

LEXINGTON CHAPTER — September, 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 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...

This summer the Central Kentucky native plant community sustained a sad loss. Shooting Star Nursery closed as a retail business at the end of July. The beautiful property on Soards Road in Georgetown has been sold to become a private residence and the remaining plants have been distributed for use on public projects in Fayette County.

I loved many things about Shooting Star. One was the huge range of plant material available. Whenever I learned about a new native plant that I might want to try out, I knew there was a very good chance of finding it at Shooting Star – well not literally me finding it, of course; Marianne or one of her employees would have to find it for me in their vast collection. I will also miss the low key approach to sales, the almost casual atmosphere that reigned at the nursery despite the hard work being done there. If I happened to arrive for my plant shopping in late morning, I was invited to join the crew for lunch around the big nursery table where everybody shared the food they had brought.

Operating a nursery is a difficult business. Sales are very seasonal, yet the stock needs to be tended year-round, which means ongoing expenses for labor, insurance, taxes and much more. It saddens me to think that the very things that endeared Shooting Star to me also contributed to its end. Marianne Hunt, the owner, loves plants and her knowledge about them is phenomenal. It was her interest in plants that accounted for the huge diverse stock that she maintained. Many of her plants had a very slim chance of ever finding a buyer. She did not advertise, but simply extended a friendly welcome to her customers and happily gave advice. It did not occur to her to attract buyers through gimmicks: hay rides, a petting zoo, artsy sales items or garden ornaments. Shooting Star was about none of this. It was about plants and about the people who love them, who want to explore them and to grow them.

Beate Popkin



Sept. 7th Wild Ones Meeting at Wellington Park

On **Thursday, Sept. 7 at 6:30 p.m.**, *Wild Ones* members will gather at Wellington Park located at Wellington Way and Clays Mill Rd. to visit four gardens located there. We will look at, talk about and learn from each of these horticultural initiatives.

The sites are a Reforest-the-Bluegrass project from the 1990s that the city is restoring to a proper woodland; a tall grass prairie area that stretches along Clays Mill Rd., an initiative begun by board member Lee Meyer over 10 years ago; the Women's Garden, dedicated in 2010 to honor all women who have contributed to the quality of life in Lexington; and our *Wild Ones* pollinator garden and monarch waystation planted in 2014 that quickly became an eye-catching exhibit. This last garden is maintained by member volunteers and supported by a small amount of financial help from our chapter budget.

We will assemble at the picnic shelter located close to the entry off Wellington Way and the parking area. Wear comfortable clothes and walking shoes.

August Outreach Activities—Seed Balls and Caterpillars

By Linda Porter

The Outreach Committee of *Wild Ones* will meet in September to plan for next year. We welcome any suggestions of ways to share knowledge about native plants and the pollinators that depend on them. The work is fun, as you can see in the photos below. If you would like to join in the work of this lively group, please contact me at prairiegirl7@me.com.

BELOW: *Wild Ones* member Susan Cohn works with children to make seed balls at the Cardinal Valley Adopt-a-Park event in July. *Wild Ones* Community Outreach Committee co-sponsored this event with the Unitarian Universalist Church of Lexington. There were 47 children registered, playing games and learning about pollinators and native plants. The Outreach Committee includes *Wild Ones* members who work in the community to provide education and information to the public.



ABOVE: Children learn about butterflies and caterpillars with *Wild Ones* member Vicki Reed (not shown) at Spindletop in August. Vicki is a member of our Community Outreach Committee.

Tool Time Continued—Leaf Blowers

By Vicki Reed

Part II Leaf Blowers

Last month we explored ways to mow grassy areas in a quieter and more eco-friendly way. This month, as we begin to move toward fall, it seems fitting to discuss that power tool of the season—the leaf blower. Of course, the use of the leaf blower has grown beyond corralling nature's autumn bounty. Now throughout the year, the sight of a few grass clippings on the sidewalk or driveway seems too much to bear!

While researching this dependence on such a noisy tool, I found the summary of a "grandmother with broom proves faster than leaf blower" experiment. (You can read for yourself at <https://www.lawnsite.com/threads/grandmother-proves-rake-and-broom-as-fast-as-leaf-blowers.109395/>). I am not surprised as I watch a neighbor pour gas and pull the cord multiple times to get his beast started before he takes aim on grass clippings, actually scattering them over an even larger area. It is no wonder that Steve Zien, executive director of Biological Urban Gardening Services, an international organization of professional landscapers, calls the leaf blower "the most over and inappropriately used power tool." In a lawn it abuses soil and damages landscape plants. It blows disease spores up into the air, spreading them everywhere. The extreme heat it generates dehydrates plants, burns leaves and can even suspend photosynthesis.

A gas powered leaf blower puts out as much air pollution as a large car or truck. We breathe the particulates blown into the air. These include heavy metals, pesticides and other carcinogenic substances. Children, in particular, should not be allowed to play anywhere a blower is being used.

Then consider the damage to the person wielding the blower. Leaf blowers can hit 90 decibels and can cause permanent hearing loss, especially with prolonged use. Obviously, users should wear ear protection but the chorus of multiple leaf blowers going at the same time in residential neighborhoods can affect bystanders as well. Local municipalities in some areas are heeding noise complaints. Several cities have banned the use of gas powered leaf blowers. California is actually looking at a statewide ban as studies are showing gas powered lawn equipment may soon surpass cars as the leading cause of air pollution. (Cars have come under stricter emission rules but lawn equipment has always been given a free pass.)

I have fond memories of quiet autumn days when neighbors went out into the crisp air to attack piles of fallen leaves with nothing more than rakes. Now when the weekend warriors come out with their noisy machines, I head for the woods.

If you are interested in reading more, check out *Noise Free America* and *Quiet Communities* websites. You can like their Facebook pages and share on your own page. Join others to get the word out about the dangers of leaf blowers if you too would like to breathe clean air and hear birds, not engines. Will it be....

THIS?

OR

THIS?



Research Targets Monarchs and Waystations

By Suzanne Bhatt



Adam Baker, an entomology graduate student working with Dr. Daniel Potter at UK, is focusing his research on monarchs and their use of waystations. His studies include a 2016 survey of 24 central Kentucky monarch waystations, some of which were planted by *Wild Ones* members. He also explores the relative utility of different milkweed species and of different garden designs in attracting and supporting these butterflies.

In a recent article, Adam and Dr. Potter described clear preferences among monarchs for certain milkweed species (“Building a Better Monarch Butterfly Waystation” in *Greenhouse Product News* magazine, June, 2017). All species studied were shown to support egg laying and caterpillar growth. Among the eight targeted species of milkweed (swamp, showy, common, butterfly, whorled, spider, broadleaf

and narrow leaf), the first three were found to be preferred for egg laying. Although caterpillars on butterfly milkweed tended to be more robust, fewer eggs and larvae were found on that milkweed. Possibly the smaller size of the butterfly milkweed made it less conspicuous to the butterflies compared to the larger and more apparent varieties. As the season progressed, however, and more attractive species faded, monarchs utilized less favored types. This would underline the importance of planting a variety of species with varying bloom and growth cycles.

Rural gardens and those on the outskirts of urban areas proved more productive than those in cities surrounded by impervious surfaces, buildings and traffic. Although small gardens with plenty of milkweed were successful in attracting monarchs, the researchers believe larger gardens may be more easily recognized, especially if milkweeds are separated from nectar plants by mulch, increasing their visibility and accessibility.

Adam and Dr. Potter make a case for better use of large acreages at parks, horse farms and commercial sites to establish a broad network of milkweed and nectar resources. The out-of-play areas of golf courses offer great opportunities, as well, for the construction of waystations. Adam is collaborating with the U.S. Golf Association to research and test the feasibility of establishing milkweed on golf courses across the U.S.

Currently, Adam has undertaken two additional local studies. At the Arboretum he is using controlled garden plots to continue exploring the differences among milkweed species in attracting egg-laying females. He is also trying to understand factors (e.g., nutritional value vs. visual cues) that drive monarch preferences. Caging and weighing caterpillars, he can make comparisons of growth rates supported by various milkweed species.

In a study At UK’s North Farm various garden designs are manipulated to better understand how the placement of milkweed and nectar plants in waystations might affect both attractiveness to egg-laying females as well as rates of survival from predation. Since only a small number of eggs laid are expected to survive and produce adult butterflies, it is important to learn which designs are more attractive to monarchs while simultaneously drawing fewer predators. Such knowledge might give the monarch population a needed boost.

Results of these studies will be published over the next year. Adam Baker aims to use information gleaned from his studies to better inform the planning and design of monarch waystations and also to promote widespread adoption of waystations on currently underutilized naturalized roughs on golf courses across the country.

Natives Thrive with Summer Rain

Rains have been plentiful this summer and our moisture-loving August flowers have rarely looked so happy.

Red lobelias seed themselves out and also reproduce vegetatively. They don't like their feet crowded. The mother plant dies in fall but leaves a number of daughters growing around it from which new stalks will arise. These daughters won't grow well if the mother is mulched or crowded by other plants. So, weeding and, in most years, watering are necessary to get a dense stand of lobelias in the garden.



Joe Pye weed is not a weed at all but a lovely flower named after a New England man who used the plant medicinally to treat typhus sufferers.



Ironweed often grows too tall for a city garden, but it looks great in a prairie, which is where it belongs.

SEPTEMBER

Bernheim

Sat., Sept. 16 from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.—Bug Fest. Explore insects and their relatives. Join in the Parade of Bugs, Eat-A-Bug and more. You can also pick out plants to take home to your garden—trees, shrubs, grasses and flowers. **FREE**; \$5 per car weekend fee for Non-Members.

Floracliff Nature Preserve

Sat., Sept. 9 from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m.—Caterpillar Hunt. Easy hike, less than a mile led by Floracliff naturalists. Great opportunity to see and discuss a variety of insects and their connections to our native plants. Suggested donation: \$5-\$10 per person.

Sat., Sept. 23 from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.—A Citizen's Guide to Land Stewardship: Maintaining Biodiversity in Urban, Suburban and Rural Landscapes. Indoor and outdoor learning components with emphasis on ecology and management of invasive species and the native plants they impact. Suggested donation: \$15 per person.

Sat., Nov. 11 from 10:00 to 2:00 p.m.—Fall Long Hike. Moderate to difficult 4 mile hike led by Floracliff naturalists. Suggested donation: \$5-\$10 per person.

Pre-registration required for all events. Email: info@floracliff.com and provide your **name, phone number, and number of people** you wish to register. Programs are limited to 15-20 people.

Natural Bridge

Sat., Sept. 9 from 9:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.—The Great Caterpillar Count. An introductory presentation on caterpillars, 3 guided caterpillar hikes and a presentation on monarch waystations are on the agenda. More details at <http://parks.ky.gov/calendar/details/the-great-caterpillar-count/78466/>.

Raven Run

Sat., Sept. 9 at 1:00 p.m.—Butterflies of Raven Run. Learn about butterflies and how to identify different species. For more information call 859-272-6105.

Shaker Village at Pleasant Hill

Sat., Sept. 30 from 10:00 a.m. to 12 noon—Monarch Butterfly Tagging. Take an easy hike through the Preserve and learn how its native flowers provide habitat for pollinators. Then help tag monarchs to track and monitor their annual migration. Price: \$25 (includes Village admission and 20% off dining. Meet at the Welcome Center (in the Carpenters' Shop). Space limited so advance registration and non-refundable prepayment is recommended. For additional information call 859-734-5611.

UK Arboretum

Thursdays throughout Sept. from 10:00 to 12 noon—Native plants volunteers. Help Native Plants staff care for the Walk Across Kentucky area weeding, mulching, and removing invasives. Call 859-257-6955 for details.