



# Wild Ones®

NATIVE PLANTS, NATURAL LANDSCAPES

RIVER CITY CHAPTER - GRAND RAPIDS, MI

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*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](mailto:president@rivercitywildones.org)

## February 20th Program: A Showing of the Short Film. "Green Fire—Aldo Leopold and a Land Ethic for Our Time"

**Time: 7 PM**

**Place: Bunker Interpretive Center, Calvin College Ecosystem Preserve, 1750 East Beltline Ave SE, Grand Rapids**

Members and non-members are invited to enjoy this enlightening and beautifully produced film which explores the life and legacy of famed conservationist Aldo Leopold and the many ways his land ethic philosophy lives on in the work of people and organizations all over the country today. The film shares highlights from Leopold's life and extraordinary career, explaining how he shaped conservation and the modern environmental movement.

This first program of 2012 will also provide us an opportunity to view the brief educational video produced by the GVSU film class students specifically for our chapter. You may see yourself in this film!

We will also take some time to update you on our activities of 2011 and discuss, as a group, our thoughts about the direction we want to pursue for the coming year in regards to programs and projects. Please join us for a fun and informative night of popcorn, movies and exchange of ideas!

Check out the RCWO 2012 Schedule of Programs that has been listed on our website: [www.rivercitywildones.org](http://www.rivercitywildones.org).

### Officers

President—Amy Heilman  
VP—Eileen Schmuker  
Membership—Ruth Oldenburg  
Outreach—Carol Phelps  
Treasurer—Nancy Hoover  
Secretary—Betsy Ford

### Planning Chairs

Garden Chair—Sue Bouchard  
Hospitality—Rhonda Reider, Gretchen Zuiderveen  
Newsletter—Rachel Ford  
Web—Roland Bouchard

### Advisory Board

Mark Fitzpatrick —Director  
Ada Parks and Recreation Dept.  
Julie Francke—Director of  
Horticultural Education—  
Frederik Meijer Gardens &  
Sculpture Park  
Steve Mueller—Environmental  
Education Consultant  
Patricia Pennell —  
Environmental Consultant,  
Photographer, Botanist, Eco-  
friendly Landscaper  
Rebecca Ling — Landscape  
Designer - River Maid Design,  
Environmental Law Investigator

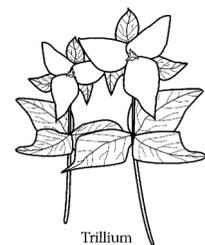
## News from National: Increase to Membership Dues

Despite their campaign success to increase membership numbers in 2011, national headquarters is having difficulty staying within the budget. Consequently, the board has approved the first dues increase since 2001 - effective March 1, 2012. The entire new dues structure will be detailed in the next issue of the Wild Ones Journal. Briefly, new Wild levels will be:

Individual or Household \$37  
Business \$250  
Non-profit Affiliate \$90

Professional/Educator \$90  
Limited Income/Student \$20  
Lifetime Membership \$1,500

The national board stresses that they will continue to live up to their pledge that no Wild Ones dues will be used to develop the WILD Center. Only grant funds and restricted donations have been used toward this effort.



## River City Wild Ones News & Notes

### *Where Did We Come From, Where Are We Going?*

Can you believe that our River City Chapter of Wild Ones is entering its 6th year in existence! Since many of our members have joined in the last year or two, I thought you might appreciate a brief history of our chapter's evolution.

In the summer of 2007, Carol Phelps initiated the process of forming a local chapter. To have a chapter chartered through national Wild Ones headquarters in Wisconsin, a group of at least 10 people had to be formed. With her usual enthusiasm and powers of persuasion, she gathered up the group of 10 members in no time, and they were off and running! With Carol as President, the chapter began to schedule some field trips and speakers. Word spread about this new group in Grand Rapids. In describing the group to others, folks would say, "I think it is called Wild Things...or...Wild Plant People ...or something like that!" Anyway, it sounded like an interesting group, it welcomed newcomers with open arms and it was a fun and informal way to learn about native plants and the importance of natural landscaping - so the word spread.

I learned about this organization in the spring of 2008 and attended a field trip to the property of member Gail Snow, where the group happily traipsed through woods, wetlands and fields to see what was growing there. We challenged each other to see who could identify various plants, asked questions of each other and generally shared all kinds of outdoor information. One of these members, JoAnn King, very generously handed me some native plants she had brought from her garden and said, "take them home and start planting, when you have enough, bring some back to share with other new folks." It did not take long for me to see that this was a special group that was much more than a typical garden club. This was a group that wanted to learn, grow and give back to the community and become stewards for the earth.

Before I knew it, I was appointed second VP to our first VP Rebecca Shilt (Ling) who was busily designing native gardens all around the area. Over the next year we developed a wonderful assortment of programs and membership began to grow - mainly due to word of mouth. By the end of 2009 we had outgrown our meeting site at Ada Park. We were fortunate to have an Advisory Board in place which offered us good advice on how to handle some of the challenges encountered as we grew. The Board was comprised of several professional people in the area: Mark Fitzpatrick; Ada Parks



*Carol Phelps at the Izak Walton League Festival in 2009.*

and Recreation Dept., Ginny Wanty; Kent/MSU Extension, Steve Mueller; speaker, naturalist, educator and Patricia Pennell; ecologist, landscape designer, speaker and Julie Francke; Education Coordinator at Meijer Gardens and Sculpture Park. We valued their input and experience then and still do today.

In 2010, Carol was elected to the national board of Wild Ones

so she could add her influence to the decision making at the top. Meanwhile, I stepped in to assume the role of President. With the wonderful encouragement and team effort of the board members; Sue Bouchard, Nancy Hoovler, Sue Osgood and Betsy Ford - we worked to lay a firm foundation for the chapter and developed partnerships with various environmental groups in the area. Public communication efforts were expanded as we staffed information tables and talked to citizens about the group. A chapter website was created thanks to Webmaster Ryan Bruneau and a beautiful e-newsletter was mailed out monthly with the help of member Rachel Ford. We found a spacious new facility at Calvin College Ecosystem Preserve to house our indoor programs as membership numbers quadrupled from the first year. The annual auction continued to raise funds to help cover the cost of materials to build our infrastructure (printing of brochures, event bookmarks, signs, display boards, portable microphone, speaker fees/gifts, facility rental, etc.)



*Touring Ranger Steve's Habitat in 2010.*

2011 brought in more new ideas, activities and people. Eileen Schmuker and Ruth Oldenburg graciously took on the roles of VP and Membership Chair and provided tremendous help in the area of public education. The "Look and Learn" tours were established so we could visit the gardens of various members to ask questions and offer support for each other's endeavor to naturalize our landscapes. An edu-

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### *Where Did We Come From, Where Are We Going? (cont'd)*

cation committee was formed thanks to Shannon Goodwin, Mike Bruggink and Joyce Tuharsky. Their combined effort helped to create several Power-Point programs that have been used for school talks on native plants and rain gardens. Our members offered volunteer assistance in the establishment and maintenance of several local natural areas and school garden projects. The publicizing of our organization has been enhanced by the formation of a public service announcement which plays periodically on a local radio station. In addition, a professionally produced video about the chapter was created which can be viewed on YouTube and on our website.



*Chris Baer leads a seed collection workshop in 2011.*

Now we have begun 2012 and the action continues; new Webmaster, Roland Bouchard, is in the process of enhancing the appearance and expanding the content of our website. Best of all we are now financially able to provide small grants and/or funding for local native garden projects or invasive species education in the area. We are being called upon more

and more to give talks, provide plants and offer advice in support of school and other programs. We, are gaining knowledge and experience as we become involved in this group. I have seen the level of inquiry and confidence grow among members over the past years and that is wonderful to witness.

So where do we go from here? Certainly we can take back to our own properties what we have learned and that is an excellent beginning. But I ask you to consider what MORE can we each do beyond our home gardens? We can always use more volunteers on various stewardship work within the chapter, as well as help with working with school groups or speaking to garden clubs or other groups who want to learn more about Wild Ones. Perhaps stepping in to fill an open officer position for a term? Fresh ideas and effort will help the chapter stay strong and vital - but it will take all of us to help sustain that. Douglas Tallamy said something in his book "Bringing Nature Home" which struck me as truth, "As you learn more - you care more...as you care more - you want to do more." I hope you all continue to learn, care and do more in 2012 and beyond!

- by Amy Heilman, RCWO President

### *Nominees Requested for RCWO Treasurer*

After 5 years of dedicated service as our Chapter's Treasurer, Nancy Hoovler is ready to take some time to enjoy her many other activities, including traveling with her husband who is retiring soon. Nancy has done a wonderful job and we will miss her efficient approach to our banking needs and honest feedback and experience on our board. A typical term for any officer is two years so the fact that she has stayed on five years is to be commended!

We need someone to fill this position by April. If you have someone you would like to nominate, that would be wonderful. Please contact Nancy (616-866-1303) if you would like to learn about the details of this position - but basically the duties are:

- Maintain depository accounts of Chapter.
- Make disbursements as required for conduct of chapter business.
- Maintain accounting of all income and expenses including annual report for national.
- Provide brief report at business meetings.
- Coordinate with Membership Chair on dues payments collected from members before they are forwarded on to national.

Please consider this an opportunity to assist our chapter. This position will also provide a chance for you to have more input into the decision making process. Nancy has graciously offered to help the new Treasurer as they learn the specifics of the role. Please submit any nominee names (you may nominate yourself) to any of the Officers via email or at our February 20th meeting.

[www.rivercitywildones.org](http://www.rivercitywildones.org)

### *Renew Membership Now and Save \$\$\$*

As of March 1, 2012 the Basically Wild Membership will increase from the yearly \$30 rate to \$37. However, if you renew your membership now or before March 1 you can renew at the 2011 individual/household rate of \$30. There are quite a few people who have memberships expiring in March and April so this is a chance to save a few dollars! Remember - when filling out the membership form - please be sure to check off the box that shows you belong to the GR chapter (River City) as a portion of your membership dollars will then be returned to our chapter account. Click [here](#) to link to the 'Join & Give' page on the national site ([www.wildones.org](http://www.wildones.org)) where you can renew your membership at last year's levels. Thanks!

## Project Update: Prairie Wolf Park

You may remember that last year our chapter members were excited to learn about a new project that member Mike Bruggink was spear-heading: the establishment of a prairie in Gaines Township at Prairie Wolf Park. The idea is to implement one new acre of prairie seeding per year until an eventual 11 acre site is in place where an old field now exists. Many of our members helped to collect seed or contributed seed from local spots for this project. Thanks to

everyone for your assistance with this educational project! Mike will again be asking for help in the months to come, possibly with spring burning, weed/invasives eradication or more seed collection - please consider helping at this lovely park - which now has the start of an actual prairie for which it is named! To see photos and get updates on the project, go to Mike's blog at:

<http://pwpprairie.blogspot.com/>



Planting Phase I of the Prairie this December. (Source: Mike's [blog](#)—go visit!)

## Upcoming Events

### Creating and Maintaining Amphibian and Reptile Habitats

**Date:** Sat., Feb 18th **Time:** 9 am—noon **Location:** Bunker Interpretive Center

Join us as naturalists and herpetologists teach us about Michigan's reptiles and amphibians and how to create and maintain their habitats. In preparation for the keynote address, Jeanette Henderson, naturalist, will start the morning off with a hands on lab introducing participants to the basic identification of these animals. This will be a great review for those of you who are familiar with these animals and a good introduction for those of you who are just being introduced to the subject. Keynote speaker, David Mifsud from Herpetological Resources and Management will then go in depth in a two hour workshop on the basic natural history and ecological needs of amphibians and reptiles in Michigan. We will approach this topic with an emphasis on both the site-specific and landscape scale needs for these species in habitat restoration and creation efforts. Topics will include the importance of slope, microtopography, predators and prey, habitat structure, refuge, nesting, breeding, immigration and migration, Best Development Practices (BDP), and various management techniques including mowing, herbiciding, prescribed burns, and subsidized predator control. Light refreshments provided.

Register by Wednesday, February 15 online at [www.StewardshipNetwork.org](http://www.StewardshipNetwork.org) or by calling the Stewardship Network office at (734) 996-3190. Cost: \$25 for SN members or \$30 for non-members. For directions visit: [www.calvin.edu/go/preserve](http://www.calvin.edu/go/preserve)

## 25th Annual Michigan Wildflower Conference

**Date:** Sun., Mar 4th and Mon., Mar 5th **Location:** Kellogg Conference Center, MSU

### Preserve the Legacy - Pass it on

The Michigan Wildflower Conference is designed for persons who are interested in Michigan native plants and their habitats. There will be general and concurrent sessions both days. Find an outline of the schedule, fees for the 2012 conference and registration form at [www.wildflowersmich.org](http://www.wildflowersmich.org). **PLEASE NOTE:** Walk-ins are welcome if you cannot meet the registration deadlines. Some topics to be covered in this year's conference include: Meadows in Urban & Suburban Spaces, Making Your Landscape More Native, Bees and Dead Wood: An Ancient Alliance, Butterfly Gardening with Native Plants, Trouble in Paradise: Are We Losing our Pollinators? Don't miss this great conference!

[www.rivercitywildones.org](http://www.rivercitywildones.org)



A Michigan Wood Frog (photo: State of Michigan, Department of Natural Resources—they have a great information resource for [Amphibians and Reptiles in Michigan](#) (and other wildlife) at [www.michigan.gov/dnr](http://www.michigan.gov/dnr))



## *Natives to Know: American Winterberry (Ilex verticillata)*

American Winterberry is a holly prized for its splash of bright color from densely packed, red berries loaded on slender twigs. When contrasted against white snow on a sunny day, it is one of the prettiest shrubs in winter.

Winterberry is native to eastern North America from Newfoundland west to Minnesota and south to Alabama. Therefore, it has acquired several common names including Black Alder, Inkberry, Possumhaw, Swamp Holly, and....Michigan Holly!

Like most hollies, Winterberries are dioecious, meaning that it has separate male and female plants. Only fertilized flowers on the female plants produce the attractive red berries (actually drupes, 6–8 mm in size). The plant blooms in early June. The flowers are small, 5 mm diameter, with 5-8 cream white petals and are not especially showy. The male flowers grow in clusters, while the female flowers grow solitary or in 2's or 3's. The male flowers are loaded with yellow anthers (pollen-bearing structures), while the female flowers have a distinct green miniature "knob" in the center (immature ovule).

The plant itself is a multi-stemmed shrub, 6' to 10' tall, which tends to sucker and form large oval clumps. In the summer, the dark green leaves are alternate, 1.5" to 3" long, elliptical with an acute apex and serrate leaf

margins. The leaves can vary from flat to shiny on the upper surface. Of the 400 species of hollies in the world, only about 30 are deciduous --and Winterberry is one of them, losing its leaves in the fall.

In the wild, Winterberry often occurs in low woods and along ponds and streams, but is also found on dry dunes and grassland. In wet sites, it will spread to form a dense thicket, while in dry soil it remains a tight shrub. In summer, Winterberry provides nesting and cover for wildlife and nectar for insects. In winter, the fruit are an important food resource for many bird species.

Winterberry seeds possess a dormancy period making germination tricky. An easier way to propagate the plant is to root early summer cuttings. Otherwise, this plant is easy to grow with few diseases or pests. Although acidic soils are optimal, the Winterberry will grow well in the average soil in full to part sun. Generally one male Winterberry is sufficient to pollinate 9-10 female plants. When using the branches covered with berries in floral arrangements, use dry (don't put in water) and they will keep for months indoors.

Warning: All hollies can be somewhat toxic if ingested. Small children are most vulnerable because of their small size and curiosity.

-by Joyce Tuharsky



American Winterberry  
(photo: wildflower.org)

### More American Winterberry

More information and photos on Ferns available at:

[http://hcs.osu.edu/hcs/tmi/plantlist/il lata.html](http://hcs.osu.edu/hcs/tmi/plantlist/il%20lata.html)

[http://www.wildflower.org/plants/result.php?id\\_plant=ILVE](http://www.wildflower.org/plants/result.php?id_plant=ILVE)

[http://www.abnativeplants.com/index.cfm?function=plants.plantdetail&plant\\_id=40](http://www.abnativeplants.com/index.cfm?function=plants.plantdetail&plant_id=40)

## *Picture This!*

Congratulations to our member, Deb Berndt, for winning the 2011 Wild Ones Photo Contest People's Choice Award. She won for her photo entitled "Swallowtail on Swamp Milkweed." She also placed first in the Pollinators category with the same photo. Ruth Oldenburg, our esteemed Membership Chair, won second place in the Scenery category for her photo "Eclectic Mix". Thank you both for providing us a glimpse into the wonderful world of natural landscaping!



*Swallowtail on Swamp Milkweed*  
by RCWO member, Deb Berndt.



*Eclectic Mix*  
by RCWO member, Ruth Oldenburg.