

*Promoting Native Plants for Natural Landscapes.*

Inside this Issue:

President's Message	2
Plant Sale Thank You	2
May Program Recap	4
Collecting Seeds	4
Membership	5
Chapter Contact Information	6

Follow us on Facebook and Instagram



[www.facebook.com/wildonesrockrivervalley](http://www.facebook.com/wildonesrockrivervalley)

@wild-ones-rrvc



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

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

All articles for the July 2023 newsletter, must be submitted to:  
[serendipitree@gmail.com](mailto:serendipitree@gmail.com)  
by June 21, 2023.

# Tying Home Landscapes to Greenways

Thursday, June 15, 2023

Time: 6:30 p.m.

Location: Cherry Valley Library  
755 East State Street,  
Cherry Valley, IL

Zoom Link on Web: [www.wildonesrrvc.org](http://www.wildonesrrvc.org)



Joel Neylon

As Wild Ones members, we know the importance of planting native vegetation to attract pollinators and birds. But, have you tried looking at your property as part of a larger greenway corridor? Joel Neylon will offer suggestions for how to go about selecting native plants that will help your home landscape fit into larger habitat corridors, the types of birdhouses you might want to put in, and logging the wildlife that you attract.

Joel Neylon is a Rockford resident. He is a wildlife surveyor specializing in bees, predominantly bumble bees, and birds. As a major reviewer of bees on iNaturalist.org, Joel has reviewed more than 200,000 identifications for others that post on this app. Joel is an avid birder, and currently works for the Boone County Conservation District, Rockford Park District, and Wild Birds Unlimited. Joel has also done private contracts performing wildlife surveys and database reviews, including the beespotter.org data base with the University of Illinois.

**NOTICE: June 15th meeting to start at 6:30 p.m.** The June 15th meeting and program will begin at 6:30 p.m. and will be both in-person and via Zoom. Visit our website for meeting Zoom link: [www.wildonesrrvc.org](http://www.wildonesrrvc.org). The meeting will be held at the Cherry Valley Public Library at 755 East State Street, Cherry Valley, IL 61016, located south of U.S. 20 By-pass on the east edge of Cherry Valley. For directions go to [www.cherryvalleylib.org](http://www.cherryvalleylib.org).

## *Message from the President* Jerry Paulson



**Jerry Paulson**

On May 18th we held our first in-person meeting for the year at the Cherry Valley Library. We've been welcomed to hold our monthly meetings at the library that planted hundreds of native prairie species in the flower beds next to the building in 2021 using plants from our native plant sale. It was great to see so many of the wildflowers blooming in the flower beds, and so many members!

Thank you to everyone who made this year's native

plant sale a great success. Despite the rain on Friday, and mud on Saturday, this was one of the best sales we've had! Much of the credit for the successful plant sale goes to Jane Evans, Janet Giesen and Cynthia Nelson, the sale coordinators. Many members helped with every aspect of the sale and bought plants to add to their yards, helping to expand native species for bees, birds and butterflies.

The next program will be held at Cherry Valley Library on June 15th starting at 6:30 p.m. Join us to enjoy the prairie plants in bloom and to see your Wild Ones friends.

## *Thank You for a Successful 2023 Spring Plant Sale* Janet Giesen

We have many people to thank for helping make our 2023 native plant sale a success. Our chapter is successful for a number of reasons, but the heart of the Rock River Valley Chapter could not beat without the dedication and hard work of our volunteers. A heartfelt thank you to our 30 volunteers who clocked in over 300 hours of hard work prior to and during the sale.

*Thank you,* to everyone who placed an order and purchased plants at the sale. Their support and interest in Wild Ones Rock River Valley Chapter helps us meet our mission which promotes environmentally sound landscaping practices to preserve biodiversity through the preservation, restoration, and establishment of native plant communities.

*Thank you,* Jerry Paulson, for once again allowing us to hold the plant sale at his lovely farm.

*Thank you,* to our plant sale committee. A huge THANK YOU, to Jane Evans, who worked tirelessly with the vendors to order the plants, took in and organized over 140 pre-orders, and arranged for the external sales at different locations across the region, which involved countless hours hauling trays of plants, caring for them at her home, and selling plants at the events. Thank you, Janet Giesen, who created the plant sale brochure and helped to orchestrate the sale. Thank you, Ginnie Watson, for making the lovely and informative plant signs. Thank you, Cynthia Nelson, who contacted and organized the volunteers. Cynthia assured that we had enough volunteers to help before and during the sale.

*Thank you,* to our vendors who provided healthy and beautiful native plants. They work hard, beginning at the end of the year, to grow local ecotype native plant

species that thrive in our region.

The weather during the days prior to the sale was wonderful and allowed us to organize the plants in record time.

Thursday, May 11 was the busiest day of the sale. Watching people dash back and forth from their cars to the barn and to the tent

in the rain is a testament to the passion that we all share for native plants! We sold over 6,000 plants at our regular sale, at Nicholas Conservatory on Mother's Day weekend, Pelican Fest in Rockton on May 20, and Klehm Garden Fair Weekend on June 3 and 4.

Pre-order customers came from close to 40 cities and towns across the region, with most coming from Rockford (44), Belvidere (10), and Roscoe (9). Customers also traveled from as far as Cedar Rapids, IA (209 miles), Iowa City, IA (184 miles), Aurora (79 miles), Westmont (78 miles), and Stockton (72 miles). We are making a difference in three states and several counties across the region!

We'd appreciate your feedback. Please consider sending us your thoughts about the native plant sale; what you liked about it, what improvements could be made, or just some comments that you'd like to share. Your input will help us plan future sales. Send your thoughts and suggestions to Janet Giesen at [janetgiesen@gmail.com](mailto:janetgiesen@gmail.com).



**Photo by Janet Giesen**

# Gardening with Grasses: Native Grasses for the Home Landscape

## May Meeting Recap by Linda Ricker



Our speaker for our first in-person meeting on 2023 was Erin Garrett, Natural Resources, Environment, and Energy Educator from Illinois Extension. Erin serves in our state's southernmost counties, near Metropolis, Illinois, home of Superman. Erin is a super presenter who delivers adult and youth programming to help them develop an appreciation

for natural resources and empowers them to make small changes to positively impact our environment. She focuses on how homeowners can consider choosing native plants to replace non-natives in order to support pollinators, identify native grasses, as well as invasive species, and to develop an appreciation for prairie ecosystems in the Prairie State.

Erin told us about using native grasses. She indicated that native grasses have many benefits, including being perennials, which means no annual replanting, having a variety of beautifully colored and varied seed heads and foliage, and having a "bunching" form, as opposed to spreading all over your yard. They also feature a variety of fall colors and winter interest in the landscape, as well as providing movement and sound in the garden as the wind moves over and through them.

Besides all these benefits, grasses are an essential part of the ecology of an area as they provide food and habitat for insects and wildlife. Erin has some wonderful photographs of this in the video which you can view online at our website, [wildonesrrvc.org](https://wildonesrrvc.org), including some tree frogs clinging to grass stems. Most insects are 90% plant specific when it comes to acquiring food, and grasses provide meals for insects like beetles and moth larvae.

Erin also touched on using "Nativars", native species which have been artificially bred to capitalize on a variety of the plant's characteristics, such as leaf or seed head color, sterility to control the spread and various other aspects of the plants. However, she indicated, even small genetic changes from the native species can result in a pass given by the insects and/or wildlife when it comes to being a food or habitat source.

Sedges are another group of grass-like plants that

differ from grasses in that the cross-section of their stems is triangular, which is a great way to identify if you have grass or a sedge in your yard. Many of these are used in shady and or damp areas in place of grasses.

Native grasses to purchase for your landscape can be found in various places, including local native plant nurseries, such as those from which Wild Ones RRVC, obtains plants for our yearly sale. They can also often be found at farmers' markets, other plant sales, and online nurseries. A good source for locating plant is the Illinois Native Plants website, <https://illinoisplants.org/>, which list native plant sales.

Planting grasses can be done in several ways, from starting your own seeds, purchasing small pots from native plant sales or nurseries, or finding someone who wants to share from their already established plantings. It takes about 2 years to establish grass plants from a 2-4" potted plant. While seed is less expensive, it can also be less reliable, unless you can replicate the exact requirements each species needs to germinate. They can be planted in the spring or fall. Erin likes the fall planting better as the grass has cooler temperatures to become established before facing hot summer. You can still spring plant, just be sure to keep young plants well-watered, especially the first year.

Maintaining grasses is not a huge chore, since, if you're growing in a small home landscape you won't need to burn your "prairie", but merely cut back dead foliage to a few inches above the crown once a year. This is best done in spring, so that overwintering insect eggs have time to hatch, and you can see new growth beginning in the base of the crown.

Erin discussed thirteen different species of grasses she recommends for use in home landscapes including great photos, their heights, form, leaf and seed head color and shape, as well as soil and moisture conditions and which non-native grasses can be replaced by them to give a similar effect using a native grass instead. Some of the grasses she discussed included Panicums or Switchgrass, Big and Little bluestem grasses, Side oats grama, (a charming grass where the seed heads all hang to one side of the inflorescence), Indian grass, River oats, June grass, Purple love grass, as well as others. To learn the specifics of these grasses and what non-natives they can replace go to our website and click on the meetings tab, look for 2023 meetings and you can view Erin's entire presentation.



## Collecting Seeds of Native Plants **Kim Lowman Vollmer**

Collecting seeds from native plants can be very rewarding and educational, and can assist in preserving native species. Here is some helpful information so you can collect seeds from your native plants.

People collect seeds for many reasons. Many of us like to preserve native species so they don't become extinct. Sometimes I pick the seeds of aggressive or non-native plants so they don't multiply. Collecting seeds to plant saves you money as plants can be expensive. You also might wish to share your seeds with others, as we do at our annual November potluck and seed exchange program.

The window for seed collection of any particular species can vary and may range from only a few days to several weeks or longer. The seed head may produce hundreds of seeds or just a couple. Sometimes identifying the part of the seed head that is actually the seed can be tricky. Seed collection methods will vary depending on the species. It requires you to plan ahead and monitor for maturity. Remember, it is illegal to pick, or collect plants/seeds from parks, forest preserves, and other such lands.

You will need a variety of tools for seed collecting: gloves, garden scissors, hand nippers, markers, brown lunch bags, brown grocery bags, buckets, canvas totes or whatever works for you. Some folks tie a bucket or bag to their belt so that their hands are free to do the work. Use paper and not plastic bags if you will be storing them for any amount of time as plastic does not breath and the seeds could mold. Collection methods will vary depending on the size of the plant, stem hardness, size, if you collect the entire seed head or remove the viable seed parts in the field, weather, and more. Grass is often harvested by stripping (with your hand) or simply pulling the seeds off. Some plants are dry and brittle, so you can break off the seed heads. Experimentation will reveal the best method for you and the plants you work with.

It's important to store the seeds correctly or they will not be viable. Most people store each seed species separately. The containers should be labeled with common name, scientific name, date collected, and location collected. Overheating can kill seeds, and temperature fluctuation should be avoided if possible. High moisture content can cause mold and destroy the seeds. Prairie Moon Nursery states, "A good rule is the 100 rule of thumb, where the sum of temperature (degrees F) and relative humidity (%) does not exceed 100." Prairie Moon Nursery

is an excellent source of education to learn how to germinate seeds over the winter. They differentiate a dozen different ways to germinate seeds, from the hot water treatment to a cold, damp period. Google Prairie Moon Nursery and look up each plant on their web site to find its germination code. Using that germination code and the germination information they provide, you will know how to treat each species.

Below are species you can typically collect in June, along with any other species that appear ready.

Bellwort (*Uvularia grandiflora*)  
 Bloodroot (*Sanguinaria canadensis*)  
 Blue Cohosh (*Caulophyllum thalictroides*)  
 Dwarf Crested Iris (*Iris cristata*)  
 Heart-leaf Golden Alexander (*Zizia aptera*)  
 Hepatica (*Hepatica spp.*)  
 Ohio Spiderwort (*Tradescantia ohioensis*)  
 Pasque Flower (*Anemone patens*)  
 Prairie Phlox (*Phlox pilosa*)  
 Prairie Smoke (*Geum triflorum*)  
 Prairie Spiderwort (*Tradescantia bracteata*)  
 Prairie Violet (*Viola pedatifida*)  
 Spring Beauty (*Claytonia virginica*)  
 Toothwort (*Cardamine concatenate*)  
 Virginia Waterleaf (*Hydrophyllum virginianum*)  
 White Trout Lily (*Erythronium albidum*)

Additional Resources and References:

[https://www.fs.usda.gov/wildflowers/Native\\_Plant\\_Materials/developing/collecting.shtm](https://www.fs.usda.gov/wildflowers/Native_Plant_Materials/developing/collecting.shtm)

One book I found very helpful with this topic was, *The Prairie in Seed: Identifying Seed-Bearing Prairie Plants in the Upper Midwest*, by Dave Williams, 2016, University of Iowa Press.

Have fun and stay tuned for additional postings in upcoming newsletters!



**Spiderwort photo by Jessie Crow Mermel**

## *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!

### 186 memberships as of May 26, 2023

### Special thanks to our members who made contributions above the basic \$40 dues!

Perry & Debbie Gay, Rockford

### Welcome to our new member(s)!

Julie Bredlau, Belvidere

Marsha Cowan Hosfeld, Rockford

Sierra Hartman, Beloit WI

Dorothy Melquist, Caledonia

Kate Noreiko, DeKalb

*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!*

About 20 attended the May meeting

### A big thank you to our May meeting volunteers!

Janet Giesen

Linda Ricker

### Anniversaries:

5 Years:

Dennis McFall, Rockford

### It is preferred that renewal memberships be submitted through the Member Center online

rather than by check for quicker processing and to avoid delays in receiving your chapter newsletter. To renew your Wild Ones membership Log in or contact [support@wildones.org](mailto:support@wildones.org) for more information. Your expiration date is on your chapter newsletter above your name on the label. You will receive several emails from the Wild Ones national organization prior to your expiration date. If you want to join Wild Ones as a new member go to the Member Center. Remember that your dues include membership in both National Wild Ones and our chapter. If you need to mail a check, please use the address below:

### WILD ONES

ATTN: MEMBERSHIP

2285 BUTTE DES MORTS BEACH RD

NEENAH, WI 54912-1274

A portion of all dues paid 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: [membershipworrvc@gmail.com](mailto:membershipworrvc@gmail.com) or call (815) 540-4730 if you have any questions about membership. Wild Ones Annual Memberships: Household \$40,

Limited Income/Full-Time Student \$25,

Affiliate Non-Profit Organization \$90,

Business \$250.

Thank you for your continuing support!

**Get more involved with your  
Wild Ones Chapter!**  
We are looking for people to offer their talents  
and time with the following positions:

**President (in 2024)  
Treasurer  
Booth Coordinator**

**Mentor Coordinator  
Board Member-at-  
Large**



NATIVE PLANTS, NATURAL LANDSCAPES

## ROCK RIVER VALLEY

ROCK RIVER VALLEY CHAPTER NEWSLETTER

c/o Sallie Krebs

1643 N. Alpine Rd., Suite 104

PMB 233

Rockford, IL 61107

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

### *Don't become extinct!*

If the expiration date on the mailing label is 06/01/2023, 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.



### *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*

Our regular meetings are held on the third Thursday of the month. We are live streaming the programs over ZOOM and posting recordings on YouTube. Links to the meetings and programs are posted on our website and our Facebook page, and sent to members via email the week of the meeting. If you want to receive the link send an email to: [janetgiesen@gmail.com](mailto:janetgiesen@gmail.com).

### *Rock River Valley Chapter Board and Coordinators*

#### **BOARD**

*President:* Jerry Paulson

(815) 222.4414 [paulsonjerry@aol.com](mailto:paulsonjerry@aol.com)

*Vice President:* Linda Tabb Ricker (217)

649.3966 [greencreations.lejoi@gmail.com](mailto:greencreations.lejoi@gmail.com)

*Secretary:* Cathy Johnson (815) 978.0865

[catjohn\\_22@yahoo.com](mailto:catjohn_22@yahoo.com)

*Treasurer:* Janet Giesen (815) 762.5912

[janetgiesen@gmail.com](mailto:janetgiesen@gmail.com)

*Board members:*

Kim Lowman Vollmer (815) 397.6044

[kimlowvol@aol.com](mailto:kimlowvol@aol.com)

#### **APPOINTED COORDINATORS**

*Booth coordinator:* [open position]

*Facebook coordinator:* Dawn Skupien

(815) 262.7864 [dawnskupien@gmail.com](mailto:dawnskupien@gmail.com)

*Library coordinator:* Ginnie Watson

(815) 398.0138 [vswatson47@aol.com](mailto:vswatson47@aol.com)

*Membership coordinator:* Sallie Krebs

[membershipworrvc@gmail.com](mailto:membershipworrvc@gmail.com)

*Mentor coordinator:* [open position]

*Merchandise coordinator:* Cynthia Chmell

(815) 969.7435 [cynthiachmell@gmail.com](mailto:cynthiachmell@gmail.com)

*Native plant sale coordinators:* Janet Giesen (as to the left)

Jane Evans (815) 494.7731

Ginnie Watson (as above)

Cynthia Nelson [cnelson18@niu.edu](mailto:cnelson18@niu.edu)

*Newsletter editor-in-chief:* Jerry Paulson (as to the left)

*Newsletter editor and production:*

Jessie Crow Mermel (815) 955.0653

[serendipitree@gmail.com](mailto:serendipitree@gmail.com)

*Plant rescue/seeds coordinator:* Mary Anne

Mathwich (815) 721.5187 [mprairiedock@aol.com](mailto:mprairiedock@aol.com)

*Program coordinators:* Lisa Johnson (779) 537.8939

[lejohnson3804@outlook.com](mailto:lejohnson3804@outlook.com)

Mark Luthin (815) 543.7412

[m.luthin@comcast.net](mailto:m.luthin@comcast.net)

Linda Tabb Ricker (as to the left)

*Publicity coordinator:* Dawn Skupien (as to the left)

*Show Me/Help Me coordinator:*

Linda Tabb Ricker (as to the left)

*Tree & shrub sale coordinator:* Brian Hale

(815) 289.2384 [treeandshrubsale@gmail.com](mailto:treeandshrubsale@gmail.com)

*Volunteer coordinator:* Cynthia Nelson (as to the left)

*Website coordinator:* Janet Giesen (as to the left)

*Youth education & grants coordinator:* Kim Lowman Vollmer (as to the left)