

**LEXINGTON CHAPTER — March, 2013**

<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/](http://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](mailto:annbowe@annbowedesigns.com) or Judy Johnson, newsletter editor, at [judylex@insightbb.com](mailto:judylex@insightbb.com).

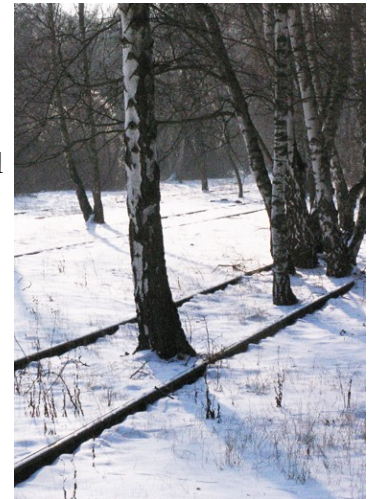
**President's Message...**

I spent the month of January in Berlin, Germany. Americans know the city for its most famous edifice, the Berlin Wall, which is now gone but which stood as the symbol of the Cold War from 1961 till 1989. Germans also know Berlin for its surrounding lakes, imbedded in deciduous forests with many white birches, the very picture of a peaceful landscape.

Toward the end of our stay, my husband and I visited a nature park located not far from the city's center. (It can be googled under nature park Suedgelaende for English language publicity). No lakes here, not even a rivulet. Instead we found an industrial site that had been reclaimed by vegetation: a former railroad yard abandoned in the early 1950s when the communist border cut West Berlin off from its hinterland, thereby vastly reducing the need for rail traffic. After the Wall came down in the early 1990s and Germany was reunited, the railroad company considered cutting down the emerging forest and putting the rail yard back to use but strong and persistent citizen pressure resulted in its being converted to a park for passive recreation with educational displays about the site's history and its plant and animal life.

The park comprises 60 acres, and on the map it looks like an elongated fish trapped between a suburban rail line (which provides easy access for visitors) and the high speed long distance line that is the marvel of European public transportation. The abandoned tracks of the old railroad yard are still in place with the forest growing between them. Many of the new walking paths are elevated to cross over the tracks and are made of metal grates, which turn out to be far more comfortable on the feet than a wooden board walk.

At this time the first succession trees are reaching maturity: the inevitable white birches and a North American locust that is valued as their worthy companion rather than perceived as an alien threat. Linden, maples and a species of oak are emerging. The park managers have decided to keep a section as a dry meadow - what we might call a prairie - to preserve the park's biodiversity. Some rare and unusual flowers that are not otherwise found in the Berlin area grow in this park. Presumably their seeds traveled here in years past via the trains, as hobos so to speak. They are not only welcome but are considered deserving of preservation. Together with the plants came the wildlife: insects, spiders, forest-dwelling birds.



*(Continued on Page 2.)*

## March 7 Feature—Dr. Tom Barnes



“Incorporating Woodland Plants in the Garden” will be the presentation of Dr. Tom Barnes at the next *Wild Ones* meeting Thursday, March 7 at 7 p.m. at St. Michael’s Episcopal Church.

Dr. Barnes is Extension Professor and Wildlife Extension Specialist in the University of Kentucky Department of Forestry.

He is also the author of many books, including “Gardening for the Birds,” “Kentucky’s Last Great Places,” and “Rare Wildflowers of Kentucky.” His books include his excellent nature photography.

St. Michael’s Church is located at 2025 Bellefonte Drive.



**Wild Ones hike Sat., Mar. 23 from 11 a.m. to midafternoon.** Join us at Cove Springs Park in Frankfort to check out the spring ephemerals! More details to follow.

*(President’s Report continued from Page 1)*

The vegetation of Europe, a continent with a long human history, has been subject to plant invasions for millennia, which gives rise to a conception of “nature” that differs from ours, so fixated on native species. In this Berlin park, the focus is on the regenerative powers of plants and the miracle of re-emerging biodiversity from inhospitable ground that once seemed ruined by decades of heavy industrial use. Nature, it appears, does not need ideal conditions to restore itself, but it does need a certain amount of sensitive human intervention. Paradise with its perfect self-sustaining balance of plant and animal life is lost forever. Europeans acknowledge that loss, and they face, perhaps more acutely than we do, the question of nature’s fate in a post-industrial environment. The Naturpark Suedgelände appears to give cause for optimism.

*Beate Popkin*

## What Did a Tree Ever Do for You?

*By Mary Carol Cooper*

Our February speaker, Jody Thompson, Forest Health Specialist, Kentucky Division of Forestry, answered this question for us. Jody is an ecologist who spends most of his time in urban areas rather than forests, much of it on “sick tree calls.” (He is also vice chair of the Kentucky Pest Plant Council.)

So back to what trees do for us. Trees take up carbon dioxide. They stabilize temperature by providing shade and by releasing water into the atmosphere via transpiration. They help with storm water management by allowing better absorption of rain water and reducing runoff. Finally, they reduce the impact of erosion and flooding. However, all these benefits depend on dense healthy trees.

As Jody pointed out research has shown that people spend more time in areas with established trees. People prefer to exercise in areas shaded by trees. They prefer to live on tree-lined streets. Some may even buy a house because of the trees on the lot. Studies show that people drive more slowly on tree-lined streets and that there are fewer crimes in neighborhoods with more trees.

Jody then switched to tree health and what to look for in an unhealthy tree. A tree in decline will show a thinning canopy with fewer leaves from year to year. Look for branches dying and epicormic branching (when branches grow from the trunk of a tree through buds forming under the bark.) Suckers popping out all over the tree also indicates that something in the tree has changed.

Fungi growing on a tree indicate that the tree’s health has been compromised. It is natural and normal to see some lichen on tree bark. However, an increase in lichen in the canopy is a sign that the canopy is thinning.

Jody gave us a lot of food for thought! He also answered many questions posed by the audience.



*Jody Thompson fields a question from Susan Menard.*

## Results Are In—Your Opinions Count!

Thanks to you for helping us evaluate the *Wild Ones* newsletter. More than ninety members received the questionnaire in October-November. Of the 33 respondents, 31 respondents (94%) said they “always” read the publication. To the committee, needless to say, that was a great start! Most responders said it was “useful,” “of interest” and/ or “met their needs.”

It was your suggestions for future issues, however, that cheered us the most. You will see those ideas taking shape in future newsletters. Your proposals fell generally into three categories: 1) requests for specific “how to” topics; 2) ideas for building a sense of community around our *Wild Ones* chapter through the newsletter; and 3) information about other community efforts involving native plant landscaping.

We thank you for your input! You have provided good direction to the newsletter staff. Keep those ideas coming! Anyone on the committee listed below will be happy to hear from you. One more thank you, this time to the one whose skillful editing and production delivers to you, on time each month, a professional looking newsletter.

We are always looking for help with the newsletter. If you would like to join our committee or write for us now and again, please let us know.

*Written by Carolyn Holmes for the Marketing and Communications Committee:*

*Ann Bove (chair); Judy Johnson (editor); Victoria Ligenza; Heather Wilson; and Carolyn Holmes.*

## MARCH EVENTS

### Floracliff Nature Sanctuary

Hikes are scheduled on three **Saturdays, March 16, 23 and 30.** See [www.floracliff.org/events.html](http://www.floracliff.org/events.html) for details.

### Bernheim Forest

**Wednesday, March 6 at 10:30 a.m.**—Seniors’ hike to see the early spring bloomers and other signs of spring. Register at 502-955-8512. **Cost: Members \$5, Nonmembers \$10.**

### Arboretum

**Tuesday, March 19 at 6 p.m.**—**The Native Plant Gardener’s Paradox** —Todd Rounsaville, Curator of Native Plants, believes the practice of cultivating native plants often goes against any sense of real naturalism. He will explore why we, as gardeners, are succeeding for all the wrong reasons and failing for all the right ones. Call 859-257-6955 to register. **Cost: \$5/Friends \$4.**

## Be on the Lookout for Spring Ephemerals

*By Victoria Ligenza*

Spring ephemerals are woodland perennial wildflowers that bloom early in the season and produce seeds all in a very short period of time. As a group they are one of the largest classifications of wildflowers. In our area of Kentucky these enchanting plants begin to appear in March but their appearance can be fleeting. The flowers can be there one day and then gone the next, making you wait until next year to see them again.

These seemingly delicate but remarkably resilient wildflowers have developed to take advantage of the spring time conditions. During spring the soil moisture is generally at its highest and the trees are not yet competing for this available moisture. Nutrients are also high due to the decay from previous year’s leaves and detritus. Trees have not yet leafed out forming their canopy. Some ephemerals attract pollinating ants through their scent. The ants carry off seeds and store them underground where they will sprout. Ephemerals hug the ground to take advantage of the earth and moisture for protection from the colder temperatures at night.

Some spring ephemerals are trillium, hepatica, trout lily, twinleaf, bloodroot, Dutchman’s breeches and pasque flower. These wildflowers are wonderful additions to any garden but remember—**never remove any wildflowers you find in woodlands.** Purchase your plants from a reputable dealer who can assure you that they are nursery propagated and not dug in the wild.

The *Wild Ones* hike **Sat., Mar. 23** (11 a.m. until midafternoon) at Cove Springs Park in Frankfort will provide the opportunity to see many spring ephemerals. More details to follow.



*Bloodroot, a fine example of a spring ephemeral, photographed by Betty Hall.*

# Brush Pile Habitats Are Important

By Heather Wilson

Most of us know that wild and native plant gardens would be missing a major component if wildlife is left out of the equation. In our quest to create native woodlands in our yards, in our urban, suburban, and farm areas, we must think about the critters that live there. One great way to provide repose for wildlife is to create a brush pile habitat. Brush pile habitats are the deliberate accumulation of brush, branches, sticks and other plant parts placed over a supporting foundation. Brush piles serve an important function in the landscape by providing wildlife with necessary shelter from weather and predators. They also serve as safe resting places and corridors for travel. Species that benefit from these structures include ground-nesting birds, many song birds, and small mammals.



A few simple steps are involved in creating a brush pile habitat in your yard and, while a habitat will prove useful in any location, there are a few ideal spots. These spots include forest edges or openings, at the corners of fields, along the margin between a stream and a marsh, or at your garden's edge.

An optimum finished brush pile should be 10 to 15 feet wide and 25 feet long, and will consist of 2 parts, the supporting base, and the topping plant material.

How to build your brush pile:

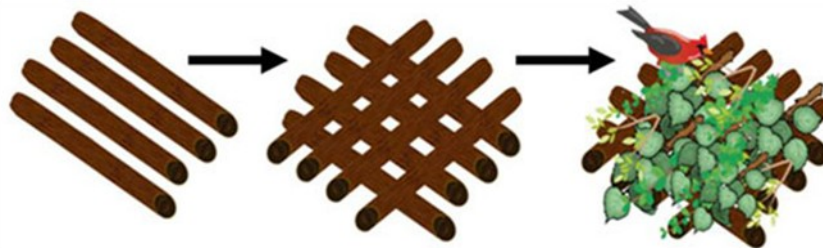
## Supporting base:

- Two layers of untreated logs (locust and cedar are great options), 6 inches in diameter, evenly spaced about 6-10 inches apart
- Build the base atop stones, tires, cinder blocks or such to delay the decomposition of the log base
- Alternate the angles of your log layers—the base should resemble that of a log cabin

## Plant material for top:

- Plant material that won't rot too quickly is preferable, like branches. Some material, like perennials that have dried over the winter, will rot quickly and clog up your brush pile.
- Place enough plant material on top of the base to create a mound-shaped pile up to 5 feet tall
- Pile the brush so the center of the pile is more dense than the edges—this allows entry and exit for wildlife as well as adequate shelter in the middle
- Replace your plant material as it decays

Brush pile habitats are highly beneficial to wildlife of all kinds. While these shelters will house beneficial species, they may also be frequented by less desirable critters including household pests or predators. With this thought in mind, it is best to create a shelter some distance from houses as well as bird feeders.



<http://www.dnr.state.md.us/wildlife/Habitat/WildAcres/wabrush.asp>

# Founder of Springhouse Gardens Tells Its Unique Story

By Carolyn Holmes



While ambling over the rolling grounds of Springhouse Gardens on a recent cold morning, this writer pondered how these inviting six and a half acres could have been, not so very long ago, a lackluster tobacco farm. What vision and skill incorporated the land's natural features into the present landscape and transformed it into a myriad of naturally flowing spaces marked by pergolas, paths, terraces, dry-laid stone walls, ponds and streams?

This was “just the land” that *Wild Ones* member Richard Weber and his wife Debbie were looking for when planning Springhouse Gardens in 1995. They wanted to offer customers ideas for their own landscapes by demonstrating imaginatively how plants grow and combine. Settings now include a meadowland, rock garden, rain garden, sinkholes, as well as colorful display tables in Centre Court. Richard sees his role as a steward of the land, encouraging customers to respect their environment and improve it one garden at a time.

While Springhouse Gardens features plants of all kinds – annuals, perennials, shade trees, evergreens, ornamental grasses – the “Native Island” displaying both shade and sun loving native plants, will especially appeal to *Wild Ones* members. And in the last two or three years, Richard has added native plant specialist Tina Placek to his staff specifically to propagate plants from local genotype seeds to be available to customers.

Richard's interest in native plants grew naturally from his childhood – hiking in the Red River Gorge, collecting rocks, identifying trees and flowers. He was mentored first by a family friend and later by a new neighbor who moved from the North Carolina woods and hired the young lad to help with the heavy work of establishing a natural garden in her Lexington yard. The impact of those years meant that from day one at Springhouse Gardens, Richard wanted to introduce people to native plants that he loved - pawpaw (*Asimina triloba*), persimmon (*Diospyros virginiana*), hearts-a-bustin (*Euonymus americanus*) – at that time unavailable in local garden centers. Alas, he was ahead of his customers; they did not yet share his interest. About five years ago, however, attitudes began to change. (He credits the educational work of the “trail blazing women” of *Wild Ones* as an important influence!) Customer interest increased and more sources of supply became available. He began to introduce informational workshops and new plants.



For individuals wanting to move from a traditional to native plant garden, Richard offers this advice, “Start with a plan, with the end in mind, but change the makeup of the garden one plant at a time. Select a neat and tidy plant such as spicebush (*Lindera benzoin*). It won't upset the neighbors. It grows in sun or shade. And it is a food source for the spicebush swallowtail butterfly and its caterpillar. Choose plants not only for their aesthetic appeal but also for their nectar and leaves, food sources for insects, birds and butterflies.”



Lest you think that Springhouse Gardens has reached its apex, think again. With the recent purchase of 6 ½ adjacent acres, Richard is already planning new and wonderful additions to his garden features and plantings, as well as enhancing the stock of native plants available for purchase.

The center's website invites you to “Visit Springhouse Gardens where buying plants is a walk in the park!” The address is 6041 Harrodsburg Road, Nicholasville. For a map and directions visit [www.springhousegardens.com](http://www.springhousegardens.com).