

LEXINGTON CHAPTER — May, 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...



Lately there seems to be a great deal of talk about traffic medians, those long planting beds that sometimes separate opposite lanes of traffic in a section of urban roadway. Most often these spaces are covered with turf grass, but last year the city of Lexington installed shrubs and ground covers along a stretch of median on Newtown Pike near I-75. Neighborhood associations have begun to think of their medians as an opportunity for creating beautiful public landscapes and grants are available to support such a project.

A street median seems ideally suited for native plants since so many of them can adapt to the harsh growing conditions between lanes of traffic where the soil is dry and the sun's heat is relentless. A median planted with natives gives our favorite species the exposure we think they deserve, since few sites have a greater potential for catching people's attention. Cars drive by constantly and often stop waiting for a light to change. Well-designed medians can provide drivers a brief reprieve from the stresses of urban life. Neighborhoods that have landscaped their entrance ways signal to incoming residents and visitors that they are leaving behind the inorganic world of stone, glass and paving to enter a world of lawns and gardens.

For all these reasons, it can be immensely rewarding for a neighborhood organization or a gardening group to plant and maintain a traffic median, but it is important for them to keep in mind that such a project site differs from a home garden. There is no room here for subtlety. Colors must be bold and boldly displayed. Blues and purples tend to be imperceptible from afar and most species should be planted in multiples to make a strong impact. The traffic engineer is likely to weigh in with safety concerns asking that the plants remain fairly low for visibility, perhaps three to four feet high. No silphiums or giant sunflowers!

So, there are some challenges to this otherwise rewarding project. Recently I gathered my thoughts and experiences about planting and maintaining traffic medians and posted them on our website at www.lexington.wildones.org under Resources. I also added a list of plants that I think are suitable for this type of landscape.

Beate Popkin

The Monarchs Are Coming! Are You Ready?

By Linda Porter

Keep your eyes open in the garden this month! The 2016 monarch migration is well under way and a scattering of monarch butterflies (*Danaus plexippus*) are making their way to Kentucky looking for gardens with just the right plants—the milkweed and nectar flowers—that they need to survive. Is your garden ready for their visit? If not, you can still welcome monarchs this year. A much larger number of migrating monarchs visit Kentucky in late summer and early fall. Some of these are just stopping by on their way to Mexico for the winter, but many will remain in Kentucky for awhile to lay one more batch of eggs. Your new, or established, monarch garden could be their nursery.

These wonderful butterfly gardens, known as monarch waystations, have become even more critical this year. While the count of monarch butterflies overwintering in Mexico in 2015-2016 nearly tripled over the previous year, the good news of their resurgence was tempered in mid-March by reports of an historic storm in the monarch winter refuges of northern Mexico. Trees were felled by the storm and many monarchs did not survive to begin the annual 2016 spring migration. Some experts estimate a 50% mortality rate but it is too early to know exactly how much impact the devastation actually had on this year's population. Many storm-tattered butterflies are now mating and laying eggs in Texas and their offspring will be on their way north soon.

Even before the storm struck, leading monarch scientists had warned that unless both Mexico and the U.S. make a concerted effort to restore habitat, the eastern U.S. population of monarch butterflies will become extinct within 20 years (Scientific Reports 6, 2016). The U.S. Department of Fish and Wildlife is gathering data to decide whether to designate monarchs, and their migration, as endangered or threatened. Regardless of the designation, there is no doubt that the situation is critical, even more so now due to storm damage.

However, some exciting monarch conservation activities are taking place in the nation and in Kentucky, specifically. In 2015 the White House announced a strategic goal of increasing the Eastern population of the monarch butterfly to 225 million butterflies by 2020. Closer to home, conservationists from across Kentucky met in Frankfort in February to develop plans for creating nectar corridors in the state, including milkweed (*Asclepias* sp.) plantings. Farmers are being encouraged to plant nectar and milkweed havens on farms for monarchs and other pollinators, the highway department is setting aside land for pollinator and monarch habitat and Kentucky state parks are planting and certifying monarch waystations. Gardeners like members of *Wild Ones* are asked to add more milkweed for caterpillars and more nectar plants for adults to their private gardens or to public gardens in their area.

If you would like more information on how to plant a monarch waystation contact Linda Porter at: prairiegirl7@mac.com.

It is not too late. The time to act is now!

Right: a tattered survivor arrives in Texas

Below: Winter storm damage in Mexico



A Flower to Be Passionate About

By Suzanne Bhatt

Passion flower or passion vine is considered by many to be one of our most beautiful vines, sporting spectacular fringed purple flowers that bloom from June through August. Add to its distinctive appearance its edible fruit that appeals to birds, its nectar that attracts hummingbirds and bees and the host site it provides for several kinds of butterfly caterpillars and passion vine becomes a valuable



choice for a native garden. Plant it against a fence or trellis and watch it climb with its twining tendrils. Our local variety, *Passiflora incarnata*, is also known as purple passion flower or maypop (supposedly for the “popping” sound made when the fruits are stepped on or for its tendency to “pop back” to life in May). It is native to North, Central and South America and is part of a large family of over 500 species found in many parts of the world.

The plant’s name is said to come from early missionaries to South America who noted in the flower symbolic details related to the crucifixion story of Christ, with the outer ring of five petals and five sepals representing the ten faithful apostles, the corona of filaments bringing to mind the crown of thorns, the five stamens the wounds of Christ and the three stigmas the nails.

For centuries, indigenous peoples throughout the Americas, and later settlers to this country, have brewed medicinal teas from the leaves for treatment of anxiety and insomnia and to use as an analgesic. (A note of caution: although research has supported some medicinal uses of this plant, ingesting it in large quantities can interact with some medications and supplements and the plant should not be used while pregnant or breast-feeding).

So prized are the flowers and fruit of this plant that the Passiflora Society International was created to educate, promote and protect its many native and cultivated species. This group maintains a seed bank, hosts international meetings and offers a 72 page catalogue of cultivars. Among the many species of passion vine the banana passion flower has become

an invasive pest in the Hawaiian Islands, while the Chilean passion flower, found in the Andes Mountains from Venezuela to Chile, is threatened due to habitat destruction. Several varieties employ self-protective strategies, such as hosting small colored nubs to make it appear to caterpillars that the plant is already saturated with eggs. Some plants produce a sweet liquid from glands on the stem to attract ants which in turn eat other feeding insects. One variety,

the stinking passion flower, is carnivorous, exuding a sticky fluid from small hairs that traps insects which are digested by the plant.

Passiflora incarnata grows in full sun or part shade, tolerates heat, draught and clay soil but requires good drainage. It dies back in winter but can withstand temperatures to 20 degrees Fahrenheit before the roots die. Passion vine spreads from root suckers and can be aggressive in the garden, requiring containment to keep it in check. It is a host for the gulf fritillary, the variegated fritillary and the red-banded hairstreak. Bees are attracted to its profusion of flowers, as are hummingbirds. A second species, *Passiflora lutea*, is also native to Kentucky and hosts smaller, less showy yellow flowers. It tolerates more shade, prefers more moist and richer soil and does not spread aggressively.

While other varieties may be more prized for their fruit than *incarnata*, its flavor, which is said to be a mixture of sweet and tart, is enjoyed by many. The fruits contains a gelatinous mass with many seeds. They are ripe when they soften and fall from the vine.

A beautiful native plant, *Passiflora incarnata* is worth considering when looking to fill a space against a wall or fence.



Alicia Bosela Shares Knowledge and Plants with *Wild Ones*

By Judy Johnson

At the April 7 meeting the *Wild Ones* Lexington chapter welcomed as the featured guest speaker Alicia Bosela, co-owner with her husband Mike, of Ironweed Native Plant Nursery in Columbia, KY. The family-owned business grew out of the couple's shared love for botany, plant identification and plant ecology. Both have worked for the Forest Service and as college educators fostering environmental health through plants, education and people.

Alicia shared a detailed native plant resource list that she discussed using photos of the various species as she pointed out her particular favorites. Some unusual specimens she encouraged members to consider were the umbrella magnolia (among the woody plants), the possumhaw viburnum and black chokeberry (among hedges and accent plants), aromatic sumac, Barbara's buttons and fewleaf sunflower (as borders), little brown jug and Meehan's mint (as greenery).

The evening ended with the opportunity for members to peruse plants from the nursery and make selections to take home to their gardens.

For more information, check out the Ironweed website at www.ironweednursery.com.



Plant Exchange Coming Up

This year our annual plant exchange will take place on **Thursday, May 7 at 7:00 p.m.** The location is St. Michael's Episcopal Church at 2025 Bellefonte Drive. We will meet in the lower parking lot which is accessed from Libby Lane.

Items to be exchanged can be perennials, grasses and sedges, shrubs, trees, vines and seeds. The plants must be native to the Eastern United States; cultivars of a native plant are acceptable. Potted plants are preferred, but if they are dug on the day of the exchange, their roots must be kept moist in wet newspaper surrounded by a plastic bag. Each plant must be labeled.

Participants who have no plants to offer may contribute a food item or something good to drink for the evening's social gathering, in exchange for plants. Finger foods, beer, wine and juices are particularly cherished.

Our plant exchange is also a fund raiser and supports our programs. **We ask that *Wild Ones* members pay \$5 for a ticket to select multiple plants. Non-member guests are charged \$7.**

Now is a great time to look around your garden and pot up what has gone to seed or has spread beyond all reasonable bounds. The plant exchange is always great fun and everybody gets to go home with new plants. See you there.

Beate Popkin



NATIVE PLANT SALES

Dunbar Memorial Garden Plant Sale



Sat., May 7 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Dunbar HS Main Pavilion (1600 Man O War Blvd.)

Funds raised support the school's memorial garden and other projects of the Jesse Higgenbotham Technology Trust.

Included are native flowers, tree seedlings, grasses and shrubs.

All plants priced between \$2 and \$20—CASH ONLY, please.

Down to Earth Garden Club Annual Sale and Fundraiser

Sat., May 14 from 9 to noon

Woodland Christian Church (Woodland and Kentucky Ave.)

Funds raised support the club's civic project at Waveland and other contributions to the community.

Plants come from the gardens of club members who can offer advice for planting and care.

List of offerings can be found on the club's website www.downtoearthky.com/plantsalelist.html



May Calendar



Bernheim Arboretum

Sat., May 4 from 10:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.—**Lunch and Learn: Gardening for Butterflies**—presentation, short themed hike and lunch from Isaac's Café. Hosted by Corine Mastery. Members \$15; non-members \$20. Registration and payment required by 4 p.m. the day before event. Call 502-955-8512.

McConnell Springs

3RD ANNUAL BLUEGRASS BIRDING FESTIVAL AND CRAFT FAIR—Sat. and Sun. May 14-15 (details on page 6)

Sat., May 21 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.—**22nd Annual Founders' Day**—come help celebrate the city's founding in 1775 at the springs. For a full schedule of events, check the website at www.mcconnellsprings.org. Event is **FREE**.

Raven Run Nature Sanctuary

Sat., May 14 at 8 a.m.—**Birds of the Bluegrass**—join park staff for a morning walk to look for the migratory birds of spring. For more information, call 859-272-6105.

Shaker Village at Pleasant Hill

Sun., May 22 from 10 a.m. to noon—**Blue Heron Rookery Cruise**—take a Discovery Trek on the Dixie Belle Riverboat up the Kentucky River to see the blue heron breeding colony along the palisades. Bring binoculars and cameras. \$35 ticket includes 20% off dining voucher and complimentary admission to the Village. Purchase tickets on the website at shakervillageky.org and make dining reservations at 800-734-5611 ext. 1545.

UK Arboretum

Sat., May 21 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.—**Addie's Day**—**FREE** admission to the KY Children's Garden on this special day of entertainment for the whole family in memory of Adelaide Kennedy McReynolds.

DROPSEED NATIVE PLANT NURSERY SPRING SALE

May 14, 21, and 28 from 9 to 4

1205 S Buckeye Lane, Goshen, KY 40026

Check the website for details at:
www.dropseednursery.com

3rd Annual Bluegrass Birding Festival & Craft Fair



Saturday & Sunday, May 14-15
At McConnell Springs
416 Rebmann Lane, Lexington, KY 40504
www.bluegrassbirdingfestival.com

- This event, cosponsored by Wild Birds Unlimited and Lexington Parks and Recreation, grows each year.
- More details are available on the website:

www.bluegrassbirdingfestival.com

SCHEDULE SUBJECT TO CHANGE

SATURDAY, MAY 14

Guided Bird Watching

- 6:30 a.m. Bird Walk at Shaker Village *
(\$10 pre-registration required)
- 8 - 11 a.m. Bird Walk at Floracliff *
(\$5 pre-registration required)
- 9 - 11 a.m. Bird Walk at McConnell Springs
- 11 - 1 p.m. Bird Walk at McConnell Springs
- 12 - 1 p.m. Kids' Walk at McConnell Springs
- 2 - 3 p.m. Kids' Walk at McConnell Springs

Talks

- 9:30 a.m. *Hummingbirds*/"Wild Bill" Gordon
- 11 a.m. *Bird-Friendly Coffee*/Suzanne Bhatt
- 12:30 p.m. *How to Draw a Bird*/John Sill
- 2 p.m. *Native Plants*/Connie May
- 4 p.m. **KEYNOTE SPEAKERS:**
John, Cathryn Sill
Little Known and Seldom Seen Birds

Other Featured Activities

Banding Demo, Birds of Prey Display, Vendor Area, Face Painting, Kids' Activity Area, Raffle and Silent Auction

***To register for an off-site walk contact Nic Patton at 859-268-0114. Space is limited and on first come first serve basis.**

SUNDAY, MAY 15

Guided Bird Watching

- 6:30 a.m. Bird Walk at Red River Gorge *
(\$10 pre-registration required)
- 8 - 11 a.m. Bird Walk at Buckley Wildlife Sanctuary *
(\$5 pre-registration required)
- 8 - 11 a.m. Bird Walk at Lexington Cemetery *
(\$5 pre-registration required)
- 10 - noon Bird Walk at McConnell Springs
- 12 - 1 p.m. Kids' Walk at McConnell Springs
- 2 - 3 p.m. Kids' Walk at McConnell Springs

Talks

- 10:30 a.m. *Intro to Nature Photography*/Steve Bromley
- 12 noon *Woodpeckers*/"Wild Bill" Gordon
- 1:30 p.m. *Native Plants*/Connie May