

Promoting Native Plants for Natural Landscapes.

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



All articles for the January 2016 newsletter, must be submitted to: Constance@wildonesrrvc.org by November 23, 2015.

*Member Potluck and Seed Exchange
Thursday, November 19, 2015*

NOTE: Different location: Unitarian Universalist Church of Rockford, 4848 Turner Street Rockford, 61107

NOTE: Different time: 6:00 to 8:00 p.m.

Typically, November has been our time for our member potluck, annual report from the board, and seed exchange. This year we will also be viewing a multimedia presentation highlighting the people and activities of our own Wild Ones chapter. This will be a wonderful celebration of the various ways we positively impact our community and our environment throughout the year.

Please note the **different location** this year. The UU Church is near the intersection of Alpine Road and East State Street in Rockford. Also note the **different time!** Come at 6:00 p.m. (or as close to that for working folks as you can) so we'll have time to eat, listen to the board report, and enjoy the photo program. *Bring your own eating utensils and a dish to pass.* Vegetarian lasagna and drinks will be provided.

Bring seeds to share during the exchange. Please put them in envelopes or baggies labeled with common name, scientific name (if you know it), and place of origin (e.g., Winnebago County, Wild Ones plant sale, or other source), and your name, in case anyone has questions, such as "how does the plant grow." For new members: We always have lots of seeds, and if you are new to this and don't have any seeds to share, you are still welcome to go home with some seeds! We want to share, as this increases the chances of more and more native plants growing all over the place.

If you are not a member yet, this is a great time to join and participate in one of the fun member benefits.



Above: Members listen to Mia answer questions, Right: Mia Spaid demonstrating cards with Janet Giesen at the October meeting.

Message from the Co-President Ginnie Watson



Ginnie Watson

photo by Jon McGinty

I was talking with Kim Risley a couple of months ago. You remember Kim. She started the Woodland Plant Sale back in 2009 and chaired the committee that put together the wildly successful landscape tour last year. She was also program chair from 2009-2010. Kim is known for her good ideas, so when she said she would like to see a Co-President's Message about native plants and ecoregions, I took it to heart.

Wild Ones defines a native plant as follows: *A native plant species is one that occurs naturally in a particular region, ecosystem and/or habitat and was present prior to European settlement.*

That seems fairly straightforward and easy to understand, but what actually are the "boundaries" of a local ecosystem, region, or habitat? How does one know where the line is? An ecoregion is delineated by ecological, not political, boundaries. Our chapter gets its plants for the prairie plant sale from Agricol, which is located in Janesville, Wisconsin. Those plants are grown from seed responsibly collected from plants within our ecoregion and are far better suited to our area than plants from southern Illinois, even though they come from a different state. A map of U.S. ecoregions can be found at <http://www.wildones.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/US-Ecoregions.pdf>.

Within an ecoregion it is important to match, as closely as possible, environmental requirements of the plant in question. In other words, a plant such as lupine – which grows in sandy soil under full sun – would not prosper

in a shaded, humus-rich woodland, even though both conditions are found within the same ecoregion. Native plants have differing environmental requirements (such as soil, climate, exposure (sun/shade), and precipitation) which must be met for the plant to thrive.

Within an ecoregion it is important to choose a local ecotype, i.e., *plants requiring a certain set of environmental conditions found locally*, as well. Little bluestem, a prairie grass, grows as far south as Texas, but a plant taken from a Texas prairie would not do well in northern Illinois because such a plant has evolved in an area of the country where environmental conditions differ from those found here.

Other considerations include preservation of local pollinators and other animals within the ecoregion which have evolved to rely on local native plants for sustenance, shelter, habitat, etc. Preserving genetic diversity is also critical. Cultivars and nativars sold in nurseries are very

frequently clones of a plant with particularly saleable features. Purchasing such plants promotes the loss of genetic variation, as most of the plants are derived from a single genetic source.

Bottom line: When determining whether or not a plant is native to an area and will thrive, it is more important to consider its ecoregion and ecotype than to be concerned with finding it within

a certain mileage radius of your location – although the closer, the better. (Please note that this is my interpretation.)

I pulled this information from an article I found on our national website www.wildones.org. You can find the article at www.wildones.org/learn/local-ecotype-guidelines. I encourage you to read the article and, while you are at it, check out other pages and features of the national website. It is an information-rich resource!



Winnebago County Extension Office Demonstration Garden

How Many Monarch Butterflies Have You Released This Year? Janet Giesen

Over the past several years, many of our chapter members have been rearing monarch butterflies for release in an effort to help proliferate the species. We would like to gather some data about these activities. If you have been raising and/or releasing monarch butterflies, even just one, we'd love to hear from you!

Please contact me at treasurer@wildonesrrvc.org and provide me with the number(s) of monarch butterflies that you released in 2015, no later than Sunday, November 30. I will create a report with the numbers and a few monarch butterfly lifecycle images for the January 2016 newsletter.

Let's see if we can encourage more people to try this rewarding, citizen-science experience! The image you see here is that of a male monarch butterfly nectaring on showy goldenrod (*Solidago speciosa*) immediately after release this past September.



Rockford-Area Home for Sale with Abundant Natives

This home sits on three lots in Winnebago County (surrounded by the city of Rockford) filled with oak trees, dogwoods, tulip trees, witch hazel bushes, and many, many native plants. In the spring, the yard is filled with trillium, violets, trout lilies, spring beauties, blood root, and numerous other plants.

The home is like two homes joined together, and has 4,600 s.f., not including the two-car garage or lower levels. One room in an addition initially included an artist's studio with 14' ceilings, but was later converted into a family room that can host a gathering for up to 50 people.

After Ted and Kathie move, the property will go on the market for under \$300,000, reflecting Rockford area market conditions for homes of this size. They want to sell to a party who will appreciate the native plants. Some plants were recently shared with Wild Ones members through a plant rescue. If you would like to see the yard and home, contact Ted Ross at (815) 262-0473 (cell).

Thanks to All Mentors Melanie Costello, Mentor Program Coordinator

The mentor program is one of the benefits you enjoy as a member of the Rock River Valley Chapter of Wild Ones. Throughout the year, members who requested some help were matched with member mentors. Being a mentor isn't difficult; it involves visiting your mentee's yard a couple times and providing advice and resources. Mentors don't have to know it all; other members are usually happy to provide additional information when needed.

So, thanks to all those who volunteered to serve as mentors this growing year. We could not offer this valuable program without your help! If you'd like to take advantage of the mentor program, please contact me at melanie@wildonesrrvc.org. We are also always looking for members willing to give a little time as a mentor.

Board of Directors in Action Cathy Johnson, Secretary

Highlights of activities of the Wild Ones Rock River Valley Chapter board of directors, as discussed at the October 8, 2015 meeting, include the following.

- As the next step in the transition to becoming a policy board, the board approved a new organizational structure, to be implemented in 2016.
- The board agreed to postpone offering another yard tour event until 2017, and a committee will be convened in late spring or early summer of 2016 to begin planning that event.
- The next board meeting will be Thursday, December 10 at 6:00 p.m, location to be determined. The meeting officially starts at 6:00 p.m., but those attending are welcome to come at 5:00 for dinner and social time. *All chapter members are welcome and invited to attend board meetings.*

October Meeting Recap

Cathie Johnson

photos by Pat Hollingsworth (pages 1 & 4)



Established Invaders in Our Region

Mia Spaid, general projects manager at Northwest Illinois Plant Partnership (NIPP), spoke on identifying, preventing, and eliminating undesirable plants commonly referred to as “invasives.” Invasives are typically plants that meet the following conditions:

- Non-native (or alien) to the ecosystem under consideration
- Causing environmental or economic harm or harm to human health.

Invasives require management due to the threat they present to ecosystems by:

- changing ecosystems;
- reducing or eliminating plant biodiversity;
- posing health risks to animals and humans (e.g. causing allergies and toxic reactions, or interfering with food sources);
- limiting recreation, such as overtaking trails in parks and forest preserves and dominating fields; and
- creating a negative economic impact.

Some basic ways to reduce the proliferation and impact of invasives include:

- cleaning tools after working with plants to avoid transferring unwanted seeds; and
- careful planning of landscaping and plant selection.

“The Usual Suspects” of the Invasive Plant World

Woody invasives include:

- **Russian olive** (*Elaeagnus angustifolia*) and **autumn olive** (*Elaeagnus umbellata*) – Alternating, silvery, hairy leaves. Russian olive leaves are oval, while autumn olive leaves are more lance shaped. White aromatic flowers in the spring.
- **Common buckthorn** (*Rhamnus cathartica*) and **glossy buckthorn** (*Rhamnus frangula*) Extremely aggressive, these can take over areas quickly. The plant has a thorn on the branch tip, which looks like the cloven hoof of a deer, with a thorn in between. Its shiny black berries are very attractive to birds, which spread them widely. It can also be identified by its

bright orange heartwood. Glossy buckthorn tends to prefer a wetter habitat, and has a fuzzy stem with glossy alternate leaves.

- **Gray dogwood** (*Cornus racemosa*) – This plant is an invasive that is also a native. Problems have been created by it due to disturbed ecosystems, but it does well when kept under control. White flowers in mid-summer, bright red stalks that bear greenish-white fruit, and leaves that are opposite, tapered, and oval.
- **Honeysuckle** (*Lonicera* spp.) – The invasive honeysuckles are non-native; the native species are typically not a problem. To differentiate, open up a branch. A hollow branch indicates a non-native. Generally, invasive species of this plant have opposite leaves, with paired flowers, and berries at the base of leaves. Species can generally be distinguished by leaf shape.
- **Multiflora rose** (*Rosa multiflora*) – The characteristic of the multiflora rose is a downward curving thorn and fringe at the base of the leaf and pink flowers.

Herbaceous invasives comprise a much longer list, including:

- **Canada thistle** (*Cirsium arvense*) – Plants grow up to 4’ tall. Mature plants have long, lance-shaped leaves, with extremely long spines. There are other native thistles that can be grown to provide seeds for finches, rather than this extremely aggressive plant.
- **Goldenrod** (*Solidago* spp.) – This has become aggressive largely due to lack of competition to keep it in check in environments such as farm fields. Can be controlled by planting other natives to out-compete them. Distinctive, golden-colored umbrella shaped top, and hairy stem with very textured leaves.
- **Common reed** (*Phragmites australis*) – Grows very tall and can form very dense stands, crowding out other plant species quickly, spreading their rhizomes out 50 feet in a single summer. Likes a damp, but not flooded, environment. Chemical warfare is typically required to bring them under control. Despite their appearance, they are very poor seed bearers, and their seed does not reproduce well.
- **Garlic mustard** (*Alliaria petiolata*) – Tends to be in wooded areas. Forms rosettes in the first year, and taller stems with white flowers in subsequent years. Later in summer, they form pods which contain many seeds and are easily spread by contact. The plants can form a seed bank in the soil very quickly, and control is typically a multi-year project.
- **Purple loosestrife** (*Lythrum salicaria*) – Likes wetland habitats. There is a beetle that eats this plant and can help control it, but to eradicate requires physical removal or chemicals. Purple flowers, with

October Meeting Recap (cont'd)

- upright, opposite leaves.
- **Queen Anne's lace** (*Daucus carota*) – Rarely takes over a native habitat, but tend to spread in disturbed areas. White umbel with one dark flower in the center. Leaves resemble those of carrots. Hairy stem and leaves.
 - **Reed canary grass** (*Phalaris arundinacea*) – Reaches only 4-5' tall, as opposed to phragmites which can reach 7'. Sturdy, hollow stems, reddish in color near the top.
 - **Smooth brome** (*Bromus inermis*) – Stems are 2-3' and hairless. Can be differentiated from similar grasses by the base of the leaf, which has no fringe and is more clustered (rather than bushy). A faint 'M' or 'W' can be seen when the leaf is stripped.
 - **Cutleaf teasel** (*Dipsacus laciniatus*) and **common teasel** (*Dipsacus fullonum*) – Burr-like flower head with spiny bracts. Cutleaf has white flowers, while common teasel has purple. Tend to grow very tall.
 - **White sweet clover** (*Melilotus alba*) and **yellow sweet clover** (*Melilotus officinalis*) – Not as aggressive as some other invasives. Smooth, oval, trifoliate leaves. White or yellow flowers.
 - **Wild parsnip** (*Pastinaca sativa*) – A special caveat was issued regarding wild parsnip and hogweed. Due to their toxicity, which can cause severe contact dermatitis and a sensitivity to sunlight, anyone finding these plants is asked to contact the DNR regarding the reporting requirements. It can be difficult to differentiate between these two plants, but hogweed, which has white flowers and large leaves, is more dangerous and much larger, reaching up to 5-6' in height, while wild parsnip tends to grow only to 3-4' and has yellow flowers. Both have very long, deep taproots which can be difficult to remove. Wild Ones sells a tool called the Parsnip Predator, which is designed to remove wild parsnip and also works well with other plants, such as burdock.
 - **Crown vetch** (*Vicia sativa*) – Dark green compound leaf. Aggressive and quickly spreading, it can suffocate other plants.
 - **Birdsfoot trefoil** (*Lotus corniculatus*) – Grows up to 2' tall. Yellow flowers. The 1" long seed pods tend to resemble a bird's foot. Presents a threat to prairies.

Many of these plants have similarities in where they are found, typically including disturbed areas, roadsides, edges, and fields. Some prefer dry conditions, while others prefer a wetter environment. All of the plants listed here can be found, along with photographs, illustrations, and further characteristics, in several of the resources listed at the end of this article.

General Control

Though control differs by location and species, there are

some rules of thumb that can be applied. Well established native species tend to help keep invasives out, as growing space is already taken. Maintenance of native species and rapid response to encroachment by invasives help to reduce the need to put much effort into fighting invasives.

While many people are reluctant to use chemical control, this sometimes is the only practical approach for large areas of well established invasives. The speaker agreed with the preference of avoiding chemicals, especially neonicotinoids, and emphasized the importance of strictly adhering to the directions provided when using any chemicals. Chemicals should also be fresh, used in proper concentrations, and used only under the advised weather conditions (typically dryer, still conditions) and times of year. Chemicals can be sponged or painted onto stumps of buckthorn to insure absorption into the roots. The speaker has successfully used a product called Polaris on reed canary grass and phragmites, and it can be used for buckthorn. This product is specifically made for aquatic plant control and claims to not harm aquatic animals. It reportedly has a 90% success rate if it is not washed off.

When pulling out plants such as garlic mustard, creeping Charlie, or other undesired species, deposit them into a thick black plastic bag and keep it tightly closed to kill the plants. Wet newspaper can also be used to smother plants over a growing season. Physical removal or suffocation may need to be repeated periodically to continue to control new growth. Plants with long roots, such as Canada thistle, will need to be dug up entirely.

When attempting to prevent the spread of invasives, remove flowers before they go to seed, and pull out the entire plant. To keep plants, but restrict their spreading, remove seed heads and rhizomes, but leave the plant.

Resources for Further Information on Invasive Plants

<http://www.invasivespeciesinfo.gov/toolkit/monitoringsmart.shtml> – At this site you can download a free app for smartphones, iPhones, and Droids which provides information on invasive plants of the Midwest and alternatives to them.

www.MIPN.org – This site has an invasive plant control database which can be accessed by entering a plant's common name.

www.NIIPP.net – The website for the Northwest Illinois Invasive Plant Partnership.

www.Newinvaders.org – A volunteer-based program to identify, map, and control new exotic invasive species.

Our chapter's library has several excellent books specifically on invasive plants, as well as a variety of other topics related to native plant landscaping. This portable library is set up at monthly program meetings. As a Wild Ones membership benefit, books may be checked out, taken home, and returned at the next meeting.

October Was the Month for Plant Rescues!

Mary Anne Mathwich,
Plant Rescue and Seed Collection Chair



Cynthia Nelson, Karen Matz, Tim Lewis, Ted Ross and Ed Foster at Ted Ross and Kathie Ayres plant rescue.

Our chapter hasn't had a formal plant rescue for some time. Then October 2015 came and there were three. The first was at the beautifully oak-shaded home of long-time members Ted Ross and Kathie Ayres. The home is for sale, so members were invited to extract woodland plants while leaving plenty for the new homeowners to enjoy. Small pagoda dogwood and witch hazel trees, along with many species of woodland forbs, have now found homes in new landscapes.



Wild One Sharon Wegler at NorthPointe

The next rescue was an opportunity for members to rescue prairie plants while educating non-members about natural landscaping. A new addition to the NorthPointe Health and Wellness facility in Roscoe will impact the prairie planting on one part of the large campus. The rescue was open to members and employees of NorthPointe along with members of Wild Ones. We had a crew of volunteers to help others with plant identification and to share



Wild Ones Cathy Johnson and Karen Matz at NorthPointe

information about Wild Ones. Ed Kletecka, Cathy Johnson, Tim Lewis, and Sharon Wegler helped in this effort.



Richard & Susan McMullen with a truck full of prairie plants from Chris & Diane Knight's yard at our 3rd rescue.

The third rescue was at the home of Diane and Chris Knight in Roscoe. They allowed us to rescue prairie plants from their yard the same day they were moving to Indianapolis. Their diverse natural landscape held a long list of colorful prairie forbs, grasses, and shrubs.

Thank you to NorthPointe, Ted and Kathie, and Diane and Chris for allowing us to gather up some incredible plants, and thank you for nurturing valuable ecosystems for all these years.

Membership Update

Shey Lowman, Membership Co-Chair

A membership e-form and our membership brochure describing the benefits of membership are both available on the chapter website (www.wildonesrrvc.org). Click on **Join/Renew** under the **Membership** tab. You can renew (or join) with any major credit card through PayPal (no PayPal account required) by using our website. Go ahead and rack up your rewards points and we all win. We appreciate your support!

218 memberships as of October 23, 2015

Welcome our new members!

Kathy Andersen, Rockford, IL
David Olson, Rockford, IL

New members are identified with a green ribbon on their meeting name badges. Please introduce yourself to them and help us welcome all new members to our great chapter!

66 attended the October meeting, including 7 guests.

A big thank you to our October meeting volunteers!

Greeters: Marilyn Heneghan, Janaan Lewis, Pat Rooney

Refreshments: Anita Johnson, Cynthia Nelson

AV/sound equipment: Bob Arevalo

Meeting recap for the newsletter: Cathy Johnson

Photographer: Pat Hollingsworth

Library assistants: Cathy Johnson, Judy Letourneau

Anniversaries

Congratulations to this month's loyal members!

15 Years

Vicky Golterman, Belvidere, IL

10 Years

Kent & Kathy Lawrence,
KMC Nature Conservancy, Oregon, IL

5 Years

Steve Litteral, Tinker Cottage & Museum, Rockford, IL



2015 Chapter Programs and Events

November 19
6:00-8:00 pm

Potluck and Seed Exchange
Members only: All members welcome
with or without seeds.
Bring a dish to share.

Unitarian Universalist Church of Rockford,
4848 Turner Street,
Rockford, 61107

December

No Meeting-Happy Holidays!

Unless noted, programs are free and open to the public. Programs are subject to change.
Please contact Jamie Johannsen 815-494-6977 for more information.



NATIVE PLANTS. NATURAL LANDSCAPES

ROCK RIVER VALLEY

ROCK RIVER VALLEY CHAPTER NEWSLETTER

c/o Pambi Camacho
1643 N. Alpine Rd., Suite 104
PMB 233
Rockford, IL 61107

Don't become extinct!

If the expiration date on the mailing label is **11/1/2015**, 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:

Wild Ones Rock River Valley
1643 N. Alpine Rd., Suite 104
PMB 233
Rockford, IL 61107

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Wild Ones - Rock River Valley Chapter

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Regular meetings are held the third Thursday of the month at 7:00 p.m. at Rock Valley College/Woodward Technology Center, WTC, 3301 North Mulford Road, Rockford, IL 61114. *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 Memberships: Household \$37, Associate (limited income/full-time student) \$20, Affiliate Non-Profit Organization or Educator \$90, Business \$250. Your entire membership contribution is tax deductible. Contact Membership Co-Chairs for additional information or to join.

815-627-0344 • Join online with any major credit card at 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.