

LEXINGTON CHAPTER — September, 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/ 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...

In September the native flower garden enters into yet another month of glory with sneezeweeds, asters and goldenrods all bursting into bloom. This year, in particular, the color display promises to be stunning due to the terrific weather we have had all season. I look at my garden and ask how did all this beauty come into being?

There are, of course, certain design rules that guide the making of a flower garden, native or otherwise: choose your plants with an eye on the succession of blooms; plant in drifts; put tall plants in the back and short ones in the front; plant flowers together that are visually effective as neighbors; incorporate at least some flowers that have good foliage even when they are not in bloom.

But once the garden takes off, it has a way of transgressing these rules. The monardas and mints cozy up to their neighbors in no time at all and then try to push them out of the way. Coneflowers and milkweeds mysteriously disappear. Beardtongues and asters show up in unsuspected places, and black-eyed susans seed themselves out in such profusion that they become garden thugs. Clearly the maintenance of a native flower garden requires as much decision-making as its original planting. Should one let the original design go to pot or should one try to maintain its basic structure?

As with so much else in life, the answer would appear to lie somewhere in the middle. Much as I love my short-toothed mountain mint, I will not let it travel wherever it wants and I will most certainly hem in the lanceleaf coreopsis seedlings, the black-eyed susans and the Short's asters that want to assert themselves everywhere. But more and more often I look at a seedling that has emerged in an odd place and decide to give it a chance, to see what comes of it.

This August I, and at least some of my neighbors, have taken great joy in a whole bunch of 6 foot high stems of dense blazing star (*Liatris spicata*) at the bottom of my driveway right near the edge of the street. They are not following the rule of "tall plants in the back" and I most certainly did not plant them there. But they do look spectacular, none the less, and the fact that bees in abundance and the occasional butterfly seek out the blazing star flowers for nectar enhances their appeal for passers-by. They placed themselves well.



Liatris spicata spikes choose front row seats at Beate's house.

Beate Popkin

Wild for Monarchs at Springhouse Gardens

By Linda Porter



Richard Weber, Joanna Kirby and Linda Porter after the monarch waystation dedication and ribbon-cutting ceremonies.

Butterflies were scarce for the start of the Fourth Annual Butterfly Day at Springhouse Gardens in Nicholasville in early July. Instead, a colorful array of umbrellas covered 39 dedicated butterfly lovers as they sloshed into the garden center landscape office. They had come out on this rainy day to learn how to help the monarch butterfly make a comeback in Kentucky.

The theme of the 2013 Butterfly Day was Monarch Waystations. Have you noticed how few monarchs have visited your garden this year? In 2013, there was a 59% decline in monarch colonies hibernating in Mexico and their annual migration has been designated as “endangered” by the World Wildlife Fund. Certified monarch waystations provide the milkweed host plants and native nectar sources necessary to sustain monarch caterpillars and butterflies during their spring and fall migrations through Kentucky. The creation of waystations may be the monarch’s only hope.

Betty Hall, longtime *Wild Ones* member, butterfly gardener and celebrated photographer, led the Butterfly Day participants through the waystation creation process, from garden design to plant selection to certification. Betty showed us, via her prize-winning photographs, that a monarch waystation is not just for monarchs. It provides a haven for pollinators like bees and all sizes of butterflies and moths. Handouts from Betty Hall – “Five Steps for a Certified Monarch Waystation” and “25 Kentucky Native Plants That Attract Butterflies and Other Pollinators” — may be found at:

www.bettyhallphotography.com/resources.

Next, *Wild Ones* member and educator Linda Porter reminded the group that waystations are often located in places other than private gardens. In fact, some of the most visited waystations are on public land and in schoolyards. Linda is leading an effort to encourage garden clubs and other organizations throughout Kentucky to create waystations in their cities and schools. For more information about these efforts, contact Linda at:

prairiegirl7@mac.com.

After the workshops, the skies cleared long enough for Springhouse Gardens owner Richard Weber and Joanna Kirby, president of the Garden Clubs of Kentucky, to dedicate Springhouse Gardens own monarch waystation (a.k.a. “Monarch B&B”). As a grand finale the group was treated to the release of a beautiful pipevine swallowtail butterfly from Betty Hall’s own home butterfly refuge. It flew off to start a new generation of pipevine swallowtail butterflies at Springhouse Gardens. Hopefully, a host of monarchs will join it soon!

NOTE: Springhouse Gardens is a *Wild Ones* business partner. Stop by the garden center at 185 W. Catnip Hill Road and visit the new waystation. While you are there, check out their ever growing selection of native plants, including milkweeds, to help you create a monarch waystation of your own.



Betty Hall in search of subjects.



ATTENTION PLEASE!— *Wild Ones* Lexington Chapter is encouraging its members to create and certify their own monarch waystations. There will be a drawing for prizes at our October meeting for those who do so. To be eligible, email Doug Rigsby at dwrigsby@gmail.com and let him know about your certification before Oct. 1. To learn more about the Monarch Waystation certification program, go to www.monarchwatch.org or www.wildones.org/learn/wild-for-monarchs.

WildOnes Picnic in the Park

By Deborah Holloway

Thursday, August 1, was a gorgeous day, as if custom ordered for our annual picnic at the Arboretum.



Dozens of *Wild Ones* members and friends gathered under the shady trees to share a variety of casseroles, salads, and desserts. The potluck meal included lots of tasty home grown creations.

After allowing time for eating and much conversation, Mary Carol Cooper led some of us on a walk to the meadow gardens as the sun began to set. It was great to see cardinal flowers, coneflowers and ironweeds blooming away. Some of the flowers and grasses stood taller than our heads. We thought the walk was a fine way to end a very pleasant evening.



RALLY TO THE I-75 CONNECTOR

Thurs., September 19 at 7:30 p.m.
Lyric Theatre

Readings and music featuring Barbara Kingsolver, Wendell Berry, Crystal Wilkinson, Eric Reese and other artists.

Tickets at lexingtonlyric.tix.com. \$12 in advance; \$15. at the door. Information at 859-280-2218.

Worms! Beetles! Caterpillars!

By Deborah Holloway

The *Wild Ones* buggy event is coming...soon! Lexington Chapter members will meet at Floracliff Nature Sanctuary on **Thursday, September 5 at 6:30 p.m.** to hunt and identify the critters until sunset.



This hunt will be led by Jennie Condra, member of the award winning UK Department of Entomology. It will be a wonderful opportunity to learn while enjoying the beautiful surroundings. The meadow and woods should be a bug hunter's paradise. Bring your curiosity, a flashlight and wear a comfortable pair of walking shoes.

Floracliff is located off Old Richmond Road at 8000 Elk Lick Falls Road. For more detailed directions, call 859-351-7770.



This is a special event just for *Wild Ones* members and their guests. See you there!

AREA CALENDAR FOR SEPTEMBER

Bernheim Arboretum

Sat., Sept. 21 from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.—**Annual BugFest and Plant Sale**—\$5 non-member environmental impact fee. More details at bernheim.org/event/bugfest-and-fall-plant-sale/.

Dropseed Nursery Fall Plant Sale

Sat. Sept. 14, 21, 28 from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. 1205 S. Buckeye Lane, Goshen, KY. Directions at: www.dropseednursery.com. Cash or check only. More information at 502-439-9033.

Floracliff Nature Sanctuary

Sat., Sept. 28 at 10 a.m.—**Fall Flowers**—Moderate level hike to Elk Lick Creek will feature last blooms of the season. Call 859-351-7770 to pre-register (required). Limited to 15 participants.

McConnell Springs

Sat., Sept. 28 from 10 a.m. to noon—**Seed Propagation**—Join Mary Carol Cooper to learn how to collect and propagate native seeds for beautiful plants. Call 859-225-4073 to register.

Raven Run Nature Sanctuary

Sun., Sept. 15 at 1 p.m.—**Raven Run Butterflies**—1 mile hike (about 1 1/2 hours) to learn butterfly identification and hear insect lore. FREE.

UK Arboretum

Sun., Sept. 15 from 4 to 7 p.m.—**Annual Gala in the Garden**—Food, drink, music, silent auction. More information at http://www2.ca.uky.edu/arboretum/calendar_events.php.

One Member's Fantasy Becomes Reality

By Victoria Ligenza



Lush greenery of Fantasy Forest.



Plant identified by name and butterfly attracted to it.

Wild Ones member Connie May had a vision. She remembered her childhood growing up in urban Frankfort. Even being in the city she saw box turtles and frogs in her backyard. Connie realized things had changed and today's children had lost that fascination of discovering the natural world around them. She wanted today's children to experience the outdoors that she did growing up.

In 2012 Connie obtained a grant to create an educational outdoor learning place on the corner of Second and Logan Streets in Frankfort. The area is right next to the community gardens, making it a perfect place to expand into a beautiful oasis of trees, flowers, butterflies and maybe even those turtles and frogs. With the help of local businesses and volunteers, hundreds of perennials—grass, trees and shrubs—were planted.

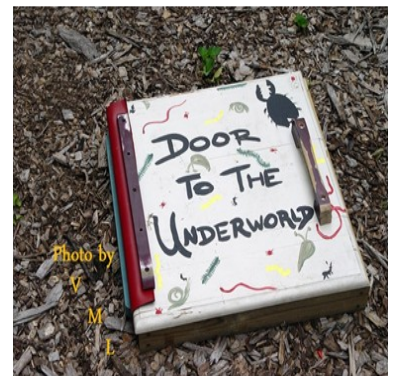
On July 21 *Wild Ones* and others were invited to tour this Fantasy Forest. Connie told about the creation of the Fantasy Forest and described all the different plants. Melissa Calhoun, another Forest volunteer, led a tour explaining the different native plants and their uses as medicines and as edibles. Many plants were humming with pollinators. At the Butterfly House we saw four cecropia moth caterpillars provided by Betty Hall. (See story on page 5.)

The gardens are divided up into "islands" with names like Giant Island and Jungle Island. There is a special section for endangered native plants and a monarch waystation. Many plants have identifying markers noting the name of the plant and the butterfly it is host to. In different areas of the garden are mysterious 'Doors to the Underworld' which you can look under to see things like insects that you would not normally see in the light of day.

Groups of children visit the gardens to take part in workshops that let them get involved with and interested in plants and insects. Thanks to Connie's commitment to this project many children can now experience the fascination of the outside world.



Cecropia moth caterpillars find food and shelter in the forest.



Inventive way to view bugs!

We Are Making a Difference for Monarchs!

- ♦ In the spring there were five monarch waystations in the Lexington, Frankfort, Berea area.
- ♦ Now there are **44!**

The Cecropia Story

By Karen Lanier



Betty Hall captures beauty of cecropia.

Eat, sleep, have sex and die. The life cycle of the huge and beautiful cecropia moth can be simplified to those few acts. Nonetheless, it is providing entertainment and fascination for some of our *Wild Ones*. Like many dramas, this story starts with death.

Amanda Cawby was on her way to a drive-in movie when wings flapping on the ground got her attention. She recognized it as a giant silkworm moth. Unfortunately, it died shortly after she placed it in a container. However, it left behind ten little nuggets resembling Grape Nuts cereal, which turned out to be eggs of North America's largest moth *Hyalophora cecropia*.

Amanda took the eggs to her butterfly-loving friend Betty Hall who thought they might survive. Betty placed them on maple leaves and about 10 days later, little black fuzzy larvae hatched out. Six lived and filled out as plump, pale green caterpillars, four to five inches long, armed with colorful, medieval-looking spiked knobs. When they formed their cocoons nearly seven weeks later, she put them in a protected cage outdoors and let them spend the winter just hanging out. "I held my breath that all would go well," she said.



Ann Bowe's caterpillar—KL.

The following summer when all six adult moths emerged and stretched their six-inch wingspans, Betty was thrilled. One of them appeared to be a female, with a larger abdomen and less bushy antennae (the males need those extra sensory appendages to sniff out the females' "come-hither" pheromones from a mile away). Betty placed this special lady in a large mesh cage with hopes it would attract a mate and she could witness the act.



Two adult cecropia moths mating—BH.

It didn't take long before a male found her and mated with her all day long. The next morning he was gone and that same day the female began laying her eggs, at least 70! After that, Betty said she deserved to be free and she released it. The moth would die within days of giving birth. In fact, the adults are only suited for breeding, having no functional mouthparts or digestive system.

Maple and black cherry trees in Betty's yard hosted this third generation, the grandchildren of the original deceased moth. When they began to hatch Betty wanted to share the experience with other moth foster parents who could provide the right food – mainly maple, cherry, apple or birch leaves.

Many larvae found homes with friends in Central Kentucky. Ann Bowe took three, Connie May took three, the Fantasy Forest took four, Salato Wildlife Center took two and Floracliff Nature Preserve took on five. As of this writing, all the local caterpillars are at various stages of forming cocoons. Laura Baird says of the one in her care, "At this point, I'm eager for the little guy to wrap it up. Literally."



Demo of relative size of caterpillar frass—KL.

We will check back with our caterpillar mommas next summer as the saga continues. Laura again: "Raising caterpillars has made the entire world of insects seem more approachable and fascinating to me." Ann's charges allow her to pet their harmless spikes. The creatures have even been the source of artistic inspiration. At Floracliff's nature journaling workshop in July, artist Pat Greer made a watercolor study of one while the entire class marveled at the size of its frass.



Pat Greer's watercolor of caterpillar.

If Amanda had never picked up that dying mother, this door to cecropia affinity might not have opened. She explains, "I am not an animal rescue person necessarily, just big-hearted." And as for Betty's expertise with raising moths, she confesses that she was "just winging it."

Some big beautiful wings will carry this story on to its next chapter. To be continued....

(You can see more cecropia photos on Betty's blog, www.bettyhallphotography.com.)