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RIVER CITY CHAPTER - GRAND RAPIDS, MI

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

For more information, please contact:

Amy – 616-308-8176 or president@rivercitywildones.org

May 21st Program: Blandford Wildflower Program

The wildflowers are blooming at Blandford Nature Center! One of our most popular speakers in the area, Dr. Mary Jane Dockery, will lead us on a floral adventure down the trails as we explore the many varieties of plants that can be found there. This is a very special place so even if we have missed some the blooms due to the early spring we received, there still will be plenty to see and learn.

We will meet in the parking lot at [Blandford Nature Center](#) and plan to begin promptly at 7 PM. The tour should take about 1.5 hours so if you have difficulty with standing

for periods of time, you may want to consider bringing along a small folding seat. Of course bug spray is a must and a camera and your Newcomb's I.D. manual may be helpful!

Immediately following the hike, refreshments will be available and we will also hold our annual native plant exchange. This gets bigger each year with more and more diversity in plants. It is a great way add to your garden and do not worry if you have none to bring, we all want to share our bounty with those who are just getting started! See you all on May 21!

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May 21st Plant Exchange — Rules of Etiquette

The purpose of the Plant Exchange is to foster natural landscaping with native plants. Please try to bring plants to share from your garden that you know to be true native species, please no invasive exotics!

Respect Plants— Plants may not get planted immediately, pot them up well so they can survive. **Please provide species labels** for the transplants or seeds you bring to share.

Respect Yourself— Just starting out? Don't have plants to bring? Of course you may still take plants! In fact, that is one of the main purposes of the Plant Exchange. We all had to get started somehow, and when native plants start doing really

well in your yard, bring some back to share. It is the "Plant It Forward" concept!

Respect Others— If there are only a few pots of a particular species, please take only one so that others have a chance to get one, too.



Spiderwort (Source: Michigan.gov)

River City Wild Ones News & Notes

March Program Recap

On March 19, 2012 the River City Wild Ones chapter was honored to have Holli Ward, owner of Michigan Butterflies, LLC and President of West Michigan Butterfly Association as our speaker. Holli operates Michigan Butterflies, LLC out of her home. Her business specializes in Monarch butterfly special event releases, butterfly gardening, and educational materials about Monarchs. To do all of this of course one has to have Monarch butterflies, and to have them one has to learn how to feed them, care for them and breed them. Holli does all this with the help of her able interns and a lot of enthusiasm.

Holli shared Monarch basics with us. The life cycle of the Monarch is ten weeks. The cycle begins with eggs deposited usually on the underside of a host plant, which hatch four days later into hungry caterpillars. The caterpillars eat and grow for ten to fourteen days, then form a chrysalis. The chrysalis is a beautiful green color with a gold ring near the top. After another two weeks the Monarch emerges and tries its wings for a few hours before it is ready for flight.

Male Monarchs can be identified by a thickening in one of the veins of the lower part of the wing that looks like a spot. The female lacks this.

Monarchs need nectar of course, but they also need a host plant for the larvae, and for the Monarch the favored plant is the milkweed. Holli described four kinds in some detail, Common

Milkweed, Swamp Milkweed, Tropical Milkweed and Butterfly Milkweed.

After a summer in the North, the fall migration begins. The newest generation of Monarchs is specialized for the migration. They are shaped a bit differently and live longer than the ten (10) weeks that is typical. They ride thermal currents to Mexico where they spend the winter sleeping. The process reverses in the spring. The specialized Monarchs begin the trip north in March, then die in April to be replaced by another generation which will continue the journey. It takes three (3) generations to make the trip north without the benefit of the thermal currents that facilitate the trip south. Last year one half of the Monarch population was lost in migration.

This summer Holli hopes to launch a local Monarch tagging program. Tiny stickers with an identification number and a contact phone number will be placed on the underside of the wings. The tags will not interfere with the Monarch's ability to fly. Holli hopes this program will help her to learn more about the flight patterns and range of the Monarch.

Visit Holli's website at www.michiganbutterflies.com. Contact Holli at Holli@michiganbutterflies.com.

by Betsy Ford



Holli Ward of Michigan Butterflies.

April Program Recap

Forty plus Wild Ones members were privileged to hear Mary Ann Menck speak at our April program. Mary Ann is the owner of Mary Ann's Michigan Trees and Shrubs, a business based in Paw Paw, Michigan which sells native plants to retail customers. Eleven years ago Mary Ann became one of the rare growers of native plants occupying a much needed niche in the retail market for people wanting to bring native Michigan plants to their environments. She specializes in trees and shrubs grown in pots which can be bought by walk-in customers, taken home and planted with minimal work by the client. Because of the scarcity of native plants Mary Ann also gets additional business from people all over the state and ships the plants where they are needed.

Mary Ann gave a brief history of how she got into the business of growing and selling the sought-after plants emphasizing again their importance to pollinators, birds and other animals. She then presented a list of twenty-five native plants she considers important additions to our own gardens. Some of the species she suggested include:

Pagoda Dogwood (*Cornus alternifolia*),
Nannyberry Viburnum (*Viburnum lentago*)
Spicebush (*Lindera benzoin*)
New Jersey Tea Shrub (*Ceanothus Americana*)
Bottlebrush Grass (*Elymus hytrix*)
New England Aster (*Aster novae-angliae*)
Thimbleweed (*Anemone cylindrica*)
Virgin's Bower (*Clematis virginiana*)

Even though Mary Ann is now in the process of selling her business, she will remain open until the business is sold. To see her current inventory of trees and shrubs, visit her website at: www.maryannstrees.com. We appreciate the work she has put forth impacting our environments and beautifying our state and wish her luck in selling her business. Hopefully it will remain in West Michigan so we may be able to purchase these important species!

by Barb Olson

Native Plant Demonstration Garden

Work has officially begun on phase one of the Native Plant Demonstration Garden located at 920 Cherry, SE in the East town neighborhood of Grand Rapids. River City Wild Ones is teaming up with Inner City Christian Federation (ICCF) to reconstruct a garden in order to showcase the beauty of native plants. Our mission is to help educate the public about the role of native plants as part of an Urban or Formal setting so that visitors may be inspired to plant natives at their own homes and businesses. So often we think of native plants within the context of a prairie or woodland environment, however the beauty and architectural form of native plants can also be captured within the framework of a formal community garden. This particular garden is visited by many people and includes special community events such as the *Grandtasia – 3d Mapping Event* held last March and the *Cherry Street Garden Summer Music Series* starting in June. Plant labels and identification signage will help to communicate the plant species and display the important role that native plants share within the environment as a whole.

Wild Ones members have the special opportunity to participate in the creation of this unique project. At our first work session in April, seven of us labored at removing many

existing garden plants such as spirea, barberry, daylilies, sedum, chrysanthemums, and cat mint to make room for the new flowering natives. Over 40 different species of native plants will be displayed in the garden when both phases of the garden are complete next year. Plants such as Culver's Root, False Sunflower, Meadowsweet, Blazing Star, and Swamp Rose Mallow are just a few of the plants planned to be installed in early June.

Many of the member nurseries of the Michigan Native Plant Producer's Association have graciously offered to donate plants for the garden. We would like to thank the following businesses for their outstanding generosity: Hidden Savanna Nursery, Sandhill Farms, Plaster Creek Stewards, Mary Ann's Michigan Trees, Wildtype, Designs by Nature, and Fen View Design, llc.

Visit our Blog at: www.ICCF-NativePlantGarden.blogspot.com for more information and to follow the progress of the garden implementation. Or join us at River City Wild Ones: www.RiverCityWildOnes.org to see how you may be able to participate.

By Mike Bruggink



Upcoming Events

Calvin College Native Plant Sale

Date: Sat., May 5th **Time:** 10 am—noon **Location:** Bunker Interpretive Center

Plan to stop by Calvin's 7th Annual Native Plant Sale for a great selection of native plants. Visit the [website](#) for more information and an updated plant list.

Kent Conservation District Annual Plant Sale and Workshop

Date: Sat., May 12th **Time:** 8 am—1 pm **Location:** 3260 Eagle Park Drive, GR 49525

Please click on the [link](#) here to download the [KCD Native Plant Order form](#). Orders are due to the office by MAY 5 and pickup date will be MAY 12 from 8am-1pm at our office. Vern Stephens, our grower, will also hold a workshop on May 9 from 6-8pm if you would like to learn more about Landscaping with Native Michigan Plants. Please call the office to register. Cost is \$5 and refreshments will be served. Please email the Kent Conservation District with requests or comments, or call 942.4111 x 4

A Wee Wild One



The youngest RCWO member, Gabrielle Elyse, was born on March 10th to newsletter editor, Rachel Ford. She is super cuddly and loves to be held—and her mom is getting good at typing one-handed!

Volunteer Opportunity: Marywood Prairie

Many marvelous native plants have begun their springtime growth (and so too have the too aggressive plants!) Some of the seeds that were planted at the Wild Ones workshop late last fall are beginning to peak their heads as well.

The Prairie sub-committee is in the process of preparing the ground around the perimeter of the prairie for paper and wood chips so that it will blend with the rest of the campus. Here are the tasks that are planned for work-bee days:

- Laying and cutting 35 inch wide paper around the perimeter of the prairie.
- Using a pitch fork to move woodchips from the pile into the wheelbarrows.
- Pushing wheelbarrows of chips to appropriate locations around the prairie's edge.

- Spreading the chips on the paper.
- Raking chips that may have fallen into the grass.

If you have your own tools to use, that would be beneficial. Should it rain, we will postpone the effort. She needs to know approximately how many volunteers to expect so please RSVP to Sister Lucille: Work: 301-1335 or Cell: 558-4915 or mljanowiak@earthlink.net. The Marywood Prairie is located at the intersection of Lakeside and Fulton in GR.

The work days are scheduled for:

Monday, May 7, from 9 AM to 12 noon

Monday, May 7, from 6:30 PM to 8:30 PM

Tuesday, May 8, from 6:30 to 8:30 PM

Thank you in advance for whatever assistance you can give!

Natives to Know: American Spicebush (*Lindera bezoin*)

Consider spicing up your landscape with native American Spicebush, and you can spice up your morning tea as well.

A deciduous shrub, Spicebush is a member of the laurel family. It grows 6-12 foot tall, has many trunks, and spreads by roots. The leaves are dark green, oval-shaped with smooth edges, and grow up to 5 inches long; although the leaves next to fruits on second-year wood are smaller and rounder. In autumn, the leaves turn a pretty golden yellow.

Spicebush has been called the "Forsythia of the Wilds," because of its clusters of tiny greenish-yellow flowers that bloom along the branches in early spring before leaves emerge, giving a yellow tinge to many low woodland forests. Spicebush is a dioecious plant (separate male and female plants), with the male flowers being larger and showier than the female. The flowers of female plants give way to bright red drupes, up to 1/2" long, which mature and are very attractive in fall, although largely hidden until the leaves drop.

Crush or scratch any part of a Spicebush plant to release its spicy-lemony fragrance that has been compared to Allspice. In fact, Spicebush has been used to flavor tea, pastries, jams, main courses, and even perfumes. American settlers used the dried bark in place of cinnamon. Native Americans used various parts of the plant for medicinal purposes. The drupes are the spiciest part of the

plant, but even the clusters of tiny flowers will scent the air in spring.

In the wild, Spicebush is often an understory plant found in damp, partially shaded woodland areas and along streams. For early pioneers, it was a sign of rich fertile soil for farming. In spring, the flowers are an excellent source of nectar for butterflies and other native pollinators. In particular, Spicebush is an important host to butterflies in the swallowtail family, especially the Spicebush Swallowtail and the eastern tiger Swallowtail. The ripe red drupes are one of the best sources of energy for long distance migratory birds in fall. Throughout the year, this bush provides nesting for birds and cover for rabbit, chipmunks, and small mammals.

Spicebush is easy to grow, well-suited to those shady, wet areas where other more traditional landscape shrubs often fail. It is excellent for shrub borders, moist areas along streams or ponds, or woodland gardens with naturalized plantings. While preferring moist sandy loam soils, it will adapt reasonably well to drier soils in sunny locations where its growth will be denser. The fibrous root system transplants easily, helped along by copious amounts of water. Spicebush is deer resistant and suffers from no serious insect or disease problems.

By Joyce Tuharsky



American Spicebush
(photo: wildflower.org)

More American Spicebush

More information and photos on Ferns available at:

<http://www.fcps.edu/islandcreeks/ecology/spicebush.htm>

<http://ohiodnr.com/forestry/trees/spicebush/tabid/5419/Default.aspx>

<http://www.grit.com/Property/American-Spicebush.aspx>