far and we divide them into shade plants and sun-loving plants. Then we subdivide the sun-loving plants according to their season of bloom: spring to mid-June, summer, and September through late fall. Participants have an opportunity to inspect the plants as they are being arranged and to ask questions about their growth habits and cultural requirements.

Everyone who wants to take home plants will have to buy a numbered ticket (\$5 for members, \$7 for non-members). When a number is called out, the person with the matching ticket gets to choose one plant. We go through three rounds of picking plants by number. Then we declare the remaining plants to be available for a general "grab as you can" session. It is always astonishing how all plants have disappeared by the end of the exchange. Presumably they are on their way to new homes where they will be loved and give pleasure.

More Opportunities to Enhance to Your Gardens:

Down to Earth Garden Club Plant Sale—Saturday, May 9, 9 a.m. to noon. This rain-or-shine event will be held at Woodland Christian Church, 530 E. High.

Dropseed Nursery's Spring Plant Sale—Continues May 9, 16, 23, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. 1205 S. Buckeye Lane, Goshen, KY. Information at: www.dropseednursery.com.

Dunbar Memorial Garden's 5th Annual Native Plant Sale—Saturday, May 9, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Funds support care and maintenance of Dunbar Memorial Garden. Plants priced from \$2 to \$25. **CASH ONLY PLEASE!** Bring your used plant pots and receive a discount on purchases. Dunbar High School, 1600 Man O



Neonics Endanger Pollinators

By Linda Porter and Susan Jonas, Garden Club of Danville

Adapted from an article originally printed in the Danville Advocate Messenger, March 8, 2015, and edited for this publication by Karen Lanier.

Concern is growing over a class of pesticides widely used on farms and in home gardens. Even if you garden organically it is hard to escape them. These are the neonicotinoids, developed in the mid-1990s. Neonics, for short. At first they were welcomed as a safer alternative to the chemical pesticides then available.

Neonics are systemic chemicals. They are absorbed by the plant through the roots or leaves and carried through the vascular system, making the entire plant toxic to insects, from roots to flowers, even nectar and pollen. Exposure endangers bees and other insects by disrupting their immune and nervous systems.

The active ingredients persist in plants and in the soil for months, if not years. For annuals in our climate this could be the entire life of the plant. Untreated plants may absorb chemical residues in the garden soil from the previous year.

Neonics are widely used in agriculture and horticulture because they are less toxic to humans and animals than previously used pesticides. This sounds like a great idea if you want to kill an infestation of aphids in your garden, but it doesn't stop there. If a plant was treated with neonics as a seed or seedling, that pretty coneflower providing lunch to a visiting butterfly or caterpillar just might be the insect's last meal, even if you don't use pesticides yourself.

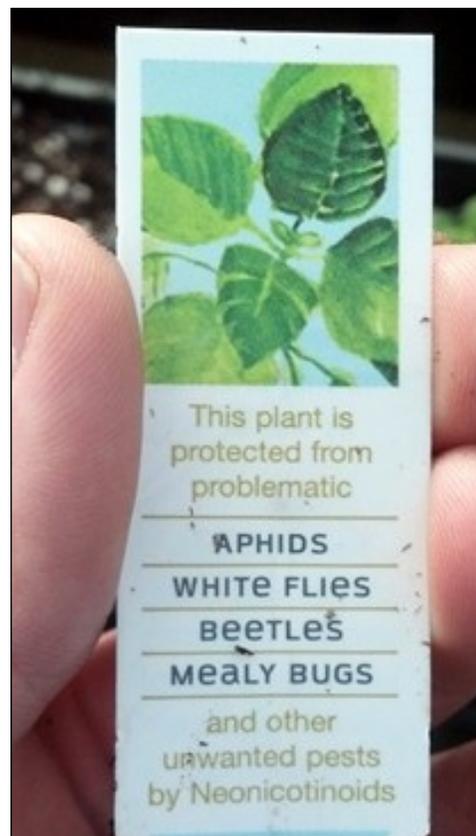
Here's the alarming part--- many, if not most, nurseries rely on neonics to control insects in greenhouses where millions of bedding plants are grown. A major study by Friends of the Earth, BeeAction.org and the Pesticide Research Institute found that 54% of annuals and perennials tested in large garden centers had been treated with neonics (www.foe.org). Growers say they can't control harmful insects without them. You may unknowingly purchase these plants intending to provide habitat and food for bees and other pollinators, but end up harming them.

Some sources feel the whole problem is overblown. Others predict another "Silent Spring." It's up to each gardener to decide what to do, if anything.

Here are our suggestions:

1. Do not buy any neonicotinoids for home garden use. Be aware that some potting soils contain neonics. Some common neonics found in pesticides include imidacloprid, acetamiprid, dinotefuran and clothianidin. Look for these names on ingredient labels.
2. Ask before you buy plants. If merchants cannot or will not tell you if their plants are neonic free, don't buy from them and tell them why.
3. Take care when using any pesticide, even organics like insecticidal soap. Follow directions for safe application and use sparingly.
4. Grow your own plants from organic seeds. They are safe and available at most garden centers or online.

Maybe it is time to see the beauty of a less than perfect garden. A garden that is healthy for beneficial insects, with a few bugs and chewed leaves, will likely have far fewer harmful insects. Mother Nature has a way of keeping things in balance. We would do well to work with her.



Wild Ones Learn About Soil Care

By Judy Johnson

On Thursday, April 2, Lexington *Wild Ones* members invited Dr. Shawn Lucas, assistant Professor of Sustainable Agriculture at St. Catharine's College, to talk about his passion, sustainable care for our soils.

He began with a reminder that the building blocks of soil are 45% minerals, 5% organic matter, 0-50% water, and 0-50% air. Although the focus of his research is agricultural practices on a much larger scale, Dr. Lucas pointed out that soil matters to all of us because it provides habitat for micro-organisms, allows air movement, acts as a medium for growth, helps maintain water supply and its purification, and supports decomposition which provides nutrients. Healthy soil can slow down atmospheric carbon dioxide increase and thereby slow global warming.

Soil's organic matter can be lost through common agricultural practices—tillage, erosion due to monoculture crops and the use of chemical pesticides and herbicides. However, Dr. Lucas said we can definitely be “more harmonious with nature.” He pointed to diversification and rotation of crops, the incorporation of cover crops, the planned addition of manure, shopping locally, and composting.

We small space gardeners can learn about our local food economy and participate by shopping at the farmers' markets and buying into Community Supported Agriculture (CSAs). In our own private space we can enrich our soil with cover crops, compost, and natural fertilizers. And we can continue learning about soil improvement. The evening gave all members a chance to think about their gardens as a part of a larger picture and was a good reminder to support our local food producing economy.



May Calendar

Bluegrass Birding Festival and Craft Fair

Sat., May 9, from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m., and Sun., May 10 from 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. at Jacobson Park—Exhibits and activities for adults and families. Sponsored by Wild Birds Unlimited and Lexington Parks and Recreation. Schedule of events at

www.bluegrassbirdingfestival.com/schedule.



Floracliff Nature Sanctuary

Sat., May 9 at 12:00 noon—Forest Hike—Preserve Manager Beverly James will lead this 2.5 mile hike to highlight mid-spring wildflowers and some of the oldest trees in KY. Suggested donation \$5. Preregistration required. Check floracliff.org for details.

Sat., May 23 at 9:00 a.m.—Herpetology—Zeb Weese, biologist with the KY Heritage Land Conservation Fund, will lead an easy to moderate hike for all ages to find some of the native frogs, salamanders, snakes and turtles in the ponds and Elk Lick Creek. Suggested donation \$5. Preregistration required. Check www.floracliff.org for details.

McConnell Springs

Sat., May 2 at 10:00 a.m.—Senior Wildflower Walk—one hour walk for adults interested in learning more about wildflowers. To register call 859-225-4073.

Sat., May 16 from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.—21st Founders' Day Celebration—park tours, reenactments, storytelling and music. Park is located at 416 Rebmann Lane; directions on website www.mcconnellsprings.org/location.

UK Arboretum

Tues, May 5 from 5:30 to 7:00 p.m.—For the Birds! Plants They Will Like and You Will, Too!—Jamie Dockery will show you plants in the Arboretum that are especially helpful to birds. Class limited to 30 people. Cost \$1. Pre-register at 859-257-6955 or email dmbast0@uky.edu.

Thurs., May 7 from 6:00 to 7:00 p.m.—Bird Walk. Carey Tichenor, retired KY state naturalist, will lead an evening bird walk. Class limited to 30 people. Cost \$1. Pre-registration required.

Tues., May 14 at 10:00 a.m.—Gardening for Pollinators—Jesse Dahl will explain basic requirements for pollinators. Participants will take home two pollinator-friendly plants. Class limited to 20. Cost: \$10, Friends \$8. Pre-registration required.