



# Rock River Valley Chapter Newsletter

September 2013

## Promoting Native Plants for Natural Landscapes.

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## Global Warming and Its Effect on Natives Thursday, September 19, 2013

Location: **Burpee Museum of Natural History**

737 North Main Street, Rockford, IL

Time: **7:00 – 9:00 pm**

We hear and read media articles often about “Global Warming”....many with sincere warnings, and many absolutely denying there is any such thing. How is anyone like us supposed to know what is really happening, and should we even care? Jessica Hellmann is a professor of biology at the University of Notre Dame and the leader of the climate change adaptation research program in the Environmental Change Initiative. She also directs an interdisciplinary training program for graduate students in the area of environment and society.



Professor Hellmann’s research addresses the ecological responses of climate change and strategies for reducing those impacts. These strategies include restoration to habitat conservation but also more controversial and emerging strategies such as managed relocation (assisted migration). She has active research at the Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore, the Kankakee river basin, and the City of Chicago, all dealing with how to preserve ecosystems and greenspaces for the benefit of nature and humanity.

Through Dr. Hellmann we should be able to see that with our yards of native landscaping we are truly helping habitat conservation in the bigger picture of preserving ecosystems – not only for plants and wild creatures, but also for ourselves. Please join us September 19 for this inspiring presentation.

For more information about Jessica Hellmann’s work, follow her on Twitter@ jessicahellman, or her website: <http://www.nd.edu/~hellmann>.

Come before 7:00pm, browse the merchandise tables, check out the library and Wild Ones information Booth, and help yourself to refreshments.

This program is free and open to the public. For more information call: 815-627-0344.

Submitted by Lynda and Lee Johnson, Co-Chairs/Program



Scan with your Smartphone for more information about Rock River Valley Wild Ones

**FOUR RIVERS**  
ENVIRONMENTAL COALITION  
MEMBER ORGANIZATION

Articles for the October 2013 newsletter, must be submitted to the Newsletter Chair, at: Pambi@wildonesrrvc.org September 23, 2013.



## *Message from the Co-President*



Ginnie Watson

Wild Ones, both at the local chapter level and the national board level, is all about education for its members and its leaders. Members are offered a marvelous menu of learning opportunities. Monthly programs covering such topics as how to start a native garden, defeating aggressive alien invaders, creating a rain garden,

restoring a degraded natural area and so much more are open not only to members but the community at large. Show Me/Help Me events, for members only, showcase beautifully landscaped yards as well as yards that just need a good suggestion or two, become a learning experience for all attendees. Our library, another members only benefit, has a wealth of books just ready to advise and entertain. Our newsletter keeps us up to date on chapter events and recaps the previous month's presentation for those who were unable to attend.

Scholarships are available to help offset the cost of a workshop or conference. Kim Lowman-Vollmer, our Grants and Scholarships Chair can help you with that. Kim can also help you obtain a grant to help start a school prairie, offset expenses at a Master Naturalist project or some native plant project benefitting the community. Native plant rescues and native plant sales are a good way of learning about our local biodiversity. Even volunteer opportunities are instructive as you work alongside chapter experts.

But what is available for our leaders to keep them on point and motivated? Over the weekend beginning Friday, August 17, and ending Sunday, August 19, fellow Co-President Bob Arevalo, Vice President Jerry Paulsen and I attended the Annual Membership Meeting which included workshops aimed at exploring ways to improve chapter involvement. Topics such as How to partner with local environmental organizations and succeed, How to connect with first time homeowners and keep them engaged, How to start educating children with a grant program, and How to maximize your online presence with the new chapter websites inspired us and gave us new ideas and new ways of looking at issues. Some of these subjects are already done in our chapter but new ideas are always welcome.

Of particular value was the National Board Development session led by Moderator Dale Feinauer. National board members were expected to attend, either in person or by phone, but the session was open to all of us and many of us took advantage of the opportunity. Following up on that theme was national President Tim Lewis' workshop Sunday morning on Expectations of a Board Member. Our chapter has participated in this weekend learning experience for the past 3 years, sending 3 board members each year. Knowledge and creative ideas gleaned from this conference are then shared with the rest of the board at our yearly retreat held in January of the next year. These new ideas and creative thought find their way into our chapter through this meeting of the minds and we are most grateful for the inspiration provided by the yearly August conference usually held at the W.I.L.D. Center in Appleton, Wisconsin. We have Donna Van Buecken, Executive Director, Jamie Fuerst, Marketing Assistant, and Joan Rudolph, Administrative Assistant, with assistance from the local Fox Valley Area Wild Ones to thank for this marvelous weekend.



It wasn't all work. Jessica Miller, Education Coordinator at Mosquito Hill Nature Center in New London, Wisconsin, updated us on the status of the monarch migration as part of the Wild for Monarchs presentation and later we were treated to a monarch release. I saw 8 newly emerged monarchs released to the wild. Magical. Saturday night we watched the Disney movie, *Wings of Life*, narrated by Meryl Streep, which poignantly portrayed lives of several pollinator species.

Wild Ones is all about education for its members and its leaders. As a result our organization is getting better at the other half of our mission...advocacy. Lucky us. Lucky world. Spread the word!

## July Show Me/Help Me Recap Mary Anne Mathwich



*Steve and Claudia Fleeman by their rain garden.*

About 20 Wild Ones enjoyed a beautiful warm day of visiting Rockford area landscapes. A stunning rain garden greeted us at Claudia and Steve Fleeman's home. Claudia utilized the natural slope of the lot to slow runoff by designing a rain garden anchored by cup plant, joe-pye-weed and red milkweed and surrounded by other moisture loving natives. Claudia asked for ideas for colorful wetland plants and plants that would green up earlier. Suggestions included turtlehead, cardinal flower and golden Alexander for color and native sedges for green. On the upward slopes, plants favoring drier conditions are planted. This is all framed by stone hardscaping designed and installed by Claudia. A large patch of blue grama grass provided one example of a no-mow area. Another excellent example of low maintenance landscaping was the side yard. It was almost entirely Prairie Moon Nursery's No-Mow grass. It created a beautiful, cushiony transition area to the wooded backyard. The mature trees provided an area for both native and non-native shade plants. Many native shrubs are planted in the various levels of the yard including cranberry viburnum, elderberry, hazelnut, pagoda dogwood, fragrant sumac and a red honeysuckle vine. We followed a path down through one very healthy looking vegetable garden. All of this has been accomplished since the Fleemans moved in only four years ago.

Awhile back, Barb Kober attended a Wild Ones sponsored program given by Doug Tallamy about "Bringing Nature Home". This influenced her to rethink how she gardens. She has a great variety of non-native plants attractively arranged throughout her landscape. In her front yard, she has native pagoda dogwood and serviceberry and enjoys native spring ephemerals in a shady area. As she now wants to bring more nature into the landscape, ideas were shared such as: start small, add an area of natives next to existing gardens, add some no-mow grasses and prairie dropseed between sidewalk and curb and add a Wild One's sign. A huge basswood shades part of the backyard. The center of the back appeared to be a good spot for a sunny rain garden. Barb had many vines in the back so

native vines were suggested: wild yam, old man's whiskers (native clematis), American bittersweet and red or yellow honeysuckle vine.



*Barb Kober leads a tour of her yard*



*Wild Ones enjoy the colorful display in Dave & Anita Johnson's yard*

Our last stop was Anita and Dave Johnson's yard. One of their goals is to create a screening along the front side between their yard and the neighbors. A number of shrubs were suggested such as hazelnut and arrow-wood viburnum (*viburnum rafinesqueanum*). This species of viburnum only gets to be 4 to 5 feet tall. Anita enjoys looking out at the square planting along the south side of the house. This planting came with the house and Anita has been adding native prairie plants, slowly replacing the non-natives. She enjoys this space in every season and it was especially colorful this day with cup plant, liatris, bergamont and purple coneflower. Anita is not a purist when it comes to gardening in her own landscape and desires a lot of color. The backyard hosts a shady woodland garden which has held its own even though it has been flooded 3 times this year. As we just learned about raising monarch butterflies at the Wild One's social, it was appropriate that Bobbie Lambiotte should find a monarch egg attached to a volunteer milkweed plant. Our tour ended with fruit, cookies and lemonade refreshments, enjoyed on the Johnson's shady deck.

**Photos by Mary Anne Mathwich**

# August Meeting Recap

Constance McCarthy

*Photo by Jerry Paulson*

## Native Trees and Shrubs: What Works?

Connor Shaw, owner of Possibility Place Nursery, spoke to the chapter at our August meeting on Native Trees and Shrubs: What Works. Possibility Place, which is the supplier for our chapter's tree and shrub sale, offers trees and shrubs that are native to the Chicago area and north-central Illinois. Even though he has owned the nursery since 1978, he says that he is still learning new things all the time.

Woody plants will shoot three to four times in their first year, trying to survive and get ahead before winter. The number of shoots diminishes a bit in the second year. Woody plants are falsely thought to be slow growing. Shaw says that people just need to know how to treat them right. When treated well, very few woody plants are truly "slow growing." For example, the shagbark hickory is the only one that he would characterize as a very slow growing tree. One of his shagbark hickories produced its first nuts only in year 20! On the other end of the spectrum, some oaks will produce acorns from the fifth year onward. Oaks can grow 6 to 12 inches in spring, and 12 to 18 inches in summer.

One of the most important lessons to learn is that if you group trees, they will grow 20 to 30% faster than if you planted a single tree all by itself in your yard. He even plants trees on only 1-foot spacings, and says it is a myth that trees need 45-foot spacings. Oaks can grow 2 to 3 feet per year if they are grouped with others. There are several reasons for this. First, all of their roots are interconnected and support each other.

Second, mycorrhizal associations are present. This refers to the symbiotic relationship between a fungus and the roots of a plant. Over 80% of plants benefit from this association, in which the fungus colonizes the roots of the plant. Although commercially available, Shaw says there is no need to buy mycorrhizae. Once the roots connect among the trees planted in a group, the mycorrhizal association will form all on its own. The fungi then receive sugars from the plant roots, and the fungi transfer essential minerals from decaying organic matter into the plant. Some mycorrhizae help accelerate plant growth, and can protect the plant from drought, predators, and pathogens. The roots give organic matter back to the surrounding soil because 5% of a tree's roots are sloughed off each year.

This is why the most active area in soil is that immediately surrounding the roots. It is amazing to think about all this complex activity going on in the soil beneath our feet! Because we can't see it, we often forget about this way that plants and fungi work together for each other's benefit.

Third, the trees planted in groups communicate with each other. For example, when one is attacked by an insect, the others in the group will also shore up their defenses.

The roots of a tree extend out very far, up to several times the drip line of the tree. (The drip line is the area located immediately under the outer circumference of a tree's canopy.) For example, if a tree's drip line is 30 feet across, the diameter of its root spread would be 90 feet on average. For some trees, more than 50% of the roots are found beyond the drip line.



In order to group trees when you plant them, you can make an uneven triangle to create an informal landscape. Shaw then plants shrubs and mid-size trees in and around the group. Don't keep it a barren desert under there!

Shaw expects this year to see a bumper crop of acorns. White oaks will produce acorns in the same year as pollination, while red oaks produce acorns two years after pollination. If you are going to attempt to germinate some acorns, he suggests sampling a few acorns from a tree to see if there are weevils. Split a few acorns open with hand pruners; if more than five acorns in your sample have weevils, he suggests harvesting acorns from a different tree in order to improve your chances of success.

When people ask Shaw for a "flowering tree," he reminds them that all trees flower. However, on some trees, the flowers are very small or can't be seen well due to where they are found on the tree.

Shaw explained one aspect of the biology of a tree. Energy that comes from the bottom third of the tree goes into caliper growth (building the thickness of the trunk), while the energy from the top two thirds goes towards top growth. He therefore suggests pruning off a tree's bottom branches only very slowly, leaving them on for at least two years before pruning them off. If you prune off too many branches from the bottom of a tree, you'll see very little caliper increase.

On the topic of cultivars, Shaw describes them as new and different (not "new and better," which is what many people in the nursery trade tend to say). The sterile flowers on cultivars are rejected by insects. He is not a fan of most cultivars, noting that in Chicago's Millennium Park, they are ripping out all Echinacea hybrids because of insect pest problems. Based on his observations, bees and butterflies favor natives.

## August Meeting Recap (cont'd)

The best time to plant trees is July-October or March-April. May is tricky because plants leafing out don't want to put energy into growing their roots.

Shaw says that folks are far better off buying smaller plant material than larger. A 1.5-inch tree that is planted and watered well, will grow just fine. It is important to plant close enough to your house (or other water source) so that you can water the trees as they are establishing themselves.

He also discussed nurseries growing trees in fabric bags vs. burlap balls. In the fabric bags used by Possibility Place, the roots grow into the fabric and flourish. Many balled and burlapped trees are planted far too deep in the burlap ball. The root flare (not the graft) must be 1.5 to 2 inches above grade. It is imperative not to plant too deep! For the planting hole, the wider, the better. When soil is removed from the hole, simply use a fork to gently break it up; don't lift it, smash it, etc. Also, remove or kill the grass from around where you are planting the tree.

Shaw has tried to encourage cities to plant 1.5-inch trees, rather than 2-inch trees. He noted the success of Keep Indianapolis Beautiful, which plants 5,000 to 7000 trees per year, all planted by the public. They plant 1.25-inch to 1.5-inch trees, and hire high school students to help care for them. People can handle and manage smaller trees better, and a person could plant 20 of them in one day because they are not too heavy. Trees of the recommended size have a much higher success and survival rate. Indianapolis is also applauded by Shaw for planting a very wide variety of trees.

Some books that he recommends: *Caterpillars of Eastern North America* by David L. Wagner; *Ecological Planning: A Historical and Comparative Synthesis* by Forster Ndubisi; *Bringing Nature Home* by Doug Tallamy, and *Native Trees of the Midwest: Identification, Wildlife Values and Landscaping Use* by Sally Weeks, Harmon Weeks Jr., and George Parker.

The second part of the presentation focused on some of the trees and shrubs being offered this year in our chapter's annual sale (indicated with an asterisk), as well as other trees offered by Possibility Place.

*Swamp white oak* (*Quercus bicolor*). Fibrous root system. Tolerates very wet, as well as very dry conditions. Shaw fears that these will be overplanted in urban landscapes, as people still seem not to be learning lessons about overplanting. Rounded shape, rapid growth. Found in flat woods and flood plains. Shaw strongly suggests not planting this one in a berm, which is entirely unlike its native habitat. Best planted in good garden soil.

*White oak* (*Quercus alba*). The state tree of Illinois. The most shade tolerant of all the oaks, and will survive on only 3 to 4 hours of full sun (all other oaks need at least a half day of full sun). Pretty fall color.

*Hill's oak* (*Quercus ellipsoidalis*), now believed to be *scarlet oak* (*Quercus coccinea*).<sup>\*</sup> Outstanding fall color, and the most variable one that he grows. Can be a large shrub or a tree; some have small leaves, others have large leaves; some leaves are

deeply lobed, others are not.

*Hackberry* (*Celtis occidentalis*). An extremely tough and durable plant that can be quite gangly and unruly when young. Shaw thinks that it should be planted more often. It is very susceptible to nipple gall; although he finds that people can become riled up about this, the galls don't seem to harm the tree at all. He thus advises not even trying to use chemicals to control these galls.

*Shagbark hickory* (*Carya ovata*). It actually grows faster in the shade when young, and grows more like a telephone pole in its early years. Especially good to plant among oaks. Without shade, it is a very slow growing tree. However, even with shade, it grows only 6 to 8 inches per year. Yellow fall color.

*Kentucky coffee tree* (*Gymnocladus dioicus*).<sup>\*</sup> Rather unattractive when young, with very few branches. A very tough, durable tree in the legume family that fixes nitrogen in soil. It has the largest leaves in North America. Unfortunately, many in the nursery industry are concerned about mess and want to get rid of the female trees because their seeds fall on ground and make a "mess." However, as a dioecious tree, male and female trees are generally needed to produce fruit and seeds. It takes years for the seed to germinate in the wild because the seed coating is incredibly hard. Scaly, ridged bark and irregular, coarse branching create great winter interest. White flowers.

*Hop hornbeam*, also known as *ironwood* (*Ostrya virginiana*). Some have said that it is slow growing and transplants poorly, but it is actually one of the fastest growers in Shaw's nursery, growing 2 to 3 feet per year. Shaw strongly advises against pruning off the lower branches, and believe that more people should plant this as a street tree. Attractive, shaggy bark.

*American plum* (*Prunus americana*). A classic prairie/savannah plant. Has quasi-thorns that are sharp. Fire tolerant. Shaw recommends planting them on 4 to 5 foot centers and watering during the first few years. Once it is 4 to 5 feet tall, it is big enough to protect itself against deer. (Deer will leave trees alone if lower branches are left on, as deer don't like to be poked with branches.) White flowers. A good plant for berms or a border. Suckers freely and forms thickets, and therefore not recommended as a small backyard tree.

*Blue beech, American hornbeam or musclewood tree* (*Carpinus caroliniana*).<sup>\*</sup> Lives on the bottom third of hills and in wet areas. Very shade tolerant. Excellent for screening. Remains dense, and grows to 15 to 20 feet tall. Great fall color! Its tough, durable wood was used for wheel spokes. Grows 18 to 24 inches per year.

*Bladdernut* (*Staphylea trifolia*). Will sucker and create colonies. Moths pollinate the white, bell-shaped flowers. Seeds rattle in the bladder-like capsules when blown by the wind. Yellow fall color.

*American bittersweet* (*Celastrus scandens*). Unfortunately, this vine is rapidly disappearing from our environment, as it is now readily crossing with Asian bittersweet. Unlike the Asian

(continued on page 7)

## Tour of Rooftop Garden: Exceeds Expectations! Lynda Johnson



Eight of us ventured to Chicago to visit the Rooftop Garden eleven stories up on top of the Chicago City Hall. In March Kevin Carroll had given a presentation about this special garden, and he extended an invitation to our Wild Ones members to come see it. We knew it would be special from seeing his slides, but when we stepped out onto the roof and saw the flowers, our reaction was: "WOW!"

Kevin said that Mayor Daley had wanted a rooftop garden in Chicago after seeing the roof gardens in Europe, which were covered with different species of sedums, which are low-growing groundcover plants. When Kevin was put in charge a few years later, he proceeded to put in native prairie plants. Most prairie plants have roots that are 12-15 feet long, and it was amazing to see all the prairie plants flourishing in 1 1/2" - 6" of soil! Obviously, the roots grow horizontally.

He has built up parts like small hills, with curving paths around and through. And there are several large, old skylights that have been not in use for many years. The skylights were like "raised beds", so the tall prairie plants planted in those were at eye-level, right in front of our

faces. He has many, many different species, and the profusion of color was magnificent. We were instructed to stay away from the edge, and not look down – the barrier is less than 24" – believe me, none of us wanted to get anywhere near the edge!

The view of tall, tall buildings all around this wonderful prairie made us realize what, indeed, a special place this rooftop garden is. We saw three Cabbage butterflies, and before we left, we even saw a Monarch butterfly. Kevin said many birds stop there to rest on their migration journeys. He leaves the vegetation there in the winter so that birds can also eat the seeds of the plants. Thank-you, Kevin, for sharing this special place with us!

Photos by Cynthia Nelson



bittersweet, this native is not aggressive. The native has fruit only at the ends, while Asian bittersweet has fruit all along vine. Fire tolerant. It takes it a while to figure out how to grow on a trellis, so be patient.

*American filbert, also known as American hazelnut (*Corylus americana*).\** The nuts, which form in mid to late August, are the most sought after of any nut, and squirrels will devour them almost immediately. Moderate growth rate; can form thickets. Will double in size if burned once. Like many savannah shrubs, it can be pruned to the ground and will rejuvenate. You'll have a better chance of getting nuts if you plant at least three of them. Needs at least a half day of sun.

*American currant*, also known as *wild black currant (Ribes americanum)* needs to be planted in dry understory. Grows to be 2 to 3 feet tall and forms thickets. Flowers are great; fruit is edible by both humans and wildlife. It has a more open and horizontal growth habit in the shade.

There are several varieties of Viburnum, each of which has its own niche when it comes to favored planting environment. Good fall color. Indeed, some will even turn red when planted in the understory. They can easily live to be 100 years old, and will sucker. *Blackhaw viburnum (Viburnum prunifolium)\** is an oak savannah plant; it won't flower in the shade, and grows to around 15 feet in this region.

## Membership Update Marilyn Heneghan, Membership Chair

### 172 memberships on August 1, 2013

#### Welcome New Members

Fiona & Graham Fordyce  
Donald & Joy Hyson  
Chris Reisetter

#### Special Thanks to Recent Rock River Valley Chapter Donators

(any amount above the \$37 basic dues)  
John & Carol Gerrond  
Bob & Carolyn Arevalo  
Jack & Joyce Armstrong

57 attended the August program. Thank you to Janet Giesen and Anita Johnson for greeting members.

**Note: It is preferred that renewal donations be sent directly to the Chapter's Membership Chair, Marilyn Heneghan, Wild Ones Rock River Valley 5411 E. State Street PMB340 Rockford, IL 61108 rather than to the national office.** Processing goes quicker this way for the chapter. Your expiration date is on your newsletter and your Journal address label. Thank you.

Please send email address changes to Marilyn Heneghan at [Marilyn@wildonesrrvc.org](mailto:Marilyn@wildonesrrvc.org)

## 2013 Chapter Programs and Events

<b>September 28</b>	Native Tree & Shrub Sale Orders Due	<b>John Peterson</b> Tree and Shrub Sale Coordinator
<b>September 19</b> 7:00-9:00 pm	Global Warming as it Relates to Natives	<b>Jessica Hellman, PhD</b> Univ. of Notre Dame
<b>October 4</b> <b>5-7:00 PM</b>	Pick Up Tree and Shrub Orders See brochure for full details	<b>John Peterson</b> Tree and Shrub Sale Coordinator
<b>October 5</b> <b>9-11 AM</b>		
<b>October 17</b> 7:00-9:00 pm	Native Plants in Winter	<b>Dr. James Reinartz,</b> Director Univ. of Wisc.-Field Station
<b>November 21</b> 7:00-9:00 pm	Pot Luck and Seed Exchange Members only: All members welcome with or without seeds. Bring a dish to share.	Burpee Museum of Natural History
<b>December</b>	No Meeting-Happy Holidays!	Burpee Museum of Natural History

Unless noted, programs are free and open to the public. Programs are subject to change.  
Please contact Lynda and Lee Johnson at (815) 629-2781 for more information.



NATIVE PLANTS, NATURAL LANDSCAPES

## ROCK RIVER VALLEY

### ROCK RIVER VALLEY CHAPTER NEWSLETTER

c/o Pambi Camacho  
6680 Hartwig Drive  
Cherry Valley, IL 61016

## *Don't become extinct!*

If the expiration date on the mailing label is  
**9/1/2013**, this is your last chapter newsletter and  
you have received your last Wild Ones *Journal*  
until you activate your membership

You may receive a renewal notice from both the  
National organization and your chapter. Your  
membership information will be updated quicker if  
you renew through your chapter so you won't miss  
an issue of the chapter newsletter.

Mail your renewal to Marilyn Heneghan  
**Wild Ones Rock River Valley**  
**5411 E. State Street PMB340**  
**Rockford, IL 61108**

## Wild Ones - Rock River Valley Chapter

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Regular meetings are held the third Thursday of the month at 7:00 pm at the

Burpee Museum of Natural History, 737 North Main St., Rockford, IL

*Special meetings, outings, and events are scheduled periodically and sometimes replace the regular meeting time/place. Contact any officer to confirm information about our next meeting.*

Wild ones Annual Membership: Family \$37, Limited Income/Full-Time Student \$20, Business \$250  
Entire membership contribution is tax deductible. Contact Membership Chair for additional information or to join.

815-627-0344 • Visit our Web site at [www.WildOnesRRVC.org](http://www.WildOnesRRVC.org)

## *Wild Ones Mission*

Wild ones: Native Plants, Natural Landscapes promotes environmentally sound landscaping practices to preserve biodiversity through the preservation, restorations and establishment of native plant communities. Wild Ones is a not-for-profit environmental education and advocacy organization.