

LEXINGTON CHAPTER — June, 2017

<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...

Recently I was asked to provide a design for native flowers and grasses to be installed on a slope behind a newly remodeled public library. The goal was to stabilize the slope and to create an attractive maintenance-free natural landscape that would resemble what Daniel Boone saw upon arriving in central Kentucky.

I have always thought that the concept of a “low- (or no-)maintenance landscape” arose from a garden designer’s wishful thinking. It sounds so good when you are trying to sell your product. But those of us who actually weed our gardens, native or otherwise, or who volunteer to maintain public planting beds, or who work in landscape maintenance know the truth.

In the hope of encouraging my contact person at the library to budget for the care of the bed she envisioned, I asked her to consider these three facts:

- First, in Kentucky, as in most of eastern North America, a planting of sun-loving flowers and grasses in an open area naturally reverts to forest. If not consistently weeded, the seedlings of surrounding trees will gain a hold among the flowers and eventually shade out the intended plants. A forest is what Daniel Boone saw when he entered central Kentucky.
- Secondly, without a gardener’s intervention, the original design of a native flower bed will become invisible within three or four years. The clusters of bloom and form that make the design visually appealing will become ever less distinct. New seedlings succeed in unintended places (think of all the black-eyed susans you don’t really want); plants with strong rhizomous growth invade their neighbors (think of your short-toothed mountain mint); or a short-lived species gets choked out because it’s not sufficiently competitive (think of the purple coneflowers you have lost). A native plant gardener, unconcerned with the visual impact created by the original design, may be content to let this competitive struggle take its natural course but, if so, the species diversity in the bed will almost certainly suffer.
- Thirdly, if we live in a city or have neighbors who shop for plants at conventional outlets, weeds of foreign origin will invade our garden beds. By definition, weeds are very well adapted to establishing themselves in disturbed ground, spreading rapidly and choking out what has been planted. Eventually, our intentionally introduced plants may cover the ground so thickly that the weeds have a much reduced chance to get a foothold. But during the first two or three years after establishing a new native plant bed, periodic weeding is a must.

For novices to native plant gardening, the idea of a no-maintenance landscape seems, not only appealing, but also reasonable. Indeed, we may all wish to return to a paradise where all is naturally in perfect order. Nobody, after all, weeded the Garden of Eden. The problem is that we don’t live there.



Plants vary in their ability to compete for survival through seed dispersal.

Beate Popkin

Champion Tree

By Suzanne Bhatt

Fayette County is home to the newest Kentucky state champion tree, a massive black cherry discovered in the Peninsula off Squires Road. Julian Campbell and Dave Leonard identified the tree and its champion status was confirmed by the state Division of Forestry in late April. The tree measures 196 inches in circumference, 95 feet in height and has an average crown width of 85 feet. The Peninsula, long owned by Kentucky American Water Company, has recently been rezoned for development by Ball Homes. It is still unknown whether this magnificent tree will be protected.

The programs that identify and recognize our largest trees nationally, statewide and locally began in 1940 with the American Forest National Registry of Big Trees. The Kentucky Division of Forestry followed several years later with a state champion registry and the city champion program was developed by Dave Leonard in 1988. The purpose of these programs is to increase appreciation of these “living monarchs” in our communities and awareness of their environmental benefits. The lists continually change as new massives are discovered and old trees die.



Dave Leonard measures the new champion.

Potential champions are nominated to the state Division of Forestry using electronic photographs, GPS coordinates and measurements. If a nominee is considered a candidate, a state forester will conduct official measurements. Trees are evaluated based on a point system determined by their circumference measured in inches at a height of 4 ½ feet above ground, the overall height measured in feet and ¼ of the average crown spread measured in feet. The trees are re-measured every five years to confirm that they are still living and that they continue to hold their champion status.

The Kentucky Division of Forestry hosts a website: <http://forestry.ky.gov/championtrees/pages/default.aspx>, that provides the full listing of state champions and other information about the program, although the actual locations of the trees are not provided. Information about the national registry is available at <http://www.americanforests.org/>.

Kentucky boasts 11 national champions with two located in Lexington. The best known is the huge American basswood near the Henry Clay memorial in Lexington Cemetery. This tree has a circumference of 276 inches and a height of 102 feet. It is believed to date to at least 1776. The other is a smooth sumac located at McConnell Springs. Two previous national champions from Kentucky, a red maple in Knox County and an American sycamore in Montgomery County, have died since their identification.

Fayette County is home to twelve of the 100 state champion trees, including the largest Ohio buckeye, cucumber magnolia (also located in the Lexington Cemetery), black maple, Eastern redbud, American smoketree, sugarberry (on Paris Pike), blackhaw viburnum, and downy, green and Washington hawthorns. Clark, Franklin and Woodford Counties each claim two state champions and Jefferson County is home to five more. The tallest tree in the state is an Eastern cottonwood in McCracken County which stands feet in height and the broadest is a bald cypress in Ballard County with an impressive girth of 34 feet or 408 inches.

John Muir, the founder of the Sierra Club, marveled over the multitude of gigantic trees that he viewed in Kentucky on his 1,000 mile walk to the Gulf Coast. On the first day of his journey, which began in Louisville in September, 1867, he wrote, “I have seen oaks of many species in many kinds of exposure and soil, but those of Kentucky excel in grandeur all I had ever before beheld.” With the loss of so many of these magnificent trees over the years, it seems only fitting that we should recognize and honor the “living monarchs” who continue to stand among us.

Kentucky Buzzing with Pollinators



Is your garden ready to welcome pollinators this summer? If your garden contains native plants then the answer is most certainly yes.

One of my favorite things to do is visit my garden on a summer day and stand for five minutes watching the activity among the flowers. Today, during those five minutes, I saw the following pollinators: bumble bee, honey bee, mason bee, green sweat bee, wasp, hover fly, cabbage white butterfly, spicebush swallowtail and black swallowtail caterpillar--all among my native plants. The bumble bee on a spiderwort had pollen baskets filled with pollen. The hover fly delighted me with its acrobatics. It was obvious the pollinators LOVED my native plants, and I loved them.

What is so special about natives? The U.S. Forest Service reminds us that "pollinators have evolved with native plants, which are best adapted to the local growing season, climate and soils. Most pollinators feed on specific plant species—hummingbirds sip nectar from long, tubular honeysuckle flowers, while green sweat bees prefer more open-faced sunflowers. Non-native plants may not provide pollinators with enough nectar or pollen, or may be inedible for butterfly or moth caterpillars."

Pollinator Week is coming June 19 to 25. All across the country people will be celebrating the insects, birds and fruit bats that spend their entire life helping to ensure that flowers bloom and crops produce food. In fact, at least 75% of all flowering plants depend upon pollinators to ensure successful seed production and 35% of America's food production relies to some extent on pollinators.

Kentucky plans to join other states in celebrating Pollinator Week by introducing the Kentucky Pollinator Protection Plan on June 19 and the Kentucky Monarch Conservation Plan on June 22. *Wild Ones* Lexington chapter members worked with the developers of both these plans to help ensure that native plants are given credit due for the important role they play in supporting pollinators.

More on these plans and what you can do to help implement them soon. For now, just keep on doing what *Wild Ones* members do so well, grow those native plants! Then sit back and enjoy the fruits of all your labors.

Linda Porter

Monarch Waystation Chair

Wild Ones Member Potluck and Plant Walk

The Lexington chapter of *Wild Ones* will gather at **6:30 p.m. on Thursday, June 1**, at Floracliff Nature Sanctuary. The nature sanctuary recently acquired an additional 59 acres, known as Trail's End, which includes a diverse forest along Elk Lick Creek and the Kentucky River as well as a historic lodge.

Come for a potluck meal at the lodge and a plant walk on the new addition led by Beverly James and Josie Miller. Bring a dish to share with friends and learn more about the region's history and biodiversity.

Directions will be sent with the membership email.

Native Bees Are Important, Too

By Suzanne Bhatt



Image of rusty patched bumblebee from popsci.com

At our April meeting, Dr. Tammy Horn Potter, Kentucky State Apiarist, spoke about threats to honey bees and current efforts in Kentucky to protect them. But what about our local native bees? While we know that a number of factors are also causing declines in native bee populations, information about the status of specific bee species is lacking. In fact, we do not even know how many species live in Kentucky. Historical or current survey data on species abundance is due to difficulties in identifying bees at the species level and lack of research funding. Ellis Laudermilk, of the Kentucky State Nature Preserves Commission, estimates that there may be 400-500 bee species in the state. He believes that there have been dramatic declines in numbers over the past 20 years. One species in particular, the rusty patched bumblebee, was recently listed as endangered and is considered “state historical” by the KSNPC due to lack of sightings in recent years.

The story is the same across the country. A 2017 study by the Center for Biological Diversity estimated that of 4,000 bee species native to the U.S., half are in decline and a fourth are imperiled. *Science* magazine reported that four bumblebee species have declined 96% in the past 20 years, with three are believed to be extinct. Across the Midwest, 50% of bee species have disappeared from their historic ranges over the past 100 years. Generalists that can forage on a broader diversity of plants over longer seasons tend to fare better overall than specialist species that depend on specific flora for survival.

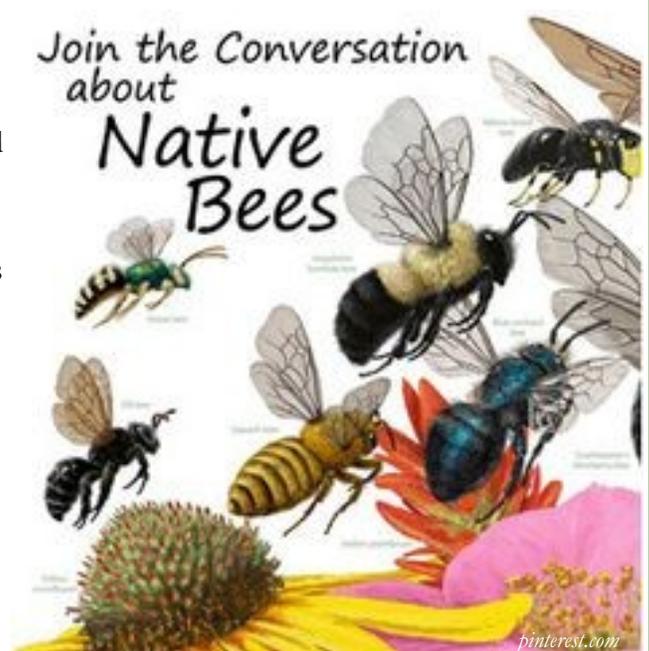
Several factors are at work, including loss of floral diversity and nesting sites with the advent of monoculture lawns. Climate change affects flowering times and distribution of plants and increases in atmospheric carbon dioxide have been found to result in decreased concentrations of pollen proteins, thus negatively affecting bee health. Non-native bees compete for nesting sites and also spread diseases to native populations, including mites and a fungus, *nosema bombi*, which significantly impairs reproduction.

Pesticides also play a significant role, their chemicals affecting both honey bees and native bees. Even “organic” pesticides derived from plants, like pyrethrums, can be fatal to bees.

Many of the measures that we can take to protect and promote butterflies benefit native bee populations as well. Planting a wide diversity of nectar and pollen-producing plants that bloom from early spring through late fall provides a steady food source. Try to avoid using pesticides and herbicides containing glyphosate. Tolerating lawn weeds both reduces chemical use and provides early sources of nectar. As bees nest in dead trees, logs, stumps and in the ground, leaving deadwood on trees and bare patches in yards provides needed habitat.

While some people are uncomfortable about close contact with bees, most native bees are solitary and are unlikely to sting. Bumblebees, which are social bees, are the exception. Inviting bees into the back yard provides important support for insects that play a vital role in pollination of our garden crops, native wildflowers and trees.

(Footnote: Thanks to Bernadette Mach, UK graduate student, for assistance with this article.)



Spreading the Word about Native Plants

What do the Best Friends Day Center, Wild Birds Unlimited, Good Foods Co-Op, the Garden Club of Kentucky, the DAR of Central Kentucky and the Fayette County Family Care Center have in common? All these organizations and over 25 other groups have invited *Wild Ones* members to give a presentation or mount a display at their sponsored events over the past two years. Our members have been there sharing their experience and knowledge on topics ranging from gardening for pollinators to best native plants for unique gardening needs. Thank you, thank you to all of you who have worked to make this happen.

The Lexington chapter Outreach Committee is seeking more *Wild Ones* members to help with our activities in the coming months. Regardless of personal level of expertise, we would love to hear from members about ways in which you would like to help. Some possible opportunities are:

- Sharing your own personal experiences using native plants with a group of interested gardeners
- Sharing your special native plant gardening or landscaping expertise
- Working with a team to put together information on native plants
- Developing materials for others to share
- Talking to children about native plants and pollinators
- Helping display *Wild Ones* information at an event
- Distributing *Wild Ones* literature at events you may participate in

When we receive a call for someone to share information about native plants, we would like to have a list of members whom we can call for help. Could you be one of those members? You can always say no to a request but we hope you will join us in this important volunteer work. You can help as much or as little as you like.

Contact Linda Porter, prairiegirl7@mac.com for more information or to volunteer.



A Time to Plant, A Time to Sow

Article and photos by Vicki Reed

Most often when you seek planting advice, you learn about the placement of plants. Is the soil right? Is there enough sun? Enough shade? You rarely see information about the WHEN of planting other than, perhaps, the generic "plant in early spring." I have found timing to be crucial. It doesn't matter how much you water. If you plant in the morning of a day that is going to be sunny, hot and windy, you've hit the trifecta of how to kill a plant, especially if that sunny day is followed by a string of more hot, sunny days. The loss of moisture to sun and wind depletes the leaves' moisture and causes transplant shock. Your plants, at a minimum, will be stunted and, at worst, may never recover.

A cool, cloudy day with rain in the forecast is perfect for planting. I have sometimes plopped a last plant in the ground as sprinkles started and have run for the house with a smile on my face.

But, of course, in real life it is not always possible to hit the optimum time. So here are a few coping strategies. *Plant late in the day.* This gives the plant time to recuperate during the cool, dark hours of night. *Plant before a string of cloudy days is predicted or shade the plant until it has recovered from the initial transplant shock.* A milk crate works just fine. It provides light and air circulation but filters the direct rays of the sun. In really hot weather you can throw some weeds you've pulled or a few cut branches on top of the crate for more protection.



For larger scale plantings—either in height or numbers—an old patio umbrella is just the ticket. But beware on a windy day! You don't want it blowing over and taking out the new plants.

Seeds, of course, need warmth to germinate so feel free to plant them on a sunny day.

Wild Ones Garden Tour A Success

The tour committee focused on creating a garden tour experience that offered design ideas, plant ideas for shaded areas and diversity in garden styles, size and age. According to the comments of enthusiastic garden visitors on Sunday, May 7, this goal was fully accomplished.

Based on ticket sales, we estimate there were 121 full-paying guests and nine who paid half-price because they were volunteers. Most guests were able to visit at least five locations and expressed pleasure with the diversity of the gardens and their personal responses to each one. *Wild Ones* volunteer hosts enjoyed having time to talk with guests and share gardening experiences.

Ticket sales were \$1,255; raffle sales brought in \$340. With expenses of \$327 we are left with a profit of \$1,268.

Many thanks to the tour committee co-hosts **Susan Cohn** and **Vicki Reed** and members **Tee Bergman**, **Katrina Kelly** and **Caroline Johnson**. Additional volunteers included **Pam Anderson**, **Joy Arnold**, **Carolyn Barbera**, **Diana Clewett**, **Jane Crouch**, **Kathleen Donovan**, **Betty Hall**, **Judy Johnson**, **Cheryl Jones**, **Gail Lightner**, **Connie May**, **Lee Meyer**, **Robin Michler**, **Josie Miller**, **Amanda Mussetter**, **Roger Oberholzer**, **Nic Patton**, **Eve Podet**, **Beate Popkin**, **Linda Porter**, **Jean Sabharwal**, **Barbara Sterrett**, **Dave Svetich**, **Mickey Vincent** and **Debbie Wakeman**.

Thanks, one and all!

June Calendar

McConnell Springs

Sun., June 11 at 2 p.m.—**Explore the Springs.** One hour guided hike suitable for all ages. **FREE.**

Natural Bridge State Park

Sat., June 3, 10, 17, 24 from 6:30 to 10:00 p.m.—**Natural Bridge Hoedown.** Easy to learn Appalachian square dancing, line dancing, two-stepping and more. Email andrew.stevens@ky.gov for more information.

The Garden Club of Kentucky, Inc.

Fri., June 2 from 8:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.—**Kids Day at the Arboretum—Learning about Pollinators.** (Nannie Clay Wallis Arboretum, 616 Pleasant St., Paris, KY.) A day of **FREE** activities, goody bags and lunch for all attendees. Children accompanied by parents—ages 6-14. Check calendar at www.gardenclubky.org for event flyer.

Sat., June 3 from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.—**Pollinator Workshop.** (Nannie Clay Wallis Arboretum) Presentation topics include honey bees, hummingbirds, rain gardens, mason bees, garden photography and planting to attract monarchs. Expert presenters as well as vendors. **Registration on site is \$30 per person.** Check the calendar on the Garden Club website for flyer with details about presenters.

UK Arboretum

Fri., June 16, 11:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.—**Docent-Guided Garden Tour.** 25 spots available, groups of 5+ must pre-register. Cost is \$3 per person, cash or check only.

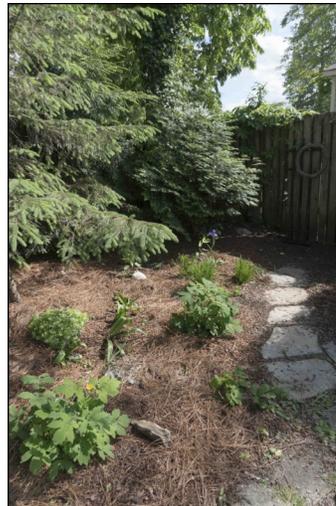


Stonewall Rd.

Family Care Center



Old Park Ave.



Palmyra Ave.



Brier East Rd.



Michler's Cafe

Greenbriar Rd.



*Photos from the Wild Ones garden tour
courtesy of Karen Lanier*