

LEXINGTON CHAPTER — March, 2014

<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 judydex@twc.com.

President's Message...

Did we ever long for the warmth of spring as intensely as we do this year? Having gotten used to warm winters as a consequence of climate change over the last few decades, this winter's temperatures suddenly dipped below zero --- and then they did it again – and again. If my memory serves me right, it has not been this cold in Central Kentucky since the early 1980s. All the snow we had this year could, of course, be a blessing to us: the peace and calm its white blanket spreads around us, the beauty it lays on our landscapes as they are transformed into something stark and almost unrecognizable. But the lives we lead do not allow us to appreciate the spiritual gifts of a snowfall, for we need to move on and we expect to do so on cleared roads and salted sidewalks.



Snow on little bluestem.

An unusually cold winter does not reverse global warming. It just confirms what we already know, namely, that climate change causes extreme weather conditions which are becoming an inevitable element for our planet's future. This winter reminded us that we would do well to get accustomed to unpredictable weather events.

Did the ice and the snow and the cold bring us anything positive? Well, yes. For starters, they have enriched our meteorological vocabulary by a new phrase, *polar vortex*, and we have thus become more sophisticated inhabitants of a world whose rapid environmental degradation we bemoan. More seriously, the woolly (or wholly; both spellings occur) adelgid may have received a significant set-back this winter, according to a recent article in *The New York Times*. The adelgid's breaking point, apparently, lies at -5 degrees Fahrenheit. Other invasive pests may also suffer, but so will insects that we cherish, and it is too soon to tell how they have fared in the last few months.

Beate Popkin

Want to Do Something for Monarchs? Plant Milkweed!

By Judy Johnson



Dr. Chip Taylor listened to a question from the audience.

On the evening of February 12 our *Wild Ones* chapter and the Garden Clubs of Kentucky joined with the Friends of the Arboretum to sponsor a presentation by Dr. Chip Taylor, founder of Monarch Watch. Despite the frigid weather the lecture hall at UK's Gluck Equine Center was standing room only.

Dr. Taylor is a professor of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology at the University of Kansas. In 1992 he founded Monarch Watch, an educational outreach program devoted to a range of initiatives from large scale research to school-based projects involving children in real science projects like butterfly gardens, monarch waystations, rearing and tagging butterflies.

We learned about the monarch migration to overwintering sites in Mexico and the long multi-generational trips back north. As they migrate back north, monarchs must find milkweeds in order to lay their eggs. And milkweed is fast disappearing. Dr. Taylor reviewed the many reasons for declining survival rates and tangible things we can do to preserve these beautiful butterflies.

Overwinter population decline during the last three years has been dramatic. Among the causes we can point to are increasing use of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) in agriculture paired with sterilization of fields with pesticides, increasing dedication of cropland to biofuel crops, loss of land (6,000 acres a day) to development in the U.S combined with the degradation of habitats in Mexico, and unusual temperatures in spring and fall.

Dr. Taylor explained the effects of climate change—increases in carbon dioxide, temperature and moisture. Related effects are intermittent rainfall and stronger storms, melting sea ice and even shifting crop production. He made the connection between volatile weather and a dramatic decrease of monarchs. However, a self-proclaimed optimist, he told us, “The challenge is to preserve migration—not an easy task but it can be done.”

WHAT WE CAN DO: Plant milkweed—species for Kentucky include common milkweed (*Asclepias syriaca*), butterfly milkweed (*A. tuberosa*), and swamp milkweed (*A. incarnata*). Plant nectar plants for three seasons of bloom—good for all pollinators. Betty Hall's list of plants is a great place to start (bettyhallphotography.com and click on Resources). Support the work of Monarch Watch. Continue to establish monarch waystations (there are now 10,000 registered waystations in 49 states and the District of Columbia). Work with local schools to engage children with these projects. Learn about the *Bring Back the Monarchs* campaign, a national landscape restoration project of Monarch Watch. Spread monarch information to other organizations.

Prior to the evening's lecture, four individuals were honored with membership in the Arboretum's Bur Oak Society. This award was established by the Friends of the Arboretum to recognize individuals who, through the use of their professional experience, have made significant and continuing contributions to the development and growth of the Arboretum.

Wild Ones is very proud that our own **Betty Hall** was honored this year for her work over the last ten years photographing plants, animals, people and physical features at the Arboretum and her generous sharing of those photographs with the Arboretum, the Friends and the public.

The other recipients were: Beverly Fortune, longtime Herald-Leader writer; Scott Smith, former Dean of the UK College of Agriculture; and his wife Susan Smith-Durisek, who now writes about gardening for the Herald-Leader.



A Garden Begins with a Plan

By Judy Johnson

The cold snowy evening of February 6 was an excellent time for members of *Wild Ones* to gather in the warmth of St. Michael's meeting room and turn our thoughts to spring and garden plans.

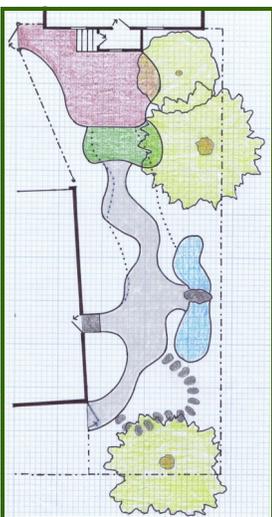


Beate Popkin answers questions from members about garden planning.

Beate Popkin began with the basic principles of garden design. She illustrated her presentation with many photos of various neighborhoods, street views and individual yards showing us the challenges of each. We learned a bit of historical perspective and how the significance of landscaping has changed with modern housing developments. We looked at examples of front yard beds that are inviting to visitors and back yard beds that provide screening and serenity. Beate encouraged planting for color and succession of bloom through the seasons, even giving thought to the appearance of garden spaces in winter. Finally, we examined several kinds of ornaments that add interest, even surprise, to her own gardens.

A detailed handout of the presentation was available to participants. It followed the outline of the talk, providing even more specific information about design elements and including lists of recommended plant materials.

To round out the evening Ann Bowe shared the design she drew for her own backyard in 2009 and, using current photos, explained how the garden has grown into a charming space that invites conversation, reading and quiet reflection. (See below.)



From drawing board to enchanted garden...

First, Ann Bowe carefully drew to scale a detailed design plan (seen on the left) for her backyard. This step, though time consuming, provides the structure that will maintain a pleasing balance among areas and integrate diverse plantings into a whole environment as the garden matures.

On the right we can see the graceful curves of walkways in the garden that exists today. Plantings have been selected to provide variety in texture, shape, density, and colors. The finished garden is now a place to enjoy each of the four seasons.

Designing Your Own Dream Garden

By Karen Lanier

Beate's talk at the February meeting was the perfect mid-winter blues-buster. I left dreaming of replacing boring lawns and random lonesome trees with vibrant little nature preserves, bustling with color, variety, and life. But how, exactly?

Here are some of my favorite resources for shaping your wild ideas into real-world native plant gardens and restorative spaces for you, birds, butterflies, and even your neighbors.

Books

Carol A. Smyser, *Nature's Design: A Practical Guide to Natural Landscaping*, Rodale Press, 1982. Explains fundamentals of landscape design and environmental conditions plus regional plant communities.

Jeff Cox, *Landscaping With Nature: Using Nature's Designs to Plan Your Yard*, Rodale Press, 1991. Shares ideas on working with hardscape features and lots of example plans to get you started on the right path.

Carolyn Summers, *Designing Gardens with Flora of the American East*, Rutgers University Press, 2010. Who can resist a chapter about "Safe Sex" in the garden!

Websites

Grounded Design, landscapeofmeaning.blogspot.com, by Thomas Rainer. Approaches landscape as modern art and focuses on naturalistic design that imitates nature and reclaims biodiversity.

Going Native, www.ncsu.edu/goingnative, by North Carolina Cooperative Extension. Features a step-by-step guide to mapping your property and creating a wildlife-friendly plan.

Blue Thumb, bluethumb.org, by Minnesota's Rice Creek Watershed District. Includes a plant selector and ideas for combining edibles and natives.



Propagating Milkweed from Seed

By Tina Placek

Editorial note: Because many members have milkweed seedpods they collected in the fall, this seemed a good time to share an article with advice for planting your own milkweed in the weeks to come.

Propagating Milkweed from seed can be very challenging. Throughout the years I have had a tremendous number of successes and failures. I love the rewards of propagating any plant from seed. What makes the Milkweed the most difficult is once it starts to germinate and grow it has a tendency to dampen off. I am not a professional propagator; I got hooked on seed germination after working in a native nursery after completing a Master Gardeners course. In this article, I will describe my experiences growing milkweed from seed.

Collection: Gather the seed pods in the summer after the Milkweed blooms. I have found it is best to pick the seed pod when it starts to split. Put the pods into a paper sack (never store any seed pod in plastic). They will still be moist, and will need to dry out totally to prevent the seeds from mildew. If you have the time, it is best to clean the seeds right away to avoid any insect infestation in the seed pod. (I normally do not have the time to do it right away so I just keep them stored in a paper sack.) I never strip the plant of all seed pods. Additionally, I will sprinkle seeds and rake them into the soil, as a way to thank the mother plant and to promote more plants in the garden.



Burning off milkweed silk.



Stripping seeds from pod.

Cleaning: There are several ways to clean the seed pods. One way is to grasp hold of the pod on the silk end and try to just run fingers over the seed so they fall off. Sometimes shaking the seeds in a paper sack will work. The problem is that the silk flies everywhere! My favorite (and the quickest) way is to scatter the seeds of one pod on a burnable surface and carefully light the silk (warning: the silk will immediately ignite; the first time I tried this I singed my hair!).

Storing and planting: You can store the seeds once they are cleaned and dried in damp sphagnum peat moss or coarse sand. I prefer the moss, as I have had the seeds actually sprout in the moss. The seeds can be stored in the refrigerator until spring (preferably 90 days) then planted in a seed starter potting mix when it is above 70 degrees (Cullina, 2000). Place the seeds in a flat or pots and place in a warm sunny window or greenhouse. Make sure the soil is kept evenly moist and not too wet. I normally sprinkle sand over the top to help with damping off. Water the seeds by either sprinkling water on top so as not to wash the seeds away or water from the bottom.

Another way to plant the seeds after cleaning is by direct sowing into the garden bed or plant the seeds into the seed flat and place the flat in an unheated greenhouse. (The seeds need to go through a cold cycle before sprouting.)

Transplanting: Once the seeds have their second set of leaves it is time to transplant them into individual pots. I have only transplanted the seedlings in a greenhouse and, once the plants have started growing vigorously, I then gradually harden them off to the outside. (I gradually expose them to the outside over a period of time to get the plants ready to be planted in warm, well-drained garden soil.) This decreases stress on the plants. New plants like to be kept watered and do not want to dry out. Fertilize the new plants about every two weeks with a light fertilizer. Make sure your Milkweeds are planted in a sunny location in well-drained soil. This is a general rule: *make sure you plant your specific Milkweed in the right location and soil.* There are some varieties that require more moisture in a garden bed and some may prefer part sun.

Enjoy growing your Milkweeds! Not only are you adding a spectacular native plant to your garden, but you are helping to save our beautiful Monarch Butterfly!!!

Tina Placek
Native Plant Specialist
Springhouse Gardens

Reference: Cullina, W. (2000). New England Wildflower Society Guide to Growing and Propagating Wildflowers of the United States and Canada. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

March *Wild Ones* Event

Thursday, March 7, the featured speaker for the *Wild Ones* meeting will be Ben Leffew, assistant property manager for Shaker Village of Pleasant Hill, who helps manage over 1,000 acres of wildlife habitat there. His talk about his work is fittingly entitled *Creating A Meadow*.

A native of Boyle County, Ben currently lives in Lexington.

The meeting will begin at 7:00 p.m. at St. Michael's Episcopal Church, 2025 Bellefonte Dr.

Beautifying Our Virtual Garden

By Karen Lanier

We've been talking a lot about design in this issue and our chapter's website displays another example of improved appearance to attract beneficial visitors to our space. Early this year our new website went live and the old website provides a link to redirect you. The redirect will disappear soon, so make sure to update your bookmarks with the new url, lexington.wildones.org.

The national *Wild Ones* hosts our website and decided to update and modernize the front page for consistency throughout all chapters, creating a more user-friendly, welcoming template. While the old site was simple and linear, the new one has easy-to-use tabs to navigate quickly between topics, such as **Plant Sources** and **Places To Visit**.

Ann McCarthy, *Wild Ones* webmaster, and **Beate Popkin** selected beautiful images for the banners that capture what *Wild Ones* is all about. Look forward to seeing more photographs added, as well as using the site to find out when and where events are happening.

AREA CALENDAR FOR MARCH

Bernheim Arboretum and Research Forest

Sun., Mar. 30, 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.—Bernheim Backroads—driving tour (with some hiking) of Bernheim's hidden treasures. Bring your own sack lunch and beverage. To register, call **502-955-8512**. Location is 20 minutes south of Louisville; check website bernheim.org for directions.

Floracliff Nature Sanctuary

Sat., Mar. 15, 1:00 p.m.—Signs of Spring Hike—Moderate level. \$5 donation. Preregistration required. Call **859-351-7770**.

Sat., Mar. 22, 10:00 a.m.—Wildflower Folklore with Laura Baird—Moderate level hike to Elk Creek led by Floracliff Field Technician Laura Baird who will discuss the fun facts of wildflowers. \$5 donation. Preregistration required.

Sat., Mar. 29, 1:00 p.m.—Wildflower Hike—Moderate level hike led by Preserve Manager Beverly James. \$5 donation. Preregistration required.

UK Arboretum

Mon., Mar. 10, 10:00 a.m.—Trees and Water Control—Learn the benefits of trees, the best species to plant and how to plant and maintain them. FREE but pre-registration is required. Call **859-257-6955** or email dmbast0@uky.edu.

Thurs., Mar. 27, 7:00 p.m.—Urban Greening through Rooftop Gardens, Vertical Installations, and Stormwater Management—Founders Series Lecture at UK Gluck Equine Center featuring Tracey Williams, owner of Greensleeves Design in Louisville. FREE to members of *Wild Ones*.

A screenshot of the new Wild Ones website appears on the RIGHT. As you can see, it is much more appealing and user friendly than previous website on the LEFT.

CHECK IT OUT!