

## LEXINGTON CHAPTER — August, 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](http://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](mailto:judylex@twc.com).

### *President's Message...*

Recently, on a trip to Austria, I visited the Belvedere palace in Vienna, built in the early 1700s by Prince Eugene of Savoy. He was the military commander who defeated the Ottoman Turks just as they were poised to strike a potentially fatal blow against the Holy Roman Empire. My guide book had declared the Belvedere with its gardens a “must see.” And indeed, Prince Eugene seems to have been lavishly rewarded for saving Christian civilization from the Muslim onslaught. His palace is opulent, gleaming in its baroque splendor above the city. The parterre garden in front is being maintained in period style with knots of clipped boxwood and plenty of statuary.



By 1800 the Belvedere had passed into the hands of the ruling Habsburg family who were no longer passionately drawn to formal baroque design, even if they continued to live with it. A new attitude toward nature was emerging. Archduke Johann, the brother of Emperor Franz I, collected plants that he and his companions, including the Emperor himself, found on their hikes in the high Alpine mountains. Yes, indeed, native plants were arousing the interest of powerful people. About 150 years ago the Alpine collection of 4000 plants was moved to the grounds of the Belvedere palace where they are now arranged in a splendid rock garden.

Upon entering this Alpine garden I found paths meandering through flowers, shrubs and grasses, all casually arranged and growing at different elevations created by the imaginative placement of rocks and boulders. It had taken the Archduke and his advisors and successors a while to figure out that the plants collected in the high mountains would thrive only if the stony habitat of their home region could be simulated. Thus, the introduction of rocks from the mountains and gravelly soil. For a century only plants from the Alps grew in the Alpine garden but now plants from other parts of the world that thrive in this kind of habitat have been introduced as well.

Committed though I am to the idea that gardens should display plants of their region, I always take pleasure in finding my beloved American natives in a European garden. It was interesting to see which of our North American perennials and shrubs had been judged suited to the thin gravel soils of a rock garden. I found heuchera, lanceleaf coreopsis and oakleaf hydrangea along with others. It occurred to me that many of the North American plants we grow in our Bluegrass gardens find themselves in soils that are far too rich for their comfort. They originate in the thin soils of glades and steep slopes and we might do well in attempting to create for them the conditions that suit them by building for them a rock garden, whether we call it Alpine or not. Just think how our Kentucky native cactus would respond to such an offer.

*Beate Popkin*

## Wild Ones Well Represented at Midwest Native Plant Conference

By Linda Porter



Betty Hall, Joanna Kirby, Linda Porter and Jannine Baker enjoying the prairie at the conference center

What do bird songs, native prairie gardens, a prairie labyrinth, chimney swifts and monarch butterflies have in common? They were all featured topics or tours at the annual Midwest Native Plant Conference on July 8-10, 2016 in Dayton, Ohio. The conference is an annual event sponsored by the Midwest Native Plant Society, a non-profit organization of amateur and professional naturalists, botanists, teachers, researchers, gardeners, birders, photographers and others who share a deep appreciation for our native flora and fauna.

One hundred seventy-five native plant enthusiasts and professionals attended this year's conference to hear experts from around the Midwest speak on such topics as gardening with native plants, birds, pollinators and using native plants in urban settings. Four different *Wild Ones* chapters were represented.

While most of the participants at the conference were from Ohio and other Midwestern states, Lexington chapter members Joanna Kirby, Linda Porter, Betty Hall and Jannine Baker participated this year and had a wonderful time taking in the many conference activities. Linda and Joanna also were invited to present two one-hour workshops. They described the joint effort of Lexington *Wild Ones* and the Garden Club of Kentucky to spread the word about monarch waystations and to increase their number in Kentucky. (As of June, 2016 the number has increased from 36 to 359). Joanna (President of GCKY, 2013-2015) described the partnership formed between GCKY and the Kentucky State Parks to install waystations in all 49 parks and offered advice on how the attendees could help form successful partnerships in other states. The presentation was dedicated to the late Mary Carol Cooper, member of the *Wild Ones*/GCKY Monarch Waystation Team (along with Tina Elliot, Betty Hall and Mary Turner).

Joanna and Linda closed by asking those attending to plant monarch waystations and share the monarch message when they returned to their communities. We hope our Lexington members will also continue their efforts for the monarch butterfly over the next year. And you might want to consider joining other *Wild Ones* at this wonderful conference in the future. You won't be sorry!



Linda Porter and Joanna Kirby in front of Bergamo Conference Center



## UNIQUE INVITATION TO EXPLORE PARKLANDS

On Saturday, August 6, our *Wild Ones* chapter will visit the Parklands at Floyds Fork, located east of Louisville. This is a series of five new interconnected parks that offer a wide variety of recreational opportunities in woodlands and open settings. There are paved and natural paths for hiking and biking, river access for canoeing, meadows and modern pavilions for picnicking, play and spray grounds for children and much more. Landscaping with nature in mind is an important focus of the Parklands design.

Tom Smarr, the chief horticulturalist of the Parklands system, has offered to show us some of the highlights of this new Kentucky landscape. Before coming to Louisville, Mr. Smarr was involved with the Highline project in Manhattan, easily the most famous native plant public space created in the U.S. during the last 10 years. We are delighted that he will be our guide during this excursion.

In order to carpool we plan to meet at 8 a.m. in the Legacy Trail parking lot of Cane Run Park, Lexington. We should be back in Lexington by 1:30 p.m. If you want to drive to the Parklands by yourself, you can meet us at 9:30 a.m. at Beckley Creek Park in front of the PNC Achievement Center for Education and Interpretation. The address is 1411 Beckley Creek Parkway, which is accessed from Shelbyville Road near the Gene Snyder Expressway. Please contact Beate by email ([beatepopkin@qx.net](mailto:beatepopkin@qx.net)) by 8 p.m. Friday evening, August 5, if you want to participate. The website for the Parklands is [www.theparklands.org](http://www.theparklands.org).



# Winning Combinations

Article and photos by Katrina Kelly

Our gardens go through quite a bit of change as we endure the heat and humidity of August. As we approach the end of summer many of our early blooming flowers have faded. However, there are still plenty of native plants that continue to sing out to us in the month of August. If you are wanting to spice up your garden at this time of the year, try some of these combinations to prolong seasonal interest.

If you love herbs, here are two to try. Anise hyssop (*Agastache foeniculum*) is an herb with a sweet licorice scent. Its leaves can be used as a tea, to flavor sugar or baked goods and its purple flowers can be dried to use in potpourri and crafts. Bees love this plant! An herb to pair with anise hyssop is dill (*Anethum graveolens*). Its large yellow umbel flowers make a striking combination against the purple flowers of the anise hyssop. Another bonus—dill hosts the black swallowtail butterfly. This is an instance where an introduced (or non-native) plant reliably performs an ecological service in the native plant garden. The last flower to add to this combination is the black eyed susan (*Rudbeckia hirta*) for a bright yellow color to pair with the yellow of the dill and the purple of the anise hyssop. All of these plants love dry to medium soils and full sun to light shade.



Dill, anise hyssop, and black eyed susan



Royal catchfly, blue sage, rattlesnake master and vervain

Little bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*) has to be my favorite grass. It stays small and compact only reaching about 2' in height. It has a beautiful hue of soft blue with periodic streams of purple, green and sometimes red! Its soft texture and color provide a perfect backdrop to mix in some red flowering royal catchfly (*Silene regia*). Add even more interest by mixing in silvery hued rattlesnake master (*Eryngium yuccifolium*) with its unique texture. For a different color tone, try mixing blue vervain (*Verbena hastata*) or blue sage (*Salvia azurea*). All of these plants enjoy dry to medium soils with the exception of blue vervain, which likes medium to wet soils.

If you want to fill in a large space and to attract pollinators, joe pye weed (*Eutrochium purpureum*) is a must. It is one of the best pollinator-attracting plants and every year I find monarch butterflies feeding from its nectar. In August its large soft pink panicle blooms are covered with every type of bee imaginable. Joe pye in my backyard is nearly nine feet tall and seems to particularly love the area near my downspout. This perennial is versatile, serving as background or focal point in a rain garden. Pair joe pye with water-loving white or red flowering swamp hibiscus (*Hibiscus lasiocarpus*), and deep purple flowering New England aster (*Symphotrichum novae-angliae*). All of these plants enjoy full sun to light shade.

If you haven't incorporated any of these plants in your garden before, I hope you will give some of them a try whether you're looking to fill a large or small space in your garden. I love introducing plants that serve many purposes in the garden from being a great pollinator plant, to an herb for cooking or a plant that can be dried and used in arrangements.



Joe pye, swamp hibiscus, New England aster

# What We Need to Know about Our Tree Canopy

By Suzanne Bhatt

The trees comprising Lexington's urban forest provide beauty and wildlife habitat that enrich our yards and community. A healthy, dense forest canopy supplies important ecological, economic, social and emotional benefits for all inhabitants of our city.

Trees absorb water runoff, thus aiding in storm-water management. They protect watershed areas by reducing flooding and erosion. They purify water as it percolates through the ground which results in improved water quality. Trees also absorb carbon and other types of air pollution, providing cleaner air and mitigating the rate of climate change. Through their shade, they reduce the "heat island" effect in areas with high concentrations of impervious surfaces, lowering energy bills through reduced energy use.

In 2013 the LFUCG Division of Environmental Policy (DEP) commissioned an urban tree canopy assessment. Collected data was compiled into a report prepared by the Davey Research Group. This report estimated that the above benefits represent a value of over \$30 million to our community. Add to this the effects that trees have on the physical and mental well-being of community members and the concrete benefits of maintaining and expanding our urban tree canopy become clear.

The canopy assessment report showed that much work is needed to enhance our urban forest. As of 2013, the percentage of tree canopy cover in the Lexington/Fayette area was about 25%, compared to a canopy cover of 40% recommended by the group American Forests. In addition, much of our canopy is fragmented, significantly reducing the value for wildlife habitat, control of invasives and forest health in general. The emerald ash borer infestation will markedly reduce our canopy cover within the next couple of years because ash trees currently comprise 11% of our canopy. Most every tree, other than the very few that have been treated, will die.

Fortunately, several groups of professionals and interested citizens are bringing much needed passion and energy to these challenges. Within city government, the DEP is working on an urban forest management plan to protect existing trees and increase canopy cover to at least 30%. This effort is aug-



mented by three groups with differing objectives but with the common goal of improving the health and scope of our urban forest.

We are presenting all three groups in this chapter newsletter. In this issue we begin with the Lexington Tree Board which advises the city on tree-related issues. This board was formed in the mid-1970s with the adoption of the local street tree ordinance. That ordinance was written by a committee of the Land and Nature Trust of the Bluegrass, chaired by *Wild Ones* member Sue Beard. It aimed to promote the appropriate planting of street trees. The 15 member Tree Board advises the city on all tree-related issues and also hears appeals when permits for tree planting or removal are denied by Urban forestry. The Board consists of city employees, a council member, local tree professionals and concerned citizens. During the last three years it has been chaired by *Wild Ones* member Ann Bowe.

A vital role of the Tree Board is to enhance communication and coordination among various divisions of our city government that work with trees, such as urban forestry, parks, planning, streets and roads, and engineering, to ensure the use of best practices for optimum tree health. The Board includes LFUCG employees from all these divisions and also designates a Board representative to sit on the Corridors and Landscape Review committees. The Board advocates for tree protection in public areas. It advises the various government agencies, as well as the city council, on matters of care, preservation, planting, removal and replacement of trees in parks, along streets and in other public areas.

Meetings of the Tree Board are held on the second Wednesday of each month at 10:30 a.m. in the 5th floor conference room of the City Government Center, 200 E. Main Street. These meetings are open to the public. Citizens can send questions and concerns about public trees to the Tree Board at [www.lexington.gov/index.aspx?page=2524](http://www.lexington.gov/index.aspx?page=2524). Minutes of past meetings can be found on that web page as well. Immediate concerns can also be reported quickly by dialing **311**. This action ensures that a file will be opened and forwarded to the appropriate person for response.

*Next month we will examine the work of Urban Forest Initiative.*



## Wild Ones as Citizen Scientists

(Photos courtesy of Beate Popkin and Karen Lanier)

On July 7 a group of intrepid *Wild Ones* met at the Millcreek Elementary School campus to learn about the Wetland and Stream Restoration Project that member Russ Turpin had spearheaded with teachers and students at the school. The site has been monitored for five years to be sure it is stable and now its maintenance has been turned over to Fayette Co. Public Schools.



Finally, Russ wrapped up the adventure summarizing the project, his part in it and his hopes for its future. The evening provided a more personal understanding of stream restoration, its implementation as well as the problems related to maintaining it over the years.

Our job was to perform a bit of citizen science work that would provide data about the status of the project. We divided into four groups and each group took one section of the stream, making and recording observations of the wetland area. Then the information was compiled.



## August Calendar



### Bernheim Arboretum

**Sun., August 7 from 2 to 3 p.m.—First Sunday Nature Hike: Sharing the Bounty**—Volunteer Naturalist Joe Rogers will lead an engaging hike. **FREE**, however, there is a weekend environmental impact fee of \$5 per car for non-members. No registration required.

### McConnell Springs

**Sat., August 27 at 10 a.m.—Weekend Workout**—a chance for everyone to help clean the park and maintain the trails. Bring your work gloves and tools. For more information call **859-225-4073**.

**Sun., August 28 from 3 to 4:30 p.m.—Nature Journaling**—Join park staff on a nature walk to the park pond to observe and record the life that fills our pond. Call **859-225-4073** to register.

### Raven Run Nature Sanctuary

**Fri., August 5 and 12 at 9 p.m.—Perseids Meteor Shower Watch**—Come catch a glimpse of the meteor shower. No registration required.

### UK Arboretum

**Wed., August 3 and 17 from 11 a.m. to noon—Garden Tour: Shade Trees and Water Features**—Join Jesse Dahl, Arboretum horticulturist, for this instructional walk. Meet at the Visitor Center. Cost is \$3. Limit of 25 people. Groups of 5 or more must pre-register. For information, call **859-257-6955**.

## Wild Ones “Show Me/Help Me” Garden Visit

The **August 4** *Wild Ones* meeting will be a “Show Me/Help Me” visit to the gardens of member Vicki Reed. The “Show Me/Help Me” concept originated to offer members the opportunity to show their gardens and also to solicit feedback from their peers.

Vicki has a large yard in a mid-century neighborhood where she has planted over 75 different trees, shrubs, vines, flowers and grasses, using mostly native specimens. This year she won a Lexington in Bloom award for butterfly gardens. (In 2015 she counted over 100 monarch caterpillars so we hope to find some during our visit.)

We will gather at 6:30 p.m. at Vicki’s house at 1717 Palmyra Avenue, which is off Dover Road between Russell Cave and Paris Pike just beyond New Circle.