

**Promoting Native Plants for Natural Landscapes.**

Inside this Issue:

Message from the	2
Call for Volunteers Co-President	2
Boone Co. Master Naturalist Training	3
January Meeting Recap	3-4
Membership	5
Chapter Calendar	5
Chapter Contact Information	6



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All articles for the March 2017 newsletter, must be submitted to:  
[Constance@wildonesrrvc.org](mailto:Constance@wildonesrrvc.org)  
by February 23, 2017.

*Spring Ephemeral Wildflowers of Illinois*  
*Thursday, February 16, 2017*

Location: Rock Valley College  
Physical Education Center PEC0110 (lower level)  
3301 North Mulford Road, Rockford, 61114

Time: 700 p.m.



Chris Benda will speak to the chapter this month about spring ephemeral wildflowers – a timely topic, with our chapter’s woodland plant sale just around the corner.

He is wrapping up his two-year term as state president of the Illinois Native Plant Society and this year will technically be past-president. He will still be the president of the southern chapter of INPS.

He is a botanist on his own (Illinois Botanizer) and works part-time at the Illinois Natural History Survey. He also teaches in the summer at Southern Illinois University

and throughout the year at The Morton Arboretum. He has a book about natural areas in southern Illinois in press with the University of Illinois Press. You can find more information on his website at [www.illinoisbotanizer.com](http://www.illinoisbotanizer.com).

This program is free and open to the public.  
For more information, call (815) 332.3343.

*Mentor Program Update* Melanie Costello

Recent warm January days and the resulting mud have reminded me that spring will be here before we know it! If you are like me, you’re probably already thinking about getting out this spring to prepare your yard and garden for the upcoming growing season. If you would like a little help in planning how to use more native plants in your yard this year, consider requesting a mentor from our Wild Ones chapter. Or, if you are more experienced, please consider being a mentor so that we can continue to

offer this great benefit!

Being a mentor involves a little time, just two or three yard visits over the growing season. Experience is certainly helpful, but you don’t have to be an expert! Just knowing who you can ask, can be extremely helpful. If you could benefit from a mentor, or if you could give a little time to be a mentor, please contact our chapter’s mentor program coordinator, Melanie Costello, at [melanie@wildonesrrvc.org](mailto:melanie@wildonesrrvc.org), or at (815) 751.1583.

## Message from the President Constance McCarthy



Constance McCarthy  
photo by Tim Lewis

My optimism for the chapter for 2017 continues to grow.

On Sunday, January 22 at the Rockton Historical Society Museum, 12 board members and coordinators met for the afternoon to plan events for the year and strategize ways to make this a banner year for the chapter. I am so fortunate to have such a dedicated and passionate board and coordinators

with whom to work! Many thanks to Mary Anne Mathwich for organizing the location for our annual planning retreat.

Some chapter doings about which I'm particularly excited:

You'll be hearing a lot about the *lecture and natural landscapes tour* that will take place during the second week of July, in lieu of our monthly program that normally takes place on the third Thursday of the month. The lecture will be on Thursday, July 13; the landscape tour (a self-guided tour, similar to a garden walk) will be Saturday and Sunday, July 15 and 16. More details to follow, but please mark your calendar and start spreading the word. The chapter organized a similar event back in 2014, and lessons learned from it will help to make this one even more successful. The event committee has been hard at work for some time already.

You might be wondering if this means that you'll miss out on the annual members-only social and yard tour that traditionally takes place every July. Fear not! This year, the social will shift to August, on the third Thursday of the month.

Our springtime *plant sales* have new coordinators this year who are enthusiastic and brimming with new ideas. Watch for your plant sale fliers (woodland and prairie), which will contain some new and interesting plants that haven't been offered for sale by us in the past (or were offered some time ago). In addition to ordering in advance, it will be possible to buy individual plants on the pick-up days in April and May. Individual plants will also be sold at Bird Fest (Mother's Day weekend), the Nicholas Conservatory (first weekend in May), and perhaps another event in Rockford.

Compared to last year, we received double the number of responses to the annual membership survey. I'm planning to stick with the switch back to the mailed hard-copy survey (rather than an online-only survey), as the more members who indicate an interest in volunteering, the easier it is for our chapter to continue to put on so many exceptional programs and events. Many thanks to all who returned their completed surveys! And if your survey is still sitting around at home, please consider still returning it, either in the envelope that came with the survey or by turning it in at the next meeting.

It's never too late to sign up to volunteer on behalf of the chapter. It's a great way to meet new, interesting folks, or to reconnect with old friends. Many hands make light work!

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## Call for Volunteers at Meetings

We are in need of some volunteers to help with our monthly meetings:

**Photo-takers:** I hesitate to say "photographers," as that term might scare off some folks. This involves taking a few pictures of the speaker, as well as of attendees before and/or after the meeting. You needn't have a sophisticated camera or advanced photography skills.

**Refreshments:** First, there is currently only one person who picks up the cookies and brings them to every meeting; she would like to have at least one other person with whom to share the task.

The cookies are picked up from the Schnuck's on East State Street in Rockford. Second, we need some additional folks to bring and set up the beverages (typically, two jugs of juice) at the refreshments table. You can turn in the receipt to be reimbursed by the chapter.

If you are interested in any of these opportunities, please contact Constance McCarthy at [Constance@wildonesrrvc.org](mailto:Constance@wildonesrrvc.org) or (815) 282.0316. You can sign up for a task for a single meeting or several meetings, as you like.

## Boone County Master Naturalist Training

The University of Illinois Extension Master Naturalist Program is designed for adults of all ages who desire the opportunity to learn about and positively impact our local environment. Master Naturalist trainees complete a minimum of 40 hours of field and classroom learning during the fall training period and then agree to complete 60 hours of volunteer service within two years to become a Certified Master Naturalist. To maintain certification, Master Naturalists must complete 30 hours of volunteer service and 10 hours of continuing education yearly.

Master Naturalist Training will be held again this

spring on Monday evenings from 5:00 to 9:00 p.m. beginning March 13 and ending May 22, 2017. The first class will be held at the Boone County Extension Office. The program fee is \$250, which covers the cost of the Master Naturalist manual and general program costs such as facility rental, instructor fees, supplies, handouts, and more.

If you are interested in registering, an application form is available at the website of the Boone County Extension office (<http://web.extension.illinois.edu/bdo>). For more information or if you have questions, contact Peggy Doty, Extension Educator, at (815) 732.2191 or [psdoty@illinois.edu](mailto:psdoty@illinois.edu).

## January Meeting Recap Constance McCarthy photo by Sallie Krebs

Ed Cope, of the Natural Land Institute and a member of our chapter's Program committee, presented his Amateur's Guide to Cleaning, Storing, and Germinating Native Seeds. He asked us not to be put off by his use of the word "amateur," as its Latin root refers to a person who does something for the sheer love of it.

While some might think of starting plants from seed as an activity for warmer weather, there is actually a lot that one can do during the winter to increase the chances of success with restoration projects. Much of the equipment that Ed uses to collect, process, and germinate seeds at NLI is homemade simply because these implements work well. Native seed collection is a relatively young field and there are few economic incentives for companies to involve themselves in seed collecting, processing, and sale. Furthermore, native seeds can be more challenging to deal with. Thus, those wishing to grow native plants from seed will be helped by a sense of resourcefulness. Most of the implements seen in Ed's presentation can be assembled relatively easily.



The three things that native seed needs to grow are soil, water, and removal of germination inhibitors. The latter term refers to chemical and/or physical barriers to germination.

The easiest thing to do after collecting seed is to separate the seed from any non-seed material. At NLI, Ed uses a hammer mill that grinds up the collected seed material. However, one can also use a brick to achieve a similar result. Be careful not to be too aggressive, as you don't want to damage or crush the seeds. After processing, Ed uses a brass soil sieve. While they are a bit pricey (\$50-75), he finds them to be very much worth it. For a more

## January Meeting Recap (cont'd)

economical method, you can build your own sieve using boards and window screen.

After the seed is cleaned, cool and dry storage is best. A good rule of thumb is that the temperature plus the humidity should equal around 100 – for example, storage at 47° and 53% humidity. If the storage area is too warm or too damp, seed viability can decline.

The failure of seed to germinate can be caused by problems with soil contact, viability, germination inhibitors, purity, and/or accuracy. Obviously, seed that is not in direct contact with the *soil* will not germinate. *Viability* problems can be caused if the seed became moldy while being stored, so that the embryo has rotted. Cleaning seed well alleviates this problem. Purity problems can arise if seed is unknowingly mixed with weed seeds that inhibit plant growth. Regarding accuracy, problems can arise, for example, if instead of 100% seed, what is being planted actually contains 20% chaff.

A big question is how to overcome germination inhibitors. Such inhibitors can be chemical or physical in nature. Chemical inhibitors can be overcome with stratification, a process that simulates winter conditions that the seed must go through before it will germinate. Physical inhibitors can be overcome with scarification or an acid treatment. Scarification refers to weakening, opening, or otherwise altering the coat of a seed. In nature, the acid treatment happens when, for example, a bird ingests a seed and the exterior of the seed is weakened as the seed works its way through the bird's digestive system.

In nature, some seed needs to experience fire or smoke treatment in order to germinate, as those processes cause chemical changes in the seed.

The Prairie Moon catalog is an excellent resource if you are wondering whether your seeds need stratification or scarification. Alas, there is no one-size-fits-all approach to germinating native seeds.

Ed gave a practical example of preparing the seed of the Eastern wahoo (*Euonymus atropurpureus*). The fruit is four-lobed, with each lobe containing a seed. After collecting, it is first necessary to remove the pericarp, which is the fleshy part surrounding the seed. If the pericarp is not removed, the seed will rot. Ed soaks the fruit in soapy water to help break down the berries so as to separate the pericarp from the seed. Next, scarification weakens the seed coat and allows for the imbibition

(absorption) of water. Stratification then helps to overcome embryonic dormancy in the seed.

It is important to properly prepare the seed bed.

If seed does not germinate within a few weeks, there are four main causes: depth (seed planted too deeply or too shallowly), water (too much or too little), temperature (many seeds germinate only once a threshold temperature has been passed), and light (some tiny seeds need light to germinate). Again, it is critical to research the needs of the particular seed you are planting.

Recently, Ed has grown four endangered plant species from seed by following these steps:

First, collect the seeds. Depending on the plant, this could be any time between mid-May and November. Many phones now have a GPS function that allows you to record the exact location where you are harvesting a particular seed. Seed should be collected when it is ripe but has not yet fallen off the plant. Ed suggests a general rule of collecting half the seed from a plant, and leaving the other half.

Once you are home with your seeds, put them on window screen racks to dry. To deter mold, place a fan underneath that gently blows on the seeds. It can take a few weeks for the seed to fully dry.

If you germinate seeds in a greenhouse, you should learn about the process that leads to the eventual transplanting outdoors. When a plant is around 6" tall, it is likely ready for transplanting. Don't forget to harden off the plants before putting them in the ground. A cold frame is one way to harden off plants.

Ed was asked how late in the season is it acceptable to transplant into the ground. Technically, this can be done any time before the first hard frost. However, some plants are more tolerant than others of not having a well-established root system before winter comes. Some plants, such as wetland plants, tend to root very quickly and can be more confidently transplanted late in the growing season.

Another question concerned ways to separate seeds from the pericarp (fruit or berry). In addition to soaking in soapy water, fermentation is another method. However, the process is very stinky.

Finally, when stratifying seed, do not place the seed in a freezer. The water in the seed will swell when it freezes and will damage the embryo.

## Membership Update Sallie Krebs, Membership Coordinator

A membership e-form and our membership brochure describing the benefits of membership are both available on the chapter website ([www.wildonesrrvc.org](http://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. We appreciate your support!!

### 205 memberships as of January 23, 2016

#### Special thanks to our members who made contributions above the basic \$37 dues!

Cynthia Chmell, Rockford, IL  
 Mike & Kathy Crandall, Winnebago, IL  
 Meryl Domina, DeKalb, IL  
 Ellwyn Englof, Rockford, IL  
 Frank & Karen Finch, Byron, IL  
 Janet Giesen, Sycamore, IL  
 Pat Hollingsworth, Paw Paw, IL  
 Kent & Kathy Lawrence, Oregon, IL  
 Karen Matz, DeKalb, IL  
 Randy & Jessie Mermel, Roscoe, IL  
 Howard Waitzkin & Mira Lee, Loves Park, IL

#### Welcome to our new members!

Lynn Berg  
 Loann Collier

*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!*

46 attended the January meeting, including at least 4 guests.

A big thank you to our January meeting volunteers!

*Greeter:* Deb Rogers

*Refreshments:* Khrista Miskell & Anita Johnson

*AV/Sound Equipment:* Bob Arevalo

*Meeting Recap:* Constance McCarthy

*Photographer:* Sallie Krebs

*Library Assistants:* Cathy Johnson

*Merchandise:* Cynthia Chmell

#### In Memoriam

In memory of the Wild Ones Rock River Valley Chapter members who died in 2016  
 Betty Edwards – Member 1998-2016  
 Susan Christensen – Member 2008-2016

**It is preferred that membership renewals be sent directly to the chapter** for quicker processing and to avoid delays in receiving your chapter newsletter. Remember that your dues include membership in both National Wild Ones and our chapter. Please use the address below:

Sallie Krebs  
 Wild Ones Rock River Valley  
 7492 Renfro Rd.  
 Cherry Valley, IL 61016

Your expiration date is on your chapter newsletter above your name on the label. You will be mailed a renewal reminder from the chapter two months prior to your expiration date with a completed membership form and return envelope for your convenience.

Twenty-five percent of all dues paid (about \$9.25 per membership) is returned to the chapter by National Wild Ones to support our chapter activities. National Wild Ones provides liability insurance for our meetings and events. All dues and donations are fully tax deductible.

Please send address and email address changes to the **Membership Coordinator:** Sallie Krebs Email: [skrebs@wildonesrrvc.org](mailto:skrebs@wildonesrrvc.org) or call (815) 540-4730 if you have any questions about membership.

Wild Ones Annual Memberships:

Household \$37, Associate (student, senior, disabled) \$20,

Affiliate Non-Profit Organization or Educator \$90, Business \$250.

Thank you for your continuing support!



## 2017 Chapter Programs and Events

**February 16**  
7:00 p.m.

Spring Ephemeral Wildflowers of Illinois

**Chris Benda**  
"The Illinois Botanizer"

Rock Valley College  
PE Center, PEC 0110  
(lower level)

**March 16**  
7:00 p.m.

Conducting a Woodland Prescribed Burn

**Russell Brunner**  
Byron Forest  
Preserve District

Rock Valley College  
PE Center, PEC 0110  
(lower level)

Unless noted, programs are free and open to the public. Programs are subject to change.  
 For more information, contact Bob Arevalo at (815) 332.3343



## 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 2 /1/2017, this is your last chapter newsletter and you have received your last Wild Ones *Journal* until you renew your membership. National Wild Ones drops expired memberships the first week of the expiration month, so please don't be late! See the *Membership Update* for renewal information.

Mail your renewal:

Sallie Krebs  
Wild Ones Rock River Valley  
7492 Renfro Rd.  
Cherry Valley, IL 61016

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED



## *Wild Ones Mission*

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

## *Rock River Valley Chapter Meetings*

Regular meetings are held the third Thursday of the month at 7:00 p.m. at Rock Valley College, Physical Education Center PEC0110 (lower level), 3301 North Mulford Road, Rockford, 61114.

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

## *Rock River Valley Chapter Board and Coordinators*

### Board

*President:* Constance McCarthy  
(815) 282.0316 [constance@wildonesrrvc.org](mailto:constance@wildonesrrvc.org)

*Vice President:* Jerry Paulson  
(815) 222.4414 [jerry@wildonesrrvc.org](mailto:jerry@wildonesrrvc.org)

*Secretary:* Cathy Johnson (815) 978.0865  
[cathy@wildonesrrvc.org](mailto:cathy@wildonesrrvc.org)

*Treasurer:* [vacant]

*At-Large:* Doreen O'Brien (815) 985.4064  
[doreen@wildonesrrvc.org](mailto:doreen@wildonesrrvc.org)

*At-Large:* Kim Lowman Vollmer  
(815) 397.6044 [kim@wildonesrrvc.org](mailto:kim@wildonesrrvc.org)

*Immediate Past Co-President:*  
Ginnie Watson (815) 398.0138  
[ginnie@wildonesrrvc.org](mailto:ginnie@wildonesrrvc.org)

### Coordinators

*Membership:* Sallie Krebs (815) 627.0343  
[membership@wildonesrrvc.org](mailto:membership@wildonesrrvc.org)

*Newsletter-Production:* Pambi Camacho  
(815) 332.7637 [pambi@wildonesrrvc.org](mailto:pambi@wildonesrrvc.org)

*Newsletter-Editorial:* Constance McCarthy  
(as to the left)

*Volunteers:* Khrista Miskell  
(815) 298.5449 [khrista@wildonesrrvc.org](mailto:khrista@wildonesrrvc.org)

*Woodland Plant Sale:* Jane & Evans  
(815) 399.3787 [rrvc.woodland@gmail.com](mailto:rrvc.woodland@gmail.com)

*Prairie Plant Sale:* Cynthia Chmell & Bobbie Lambiotte, (815) 969.7435 & (815) 398.6257

*Tree & Shrub Sale:* John Peterson  
(815) 979.8539 [john@wildonesrrvc.org](mailto:john@wildonesrrvc.org)

*Plant Rescues & Seed Collection:*  
Mary Anne Mathwich (815) 721.5187  
[maryanne@wildonesrrvc.org](mailto:maryanne@wildonesrrvc.org)

*Programs:* Bob Arevalo (815) 332.3343  
[bob@wildonesrrvc.org](mailto:bob@wildonesrrvc.org)

*Landscape Tour & Lecture:* Mary Anne Mathwich (as to the left)

*Youth Education & Grants:*  
Kim Lowman Vollmer (as to the left)

*Booth, FREC rep., website:* Tim Lewis  
(815) 874.3468 [tim@wildonesrrvc.org](mailto:tim@wildonesrrvc.org)

*Facebook:* Marilyn Heneghan  
(815) 389.7869 [marilyn@wildonesrrvc.org](mailto:marilyn@wildonesrrvc.org)

*Library:* Ginnie Watson (as to the left)

*Mentors:* Melanie Costello (815) 645.8430  
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*Merchandise:* Cynthia Chmell  
(815) 969.7435 [chmell@wildonesrrvc.org](mailto:chmell@wildonesrrvc.org)

*Publicity:* Doreen O'Brien (as above)