

**LEXINGTON CHAPTER — August, 2017**

<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...*

On the weekend of June 17 and 18, Berlin, where my husband and I vacationed for two months, celebrated “The Long Day of Nature in the City.” From 3:30 p.m. on Saturday to 5:30 p.m. on Sunday conservation and gardening groups joined city officials in hosting over 500 events, usually two hours in length and spread out over all urban districts. Guided hikes through the city’s many natural areas, parks and gardens predominated. There were bird walks, programs at Berlin’s many lakes and waterways, children’s programs, poetry readings (including one asking participants to bring their own nature poems), walks with local officials and politicians, excursions for the whole family to stalk the animals of the night and much, much more. Some events required pre-registration via the Internet, but most were open to whoever showed up. The ticket for all events was \$7. Even the most intrepid participant could hope to partake in no more than 1% of the offerings. Not to worry – *Der Lange Tag der Stadtnatur* has been held for 11 years running and will return next year.



My husband and I joined two tours, both led by knowledgeable and engaged guides. The first met at the southern edge of the city, where a section of the Berlin Wall had stood before 1990 but had since been replaced with a state-of-the-art recreational bicycle path. Our hike led us through woods and across fields as our guide explained the efforts of a neighborhood group to save this area from development. We walked contemplated a 70-yard wide strip of land stretching along the former Wall where all vegetative growth was markedly stunted in comparison to surrounding terrain. The strip, we were told, had been regularly sprayed with herbicide to keep down all vegetation during the almost 30-year existence of the Wall. This was done so that any escapee from East Germany who made it across the Wall and ran toward West German safety could be readily seen and shot.

On Sunday, I joined a group that toured the lovely Lietzensee Park which was laid out 100 years ago in Charlottenburg, then an upscale suburb of Berlin. A landscape architect explained the park’s original design, its modifications over time and the considerations that have more recently gone into adapting it to the needs of a modern urban people’s park.

There seemed to be nothing doggedly instructional about the “Long Day of Nature in the City.” It was more an invitation for Berlin’s residents to deepen their love for the city by getting to know some of its less familiar aspects. It is hugely successful and it is spreading; almost a dozen German cities are now organizing their own “Long Day.”

An obvious question occurred to me: would such an idea fly in Lexington?

*Beate Popkin*

# Urban Planning Revisions Affect All of Us

By Suzanne Bhatt

Every five years, the city updates its comprehensive plan, the document that guides how development is to occur within Fayette County. Lexington's Division of Planning recently presented its proposed revisions for the existing plan to the planning commission, which is studying and modifying the recommendations before forwarding them to the urban county council for final approval.

Planning staff gathered input from Fayette County citizens through public information and feedback sessions, written comments and over one thousand "On the Table" small group gatherings held on March 15. These comments from the community were taken into account before staff drafted recommendations to present to the council. Recommendations include the following:

- The urban service boundary, which was established to protect rural farmland and defines the area in which new urban development can occur, should not be expanded. This would prevent urban sprawl and encourage denser development and urbanization within the urban core through infill and adaptive reuse of existing structures. An excellent example of this type of development is the revitalized Distillery District on Manchester Avenue, where old buildings have been converted into a popular restaurant, music and bar scene.
- Multi-level mixed housing and business complexes should be built along the major corridor roads to reduce single level surface parking lots and encourage more use of mass transit. Development of mixed housing options is emphasized—as opposed to a primary focus on single family homes—to increase density and provide more affordable housing options.
- As infill occurs, natural areas in developing new communities should be minimally disrupted. The urban forest should be maintained and expanded, canopy requirements should be increased and improper tree removal should be prevented. All new development projects should be planned with proper greenspaces. In a plan that directs growth aggressively toward infill and redevelopment, these are important concerns, as are the challenges of limiting impervious surfaces and protecting streams and floodplains. (Much of the "found" land of recent infill projects lies in flood plain areas or in small, sheltered, wooded spaces passed over by earlier developers.)
- The city should reduce its carbon footprint through programs and incentives encouraging energy efficiency, green building and alternate transportation options such as walking, biking and public transit. The recommendations include support for continuing the Purchase of Development Rights program to preserve additional farmland.

One significant omission from the proposed revisions is the reinstatement of land use maps, an important component of the comprehensive plan prior to their removal in 2013. These maps designated the types of land use (e.g., high vs. low density, retail, mixed use) appropriate for different locations within the city to guide future development. The Fayette Neighborhood Council strongly endorses the reintroduction of revised maps to give clearer, more definite guidance in zone change decisions.

There was an initial mixed response from planning commissioners to the proposed staff revisions. Some commissioners objected to regulations on development, focus on tree preservation and greenspace and retention of the current urban service boundary.

A public hearing before the planning commission has been scheduled for **August 31**. After that the plan will go to the urban county council for consideration, at which time comments can be submitted to council members. For more information and to stay updated, go to the planning division's *Imagine Lexington* website: <https://www.lexingtonky.gov/get-involved>.

Since planning revision is an issue that concerns the quality of life for all of us, we should consider making our voices heard. Many of us have already spoken up, but clearly the decisions are still very much up in the air.

## Mason Bees—Intrepid Spring Pollinators

By Katrina Kelly



Mason bee is a familiar name that encompasses 140 different species in North America. Unlike honeybees, these native bees live solitary lives. They make their nests in tunnels found in nature, such as cavities in wood or hollow stems. Although humans have learned to provide nesting holes in close proximity to each other in commercial settings like large orchards, the bees still function independently.

All species in the *Osmia* genus are excellent pollinators of fruit and nut trees and shrubs. The blue orchard bee (*Osmia lignaria*) is a blue and black colored bee that seems to be most prized by orchard farmers because of its efficiency as a pollinator. It is one of the few native bees managed for agricultural purposes.

This bee is active in early spring and it pollinates consistently even in cold and rainy weather. It fills a gap in the seasons when other pollinators are absent. The blue orchard bee is an intentional pollen collector and stores the pollen and nectar on its abdomen while traveling from flower to flower. It carries what it collects back to its nest where it seals the pollen and nectar in cells with its eggs to be ready food for the larvae that will emerge. In contrast, the honeybee collects pollen indirectly on its legs, since its main focus is collecting nectar to take back to the hive. While a honeybee will range up to four miles to find food, a mason bee will generally remain within 100 yards of its nest. Many orchard farmers have put up mason bee nesting homes, noting increased yields as they have successfully enticed the blue orchard bee to remain within their orchards.

To attract and protect mason bees, and the blue orchard bees in particular, we can plant fruit or nut trees and early blooming flowers. We should be vigilant about not spraying chemicals on our lawns and gardens. And we can install mason bee nesting homes in our yards. Many different types are available online and in garden centers or they can be made at home with found objects like hollow reeds bundled together with twine. If we are observant, we may see this beautiful blue and black orchard bee among our native plantings.

### MONARCH GOOD NEWS!

- Many Central Kentuckians report monarch butterflies and caterpillars in their gardens since mid-June (some as early as late May). Here in Danville there have been many eggs and caterpillars among my own plants. Chip Taylor, founder of Monarch Watch and the Monarch Waystation program, reports that "this looks to be a good year for monarchs – with a stronger migration in most regions and a good prospect that the overwintering population **will increase from the 2.91 hectares of last year to 4 hectares or better this coming winter.**"
- Kentucky now officially has **495** Monarch Waystations certified with Monarch Watch. **142** of those are in the Lexington area. Although some of the certified waystations are no longer active due to closings and changes of ownership, this is still an amazing increase since 2013 when efforts by *Wild Ones* and The Garden Club of Kentucky began.
- As part of the new Kentucky Monarch Conservation Plan, a new website has been created, **[www.kentuckymonarchs.com](http://www.kentuckymonarchs.com)**. Go to the site to subscribe and receive notice of monarch articles as well as event announcements. There is also a new **Kentucky Monarchs Group Facebook page**. Hart Hagan, of the newly formed *Louisville Wild Ones* Chapter, created these resources for the Kentucky Monarchs Working Group.



Thanks to all of you who have installed and/or certified monarch gardens on your property, helped others with their native plant gardens or spread the word about the importance of pollinator conservation!

Linda Porter

## Tool Time—Advice in Two Parts

Text and photos by Vicki Reed

In the August and September issues of this newsletter, a Wild Ones member shares her experiences bringing peace to her suburban garden with what are usually two of the noisiest garden tools.

### Part I Mowers

I am old enough to remember a time when suburbia was a much quieter place, a time with no weed eaters and no leaf blowers. Only people with huge properties used riding mowers. There were no landscaping company mowers. Everyone generally mowed their own grass or hired a neighborhood kid to do the job. And whoever mowed used a push mower. When mowing was finished, a broom sufficed to clean off the driveway and hand clippers might be used to trim along the front walk. In the fall rakes were used to collect leaves. Even in the absence of loud engines, it was considered very bad form to disturb a Sunday's quiet with yard work.

Fast forward to 2017. Landscaping companies blitz through neighborhoods sending two or three riding mowers to a yard at the same time. Homeowners with small lots ride large noisy mowers. As soon as mowing is finished, out come gas-powered weed eaters followed by raucous leaf blowers. Instead of sitting on the porch enjoying a summer evening of locusts buzzing and crickets chirping, homeowners now retreat indoors to escape what sounds more like a war zone.

So what can we do to be more environmentally friendly and less noisy? Let me share my personal efforts that might spark a new thought with readers. First, of course, is planting native trees, shrubs and flowers that will reduce the amount of open space needing mowing. If you have a small yard you might be able to completely replace grass. (There are several good examples in the Kenwick neighborhood.) However, if you want a larger open area for yard games, aesthetics or privacy, some mowing will be involved.



Next, I sowed my yard in white clover. White clover (*Trifolium repens*) is native to Europe and has been naturalized in the United States. Seed is readily available at Southern States. If you find this idea slightly revolutionary, I would remind you that clover used to be a standard part (5-10 % by weight) of any good lawn seed mix. It was touted for being nitrogen-rich and drought-resistant, attracting pollinators and crowding out various weeds, mold and mildew. Only with the advent of nonselective herbicides which killed clover did the vision of completely green turf yard take hold. I found another benefit of clover. Because it grows slower than grass, I now mow roughly every three weeks instead of once a week.



Greenworks electric mower

This brings us to the mower. I moved from gas-powered to electric. I mulled going cordless but decided I would settle for a plug-in model and I was happy for awhile with my choice (Greenworks). Was the cord a bit of a hassle? Yes, but no more trips to the gas station, no more spark plugs to be replaced and no more draining and winterization of the engine.

However, I was still using energy resources and generating noise. Seeking to be more eco-friendly, this year I went back to the future with a reel mower. Years ago I had tried one and had to give it up as unwieldy but this time I read the reviews before making my purchase. I found raves online about a Fiskars model so I gave it a try. It is great! The blade has a lifetime guarantee. It is no problem to push and to maneuver in tight spots. Height adjustment is quick. I consider it easier to use than the corded electric and with only the sound of whirling blades I can still hear the birds.



Fiskars reel mower

Next month: **PART II LEAF BLOWERS**

## UK Horticulture Club Has Native Plants to Sell



Shari Dutton, faculty advisor for the UK Horticulture Club, has announced that student club members are growing Midwestern native perennials, shrubs and grasses in their nursery. Students also raise, harvest and sell organic produce.

The Club has an open market at their campus greenhouse Wednesdays from 3:30 to 6:00 p.m. and prices are quite reasonable. The University Dr. location of the campus greenhouse is easy to locate on the map at <https://maps.uky.edu/campusmap/?Bldg=0164&Map=Perspective>.



Because this is a student endeavor, hours and sale items are subject to change, so the best source of up-to-date information is the club's Facebook page which can be found at [www.Facebook.com/UKHorticultureClub/](http://www.Facebook.com/UKHorticultureClub/). Any special sale notice is also posted here.

## AUGUST Calendar

### Bernheim Forest

**Mon., Aug. 21 from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m.—Total Solar Eclipse Celebration.** While not in the path of total eclipse, Bernheim will be treated to an impressive partial eclipse. Maximum sun coverage (over 96%) will be observed at 2:27 p.m. but solar-themed activities will go on all afternoon. Check website [bernheim.org](http://bernheim.org) for more information. **FREE.**

### Floracliff

**Fri., Aug. 11 from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m.—Creek Walk.** Hike leaders will be Floracliff naturalists. Suggested donation is \$5-10/person. Hiking level is moderate to strenuous due to steep, uneven terrain along a section of Elk Lick Creek. A good chance to look for macroinvertebrates, amphibians, reptiles and more.

### Natural Bridge State Park

**Fri., Aug. 18 to Sun., Aug. 18—Natural Bridge Artisan Festival.** A celebration of Appalachian heritage showcasing mountain crafts, skills, talents, cuisine and more. More information on the website: <http://parks.ky.gov/parks/resortparks/natural-bridge/>.

### Raven Run Nature Sanctuary

**Sat., Aug. 5 and 12 at 9:00 p.m.—Perseids Meteor Show Watch.** For details call 859-272-6105.

### Shaker Village at Pleasant Hill

**Daily through the month of August from 2:00 to 5:00 p.m.—Riverboat Ride.** One hour narrated cruise on the Dixie Belle along the limestone cliffs. \$10 for age 13 and over; \$5 for ages 6-12; free under 6. Purchase tickets at the Trustees' Office.

### Urban Forest Initiative

**August—**The Urban Forest Initiative UFI is looking for neighborhood groups interested in hosting a workshop on tree health and care during the month of August! The workshops consist of a brief, 2-hour training and a survey session on tree health and care, which includes a walk through the neighborhood where the groups can learn to conduct simplified tree assessments. Groups may sign up at the website <https://ukntrees.ca.uky.edu/summerworkshops>. More information is available by contacting **Grace Coy** at [grace.coy@uky.edu](mailto:grace.coy@uky.edu). August dates are going fast!

**WILD ONES LEXINGTON CHAPTER** will meet **Thursday, August 3 at 6:30 p.m.** at U.K.'s **Alumni Drive Project.** *Wild Ones* member Russ Turpin will lead a tour of the native landscaping and talk about the project's role within the Wolf Run watershed. He will be joined by UK horticulture students who will explain how they collected seeds from this landscape to grow native plants that are now sold through the UK Horticulture Club.

**DETAILS AND PARKING DIRECTIONS ARE INCLUDED IN THE EMAIL THAT DELIVERS THIS NEWSLETTER.**