

LEXINGTON CHAPTER — September, 2016

<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 Judy Johnson, newsletter editor, at judylex@twc.com.

President's Message...

It is always exciting when a new book appears that brings a sophisticated aesthetic approach to the issue of native plant landscaping. *Planting the Post-Wild World* by Thomas Rainer and Claudia West is such a book. The post-wild world of the title is the world in which we live, where wild places no longer exist and nature everywhere is affected by human activity. Just think of the ubiquitous effect of human-induced climate change.

Although, or perhaps because, wildness is gone and ever larger cities create ever more distance between us and nature, we yearn for a natural environment. How else can one explain the enormous popularity of the Highline project in the most urban place imaginable, namely, Manhattan? Thomas Rainer and Claudia West want to create landscapes that respond to this yearning and they suggest we do that using plants – lots of species and, preferably, native ones. Of course, we agree.

In nature, anywhere in the world, plants arrange themselves in one of three archetypal landscapes: *grasslands* (prairie or meadow), *shrublands* (open growth of trees, shrubs and grasses), and *forests* (tall trees with a closed canopy). These landscapes speak to our emotions. They let us sense our connectedness with nature and, for that reason, they should form the basis of naturalistic landscape design.

Too often, when we choose and place plants, we assign them tasks based on our own needs and wishes: screen out neighbors, provide color, separate spaces, edge walkways, attract pollinators, feed birds, absorb storm water, filter pollutants, and so forth. Plants can do all of this, but if these objectives determine the design from the beginning, that design will not result in an aesthetically pleasing landscape. Instead Rainer and West advise beginning the design process by carefully assessing a site and its surroundings for clues that suggest one of the three archetypes. Does this site want to be a grassland, a shrubland or a forest?

The authors do not suggest simply putting out a prairie mix in front of your house and letting it grow into a grassland or planting a bunch of trees to let the forest emerge. Such “designs” are unreadable to the urban public and will be rejected because they do not provide the visual clues for people to see them as nature. The vast expanses of archetypal natural landscapes can be successfully translated to urban and suburban settings only if they are artistically



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The forest distilled into a readable landscape: tall tree trunks, minimal understory, lush groundcover.

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stylized, that is if their visual essence is distilled and if the design emphasizes the features that most directly evoke those natural landscapes for us. For example, we enjoy the way grasses move in a natural meadow, but a designed grassland landscape that rises above our eye level may be discomfoting, even threatening, to us. Therefore, three feet should be the maximum height for a designed meadow or prairie. In a natural prairie silphiums, tickseed, ironweed and other tall flowers rise above the horizontal line of the grasses in a random pattern but in a designed grassland these species need to be clustered for visual effect, not spaced out over the entire site.

Many suburban sites in eastern North America suggest a shrubland design since suburbs already consist of trees, shrubs and grass in open settings. However, the plants and their placement in such suburban landscapes are not evocative of nature: evergreen bushes near the house, vast expanses of manicured lawn and individual trees placed willy-nilly. By reducing the grass area, bringing the shrubs forward from the house and clustering them in islands or drifts, and by arranging the trees in small groves, a constructed landscape can emerge that really feels natural.

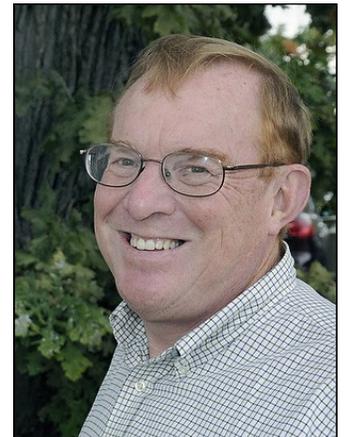
Starting the design process with careful attention given to the landscape archtype that the site suggests not only enhances the emotional appeal of the end product (the urban park, the suburban front garden, the office complex), it also gives unity to the design without sacrificing the diversity of species. But beauty is only one of the goals of Rainer's and West's landscapes. The other goal is resilience, that is, stability over long periods of time and in the face of climate change and urban disturbances. We will take up their discussion of resilient landscapes in the October issue of this newsletter.

Beate Popkin

UK Urban Forestry Initiative Begins New Series

The Urban Forest Initiative is excited to announce a new seminar series, to begin with **Dr. Tom Kimmerer's "Lexington's Urban Forest: Remnants of an Ancient Landscape"** on **Wednesday, Sept. 7**. Doors open at 6:00 p.m. with time to socialize and visit displays before the lecture at 7:00 p.m. Dr. Kimmerer is the author of the book *Venerable Trees: History, Biology, and Conservation in the Bluegrass*.

Similar to previous seminars, this talk is **free to attend and open to the public**, and will occur at the **Fayette County Extension Office**. For information on several speakers lined up in the coming months, please visit their event page for details: <https://ukntrees.ca.uky.edu/events>.



In Search of Kentucky History along the Maysville Road



On **Wednesday, September 14** with Beate Popkin as our leader, *Wild Ones* members will travel to Maysville stopping at some historic sites that provide insight into Kentucky's pioneer history. On the way back along the same route, our stops may include a short walk along the old Maysville Road as it probably was in the early 1800s, visiting a small pioneer museum, looking at Short's golden-rod along the Licking River and enjoying dinner at the Blue Licks State Park restaurant.

We will meet at 9:00 a.m. at a location to be determined and we expect to be back in Lexington by 8:00 p.m. **Please preregister by Sunday evening, September 11**, so that we can plan for transportation and arrange our agenda.

Contact: beatepopkin@qx.net.

Spraying—Pollinators' Plight

By Katrina Kelly

We seem to be seeing an increasing amount of advertising for mosquito spraying services in our area. Some of us are also noticing lower numbers of pollinators, especially butterflies. While populations of our pollinators may be down due to many factors, could the chemicals used to kill mosquitoes also play a role? Evidence from my own research leads me to say yes, our pollinators are probably taking a hit.



Search “mosquito spraying Lexington, KY” and you will find several companies offering the service. Some are general pest control companies, others only offer mosquito spraying and even the Lexington Health Department sprays for mosquitoes. Company websites display a lot of marketing information about diseases carried by mosquitoes and the general nuisance they pose. It is true that mosquitoes are bothersome and can carry disease, but does spraying for them have negative consequences for pollinators, other beneficial insects, our environment, and our own health?

I spoke with a representative of one company that sprays specifically for mosquitoes. The chemical used is called *Bifenthrin 7.9*, a pyrethroid type of insecticide, which is the manmade version of pyrethrin. Currently in the U.S. there are over 600 products containing the chemical *Bifenthrin*.

The safety data sheet provided by the EPA (available online) states that this chemical is highly toxic to bees and fish. Like many other insecticides, it is nonselective and kills by attacking the nervous system of a wide variety of insects including caterpillars, butterflies and moths. The company representative I spoke with said this chemical targets mosquitoes but would not say it specifically kills mosquitoes only.

Pesticide applicators are equipped with backpack sprayers and spray upward onto the underside of leaves on trees and shrubs in order to target roosting mosquitoes. I was told applicators are “bee-friendly,” their instructions are to avoid spraying flowers. I was also told that drift is not an issue because an additive makes the chemical tacky and it will adhere to foliage. However, it would seem there is still a possibility of drift since the product is a mist sprayed in the air.

The company’s plan generally is to spray early in the day in order to allow the chemical to dry before a family comes home in the evening. If so, this chemical is being sprayed at a time of day when pollinators are active. To have a continuing mosquito free yard, spraying has to occur every 21 days.

Since the chemical is sprayed into trees and trees are the major host plants for caterpillars, I wonder how many caterpillars are being killed. And there is the question what happens when our wild birds eat infected caterpillars or other insects?

The Fayette County Health Department sprays for mosquitoes using a different method. The chemical is sprayed off the back of a tank truck into the streets with the intention that the chemical will drift into people’s front yards. This spraying uses the compound *Duet* which contains the active ingredients prallethrin and sumithrin. *Duet* kills airborne adult mosquitoes but it is also very toxic to bees and fish. The health department sprays between the hours of 3-6 a.m., hopefully limiting direct contact with bees and humans. The health department’s literature also states *Duet* is a very safe chemical and residents can go outside immediately after application.

The department’s website gives more information, lists the spraying schedule and provides a routing map. Spraying begins in May and each route is sprayed twice a month until temperatures fall below 55 degrees at time of spraying or the first frost. Residents may opt out of spraying around their property by contacting the health department at www.lexingtonhealthdepartment.org or 859-252-2371.

The government and chemical companies say these chemicals are safe, but environmental organizations are concerned. We can all take measures to reduce mosquito populations on our property without resorting to insecticides. Basic steps to take to limit contact with mosquitoes: minimize standing water where insects can reproduce, wear lightweight long sleeves to prevent bites and use all-natural bug repellents.

The Work of the Urban Forest Initiative

By Suzanne Bhatt

Continuing with our discussion of advocacy groups for Lexington trees (began in the last issue with an introduction to the Tree Board), the second group to consider is the Urban Forest Initiative. The mission of this group is to educate and connect citizens with trees on the UK campus and, more generally, across the community as a whole. UFI, formed in 2014, resulted from the collaboration of two UK professors: Dr. Mary Arthur, a specialist in forest ecology and ecosystem science and Dr. Lynne Rieske-Kinney, a forest entomologist. Beginning with the introduction of urban forestry issues into the UK curriculum, their group has grown in scope. It currently partners with a number of entities including the UK Departments of Sustainability, Forestry, and Entomology, the Bluegrass Youth Sustainability Council, Floracliff Nature Preserve, the UK Arboretum and Bluegrass Greensource. UFI is also piloting many programs that will hopefully be adopted in communities across the Bluegrass.



UFI's website, <https://ukntrees.ca.uky.edu/urban-forest-initiative>, hosts several links designed to encourage more citizen awareness of and direct involvement with trees. There is a link to *Tree Stories*, which highlights specific trees in the Bluegrass region and tracks their history in relation to the surrounding area. Another link to an interactive map of UK trees where citizens can post comments about the condition of specific campus trees or the meaning a particular tree has for them. The *Adopt-a-Tree* program, used by teachers with youth from primary school to college, encourages individuals or groups to select and write about a tree that has directly impacted their lives. Students who adopt a tree are asked to identify it, to calculate its diameter and ecological/economic value and to monitor its seasonal changes, condition and presence in the local environment over time. The *Adopt-a-Tree* program aims to incorporate educational lessons while investing young (and older)

people as “tree keepers.”

The website also contains articles written by local experts on a range of subjects that include trees that are attractive to bees, lepidoptera and birds, approaches to combating the emerald ash borer and calculating the economic value of trees.



Last year, UFI hosted four public seminars attended by many *Wild Ones* members, on topics that included selecting trees to support caterpillar and bird populations, the effects that trees have on people's health and well-being and the value that an urban forest has for the community. This year four more talks are planned, beginning with one announced in this newsletter to be given by Tom Kimmerer about venerable trees and the social aspects of urban forests. UFI also plans to conduct community trainings with interested neighborhood groups on evaluating and monitoring the health and needs of the trees in their area.

For more information about UFI's many projects, go to the website or contact Dr. Mary Arthur at marthur@uky.edu or Dr. Lynne Rieske-Kinney at Lrieske@uky.edu.



We will conclude this series in October with a look at Trees Lexington! (formerly the Tree Canopy Committee).

Wild Ones Venture to the Parklands

Article and photos by Beate Popkin

Parks are important for urban people who seek them out to be in nature and pursue recreational activities. But parks are not just about trees and soccer fields. On August 6, a group of *Wild Ones* and their friends learned just how much more a large park can be, when they visited the Parklands of Floyds Fork just east of Louisville.

The Parklands encompass almost 4000 acres stretching along the Floyds Fork River from Shelbyville Road to Bardstown Road. Four individual parks, each with its own entrance and parking lot are linked by a broad 20 mile long paved path for bicycling, walking and running. Less developed side trails offer hiking opportunities. If none of these modes of forward movement appeal to you, you can also paddle the entire length of the park system on the Floyds Fork, passing through former agricultural fields, now partially grown back into woods and forests. The land was bought and developed with funds donated by Louisville businesses and residents and augmented by a significant federal grant, as well as smaller local grants.

Tom Smarr, the horticultural director of the Parklands showed us around Broad Run Park, the newest and southernmost of the four areas, which opened this spring. We also saw Turkey Run Park. Tom came to Louisville only a year ago with impressive credentials that included work on the Highline project in Manhattan, easily the most famous new urban park constructed during the last 10 years. He walked us around and talked to us for two hours, not boring us for a minute. There was so much to see, so many thoughts to share and so many ideas for the future to lay out. Tom is clearly enthusiastic about his employment in Louisville. He enjoys working for a park system that is well-managed and that gives space, both literally and figuratively, to his creative visions.

The first thing we saw was a sprayground, an area paved in different colors where an easy push on a button activates an array of fountains that are meant to be stood in, walked or run through, lain or sat under. Less risky and cheaper than a swimming pool and possibly more fun. Two picnic shelters flank the sprayground where adults can sit and talk while their kids play. The shelters, like many other park structures, may be rented for events like children's birth-

day parties and the income supports the park's maintenance.

Then we walked along a number of beautifully constructed natural stone walls with beds of mixed shrubs and flowers in front of them. Tom explained his choice of plants and design goals for these beds which were planted this spring. It is not yet entirely clear how everything will meld together. The planting was done in drifts of one species each, though individuals pop up here and there in drifts to which they do not belong which gives the beds that natural look right from the start.

Next we saw the edge of a large woodland whose future design was posted in a kiosk along the bike path. This piece of land slopes down to the Floyds Fork River and is currently covered with trees, shrubs and herbaceous plants. The plan calls for removing the dying ash trees and enhancing the savannah-like appearance of this park section with the gentle addition of some native plants to the existing shrub and herbaceous layer. The woodland will be kept open with groups of trees growing more or less distinct from lower plants, resulting in many edge habitats that are typically rich in biodiversity. Hiking paths will be built through the woodland.

At Turkey Run Park the theme is agriculture, which connects the Parklands to their former use. A tall yellow silo serves as a look-out tower, barns have been nicely fixed up and can be rented for events, agricultural crops are planted in small beds near the silo, and picnic shelters provide a reprieve from the sun and rain. One is called a "pignic" shelter with the pig trough behind it planted in corn. Tee Bergman took a particular interest in it (see photo).



Tom Smarr explaining the Parklands



Tee Bergman inspecting the pig trough of corn

Come Meet Beautiful Bugs



On **Thursday, September 1**, the *Wild Ones* Lexington chapter will welcome Ellis Laudermilk, the Kentucky State Nature Preserves Commission's invertebrate biologist, who will talk about the ecology and biology of those fascinating and beautiful aerial insect predators—dragonflies and damselflies. We will take a photographic tour of representatives of all 10 families found around our state.

Come at 6:30 p.m. and socialize over appetizers before the presentation begins at 7:00 p.m. The location is St. Michael's Church at 2025 Bellefonte Drive.



September

CALENDAR

Bernheim Arboretum

Sat., Sept. 17, from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.—Bugfest and Fall Plant Sale—annual celebration of insects and their relatives and sale of plants propagated from Bernheim's own collection. Sale proceeds benefit the Arboretum. **FREE** event (Non-member \$5 environmental impact fee) More information at www.bernheim.org.

Castlewood Park Tree Festival

Fri., Sept 2, from 5:00 to 8:00 p.m.—help spread mulch around trees, sample food from local vendors, enjoy the woodworking exhibit at Loudon House, listen to music of two youth orchestras. More information at: <https://www.facebook.com/Adopt-a-Tree-Lexington-326162460911298/>

McConnell Springs

Sat., Sept. 24 at 10:00 a.m.—Weekend Workout—a chance for everyone to help clean the park and maintain the trails. Bring your work gloves and tools. For more information call **859-225-4073**.

UK Arboretum

Wed., Sept. 7 and 21—11 a.m. to noon—Garden Tour—Ornamental Grasses and Fall Annuals and Perennials—join Jesse Dahl, Arboretum Horticulturist, for a walk through various gardens highlighting plants of particular interest. Cost is \$3 per person. Each tour is limited to 25 persons. Call **859-257-6955** to register.

Fri., Sept. 9 from 7 to 9 p.m.—Insect Safari—family friendly night of insects and science. Insect-themed activities and games followed at dark by a safari led by UK specialists on to the Arboretum trails in search of insects. Bring a flashlight! Cost is \$1 per person. For more information call **859- 257-6955**.

Wild Ones Visit Presents Possibilities

The *Wild Ones* August visit to member Vicki Reed's gardens was an opportunity to examine many native specimens in several different settings. Vicki explained that in 2009 her front and back yards were almost entirely planted in grass. Slowly she began introducing native plants. Today she continues to experiment with plants that are both ornamental and useful in her evolving landscape.

Vicki shared copies of her list of plants and then led the group on a walk around her property where the plants could be examined. She welcomed questions and solicited suggestions for future additions or changes. It was obvious to the visitors that the gardens were more learning laboratory than carefully designed landscape and for that very reason, stimulated fresh ways of thinking about incorporating native plants into any setting, no matter the size or location.

