

*Promoting Native
Plants for Natural
Landscapes.*

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information about
Rock River Valley
Wild Ones

www.wildonesrrvc.org

All articles for the
March 2024 newsletter, must
be submitted to:

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

by February 20, 2024.

EASING POLLUTION AND FLOODING AT HOME: HOW AND WHY TO BUILD A RAIN GARDEN WITH REBECCA OLSEN

Thursday, February 15, 2024

6:00 pm Social Time, 6:30 pm Program

**Cherry Valley Library
755 East State Street,
Cherry Valley, IL**

Zoom: <http://wildonesrrvc.org/>

***Pre-registration for Zoom now required.
See website for details.***



Rebecca Olsen

Everyone contributes a little bit to water pollution and flooding, and everyone can be part of the solution.

Home is a great place to start! Join us to learn how to plant a rain garden that will soak up stormwater and absorb the pollutants it carries while attracting birds and butterflies to your yard. Learn why rain gardens are an important addition to the suburban landscape and how to properly size, plant, and care for your rain garden. Included in the talk are local resources to get you started.

Rebecca has focused her career on land and water conservation and restoration in Northern Illinois and beyond. Rebecca's work protects, enhances, restores, and creates natural areas and encourages human interaction with nature in various ways. The projects that she develops and manages provide natural areas and stormwater filtration in rural and developed settings like river corridors, drainage systems, wetlands, parks and open spaces, and neighborhoods. These projects ensure many benefits to our communities, including open spaces for people to enjoy, habitat for wildlife, and areas to provide natural water filtration and prevent flooding.

Rebecca is the owner and president of Olson Ecological Solutions, LLC, a woman-owned consulting company founded in 2006 and co-owner of A3 Olson Ecological Joint Venture, LLC founded in 2021. Rebecca received her Master of Science in wildlife biology from Colorado State University. She moved to Rockford in 2000. She volunteers to serve her community as a member of the Land Conservation Committee for the Natural Land Institute and the Land Advisory Council for the Forest Preserves of Winnebago County.

This program is free and open to the public. Participants can attend in person at the Cherry Valley Public Library or attend via Zoom with prior registration.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT **Jerry Paulson**



Jerry Paulson

A record number of people turned out on a bitter cold night on January 18th to get their copies of Alan Branhagen's books on native plants signed by the author and

to hear him speak about using native plants in home landscapes. A set of Alan's two books, *The Midwest Native Plant Primer* and *Native Plants of the Midwest* were purchased by our chapter to give to the Cherry Valley Public Library and the Rockford Public Library. Both books are also available to borrow in our chapter library.

Copies of Alan's books can be ordered online from Amazon.com or from the Natural Land Institute at 815-964-6666.

Alan's program was a wonderful way to kick-off our 30th anniversary year. On July 20th we will celebrate getting our charter as a chapter of Wild Ones with a picnic and tour at the place where we started, Byron Forest Preserve's Jarrett Prairie Preserve. Lisa Johnson, who was working at the forest preserve district at the time and is a founding member of the chapter, will give us a history of the chapter followed by guided tours

of the prairie. A special reception and program by Benjamin Vogt, environmentalist and author, will be held on Saturday, October 19th in Rockford. Mark your calendars for these anniversary events.

Our native plant sale is coming up quickly. As always, many volunteers are needed during the week of the sale. Signup early to help with the sale by contacting Kim Lowman Vollmer, kimlowvol@aol.com. This is our biggest fundraising project of the year and introduces thousands of native plants into our landscape.

Watch your inbox for information on the plant sale that is coming out soon.

Several species of native trees and shrubs can be ordered from the Tree Sale of the Winnebago County Soil & Water Conservation District at <http://www.winnebagoswcd.org>. Orders are due by March 8th.



Chapter librarian Ginnie Watson presents Alan's books to the library.

IN MY YARD **Jane Evans**

What a welcome sight to see spring beauties come to life in mid spring and add a splash of color to our yards and woodland beds. With short-lived leaves and blooms, *Claytonia virginica* is a true ephemeral, and prefers dappled sun and rich organic soil. Its underground tubers were said to be used by Native Americans as food and medicine. Spring beauties grow to about 6 inches tall and the small blooms produce generous nectar and pollen. It is said to be visited by up to 23 species of bees and flies looking for food when not much else is available.



Spring beauties photo by Jane Evans

JANUARY MEETING RECAP **Jerry Paulson**

Looking Forward to a Livelier Landscape: Native Plant Landscapes, the Best is Yet to Come

Alan Branhagen, the new Executive Director of the Natural Land Institute, kicked off our monthly programs for 2024 with a spirited and informative presentation about how you can enrich your life by adding native plants to your home landscape, using his yard at his old home in Minneapolis for inspiration. Alan recently moved back to Rockford from Minneapolis where he was Director of Operations at the University of Minnesota Landscape Arboretum (one of America's largest public botanical gardens) where he managed horticulture, plant curation and natural resource management of the 1,200-acre site. He started his career as a planner and manager at the Forest Preserves of Winnebago County where he was part of the planning for Klehm Arboretum. He has degrees in Landscape Architecture from Iowa State University and Louisiana State University.

Alan suggested to “capture the spirit of your place” when starting out to plan what to plant in your yard. Find out what the natural vegetation of your property was—prairie, oak savanna, maple woods, or wetlands—then try to emulate that landscape with the species of plants that you choose. “Natural landscaping has to quickly evolve from a fad to a necessity if we want to sustain life as we know it,” Alan said. It is also important to ignore the myths that wild places are unsafe and full of vermin.

He also encouraged using the whole “planting pyramid” when laying out your landscape plan: shade trees, evergreens, shrubs, vines, perennials, ground covers and ephemerals. “After plants, insects run the world and it is important to provide them with the full spectrum of species to live on,” Alan explained. For example, there are 25 species of moths to every species of butterflies, and they need many different habitats to live.

Trees are the keystone species for many birds and insects, but it is important to match the right species to the soil conditions of your site. Bur oaks were probably the most common tree in our natural landscape, and they provide homes for hundreds of insects. But cottonwoods are also important, growing along our rivers and streams. They need a lot of room to grow, so don't plant one next to your house or in a small area. Birches and aspens are best when planted in groves, and always include

one or two of our only native evergreens, Eastern red cedar and white pine.

Alan also encouraged using native willows, plums, blackberries and other shrubs and vines that heal scarred ground and provide edible fruit. Vines, like Virginia creeper and wild grape can fit into small spaces and provide color and shade to a home landscape. Sedges, rushes, and grasses provide year-round cover and color. He also urged us to plant as many different species of asters and goldenrods as we can. “Asters and goldenrods help to heal the scabs on the landscape and there is one for every habitat,” he said. “The mints are great for pollinators, as are members of the carrot family.” Some of these rebels can become weedy, but they can be easily edited out of the garden. Every garden needs management, including natural gardens, so learn about how plants spread and natural succession.

Finally, he encouraged us to “leave the leaves and dead wood” in your flower beds. Many insects overwinter in the leaves or burrow into dead wood to lay their eggs. Some moths even eat dead leaves. “Twenty-five percent of all our biodiversity is tied to dead and rotting wood,” Alan said. “Learn where insects go in the winter, and don't clean up the debris.”

The whole program was recorded and can be viewed on YouTube at: <https://youtu.be/GwoC6u-tXak>

For all of our videos, please subscribe to our YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/@wildonesrrvcvideos6150>



Alan Branhagen signs books at the January meeting

2024 NATIVE PLANT SALE Janet Giesen

The Rock River Valley Chapter's 2024 Native Plant Sale is set for Thursday, May 9 (members only pick-up and sale), and the general public pick-up and sale on Friday, May 10, and Saturday, May 11. A large diversity of native herbaceous plants will be offered to help you create native habitats at home. Multiple milkweed species will be offered as well

as a great selection of woodland and prairie plant species that will attract pollinators and wildlife. The plants are grown from local seed sources from local nurseries. Look for more details on our website and in our newsletters. Please contact Janet Giesen if you have any questions about the sale at janetgiesen@gmail.com or 815-762-5912.

PLANT SALE VOLUNTEERS NEEDED Kim Lowman Vollmer

The plant sale is our big fundraiser and supports our programs, work we do and contributions to other like-minded organizations.

Volunteer tasks include:

- Organizing/sorting species
- Writing plant tags
- Placing ID tags in each of the plant containers
- Pulling customer pre-orders and making them ready for customer pickup
- Working with customers as they pick up their pre-orders
- Assisting customers as they select plants on sale dates
- Watering plants and tidying up the pickup location

The plant sale is a lot of fun meeting fellow members, learning about the plants and helping others--and no experience is needed!

Please email me with your name, phone number and email. Additionally, let me know which

days you would like to work, if you prefer morning, afternoon, or all day. As we get closer to the plant sale, we will firm up the times. Thank you!

Plant sale dates: May 9-11, 2024

Location: 4601 Paulson Rd., Caledonia IL, 61011

Contact Kim Lowman Vollmer: kimlowvol@aol.com 815-397-6044.



Plant Sale Volunteers

ROCK RIVER VALLEY CHAPTER WILD ONES MINI GRANT PROGRAM Kim Lowman Vollmer



Photo by Kim Lowman Vollmer

Our chapter offers small grants to nonprofits, schools, and community groups in our region to plant native plants, trees, and shrubs.

The grants are modeled after the National Wild Ones Seeds for Education (SFE) Grant Program which provides meaningful learning opportunities that connect youth to nature and the Wild Ones mission. The funds are used to acquire native plants for outdoor learning areas that engage youth directly

in planning, planting, and caring for native plant gardens.

Examples include:

- pollinator gardens
- rain gardens to improve water quality
- tallgrass prairies
- native plant monarch waystations featuring citizen science activities
- sensory and natural playgrounds

Learn more by clicking on the Resource/Mini Grant link on our website. Grant submissions are due by April 10, 2024 and pick up days are May 10-11, 2024.

If you have any questions, please contact Kim Lowman Vollmer, Board Member, Youth Education & Grant Chair at kimlowvol@aol.com, 815-397-6044.

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). 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!***

184 memberships as of January 23, 2024

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

Francie Barnes, Rockford

Thomas & Nancy Mangan, Clare

Welcome to our returning member(s)!

Colleen McDonald, Rockford

NEW LOGO MERCHANDISE AVAILABLE **Kim Lowman Vollmer**

It is finally here – new merchandise: stickers, magnets and clothing! There is a huge selection of clothing styles for men, women and youngsters (t-shirts, tanks, sweatshirts, jackets, long sleeve t-shirts, hoodies, onesies and more). You can select your color, pattern and size! Make it personal to fit your preference and styles. They make great gifts for



birthdays, Mother's Day, Father's Day or just because. Order with a friend and save on shipping.

To order go to the national web site: <https://wildones.org/> then to GET INVOLVED, then to STORE.

Happy shopping!

UPCOMING EVENTS

February 15 - How and Why to Build a Rain Garden with Rebecca Olsen

March 21 - Wildlife in Your Native Garden with Peggy Doty

July 20 - 30th Anniversary Member Picnic and Tour



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
Plant Sale Volunteers**

Contact Jerry Paulson to learn more and get involved: (815) 222.4414, paulsonjerry@aol.com



ROCK RIVER VALLEY CHAPTER NEWSLETTER

c/o Cathy Johnson
2205 S. Perryville Rd. PMB 191
Rockford, IL, 61108

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

DON'T BECOME EXTINCT!

If the expiration date on the mailing label is 02/01/2024, 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.

ROCK RIVER VALLEY CHAPTER BOARD AND COORDINATORS

BOARD

President: Jerry Paulson
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Board members:
Kim Lowman Vollmer (815) 397.6044
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Carrie Meyer (301) 466.8754
Cmeyer@gmu.edu

APPOINTED COORDINATORS

Booth coordinator: [open position]
Library coordinator: Ginnie Watson
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Membership coordinator: Sallie Krebs
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Tree & shrub sale coordinator: Brian Hale
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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)