

Promoting Native Plants for Natural Landscapes.

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All articles for the January 2017 newsletter, must be submitted to:
Constance@wildonesrrvc.org
by **November 23, 2016.**

Member Potluck and Seed Exchange
Thursday, November 17, 2016

NOTE: Different location: Unitarian Universalist Church of Rockford
4848 Turner Street
Rockford, 61107

NOTE: Different time: 6:00 to 8:00 p.m.

Typically, November has been the time for our member potluck, annual report from the board, and seed exchange. Our co-presidents will present their annual report. This will be a wonderful celebration of the various ways we have positively impacted our community and our environment throughout the past year.



Seed Exchange 2015 photo by John Peterson

Please note the **different location**. The UU Church is near the intersection of Alpine Road and East State Street in Rockford. Also note the **different time!** Come at 6:00 p.m. (or as close to that for working folks as you can) so we'll have time to eat, listen to the board report, and enjoy the program. *Bring your own eating utensils and a dish to pass.* Vegetarian lasagna and drinks will be provided.

Bring seeds to share during the exchange. Please put them in envelopes or baggies labeled with common name, scientific name (if you know it), and place of origin (e.g., Winnebago County, Wild Ones plant sale, or other source), and your name, in case anyone has questions, such as "how does the plant grow." For new members: We always have lots of seeds, and if you are new to this and don't have any seeds to share, you are still welcome to go home with some seeds! We want to share, as this increases the chances of more and more native plants growing far and wide.

If you are not a member yet, this is a great time to join and participate in one of our chapter's fun member benefits.

For more information, call (815) 332.3343.

Message from the Co-President **Ginnie Watson**



Ginnie Watson

photo by Tim Lewis

My four year tenure as co-president of our Wild Ones chapter has come to an end. The time seems to have passed so quickly and yet so much has happened. Let me reflect for a moment on some of the events of the last four years.

When I began as co-president, sharing duties with Bob Arevalo in 2013, we were still holding our monthly meetings at Burpee Museum of Natural

History. Our association with such an esteemed scientific organization was a good fit for us, but circumstances caused us to seek another site in 2014. Rock Valley College provided our new home and we again found ourselves connected to a highly respected organization whose mission of education closely allies with our own.

As it turned out, 2014 was a banner year for us. Having been chartered in 1994, our chapter celebrated its 20th anniversary with an incredibly successful lecture and landscape tour featuring author and lecturer Dr. Michael Jeffords. His program was followed by a self-guided tour of nine magnificent landscapes to demonstrate what Wild Ones is all about. As a result, we gained 50 new members and have maintained our membership at or about 215 ever since.

Twenty years of responsible leadership and excellent educational programs won us the

prestigious Atwood Award that year, as well. The festivities were held at Klehm Arboretum, with many Wild Ones members present to celebrate and share the fun. The following year, my co-president that year, Lenae Weichel, won the individual Atwood Award - as have many of our members in the past.

Because of our increased public recognition and our burgeoning membership, audiences for our monthly meetings increased and we were very glad to have moved to the more accommodating room in the Woodward Tech Center at Rock Valley College. Unfortunately, due to plans to update that building, we were moved, in 2016, to the Physical Education Center to room PEC 0110. Now, however, instead of two screens we have three screens with raised concert-style seating, so there isn't a bad seat in the house!

During the last four years, there have been terrific programs, amazing events, and increased participation by our membership and the community at large. The job of the president is not to do all of the above, but rather to simply keep the wheels on the bus while the leaders of the organization keep the bus moving forward and accomplish these feats.

I am the lucky one. For the past four years I have been privileged to work with a remarkable group of people who made all this happen - the men and women who make up the board and coordinators. These are the folks who are, as I have said many times, the heavy lifters, providing you with all the benefits of the finest chapter in the Wild Ones organization. Thank you all so very much!



Board of Directors in Action **Cathy Johnson, Secretary**

Highlights of activities of the Wild Ones Rock River Valley Chapter Board of Directors, as discussed at the October 20, 2016 meeting, include the following.

- Location and speaker, as well as sites for the 2017 Yard Tour have been determined.
- The annual tree and shrub plant sale has successfully completed.
- The chapter is actively looking for volunteers to help with various activities, including help with hospitality and refreshments at the monthly meetings.
- The annual members-only potluck and seed exchange will be at 6:00 p.m. on November 17 at the Unitarian Universalist Church in Rockford.

New Homes for Hundreds of Native Plants

**Mary Anne Mathwich,
Plant Rescue and Seed Collection Coordinator**

Hundreds of plants found new homes through three plant rescues and a number of plant share exchanges this year. Our first rescue was in May at Karen and Ben Gallagher’s home where shooting stars, prairie dropseed, and butterfly milkweed were some of the many great prairie species rescued. In June, Patti Lawrence of Machesney Park offered a rescue of a mix of woodland and prairie species, such as bottle and cream gentian, bloodroot, columbine, wild geranium, Solomon’s seal, and brown-eyed Susan. This October, Linda and Mark Winstead of Roscoe offered a rescue of prairie plants from their home landscape. This was a large site with rattlesnake master, three types of milkweed, wild petunia, prairie grasses, showy goldenrod, and so much more.

Plant rescues and plant shares are great Wild Ones member benefits. A huge thank you to the Gallaghers, the Winsteds and Patti Lawrence for their generosity in allowing Wild Ones members to receive plants that they had nurtured for so many years. Thank you also to everybody who brought plants to the plant shares at rescues and Show Me/Help Me events.



**Lynda Johnson and Melodee Reardon
at Winstead Rescue**



**Claudia Fleeman selects some share plants
while other Wild Ones rescue plants from the
Gallagher’s landscape.**

Illinois Monarch Butterfly Specialty License Plates

The state of Illinois will be offering monarch butterfly license plates. Fees for the specialty plates will support the Roadside Monarch Habitat Fund. Two thousand requests must be received before the specialty license plate is produced. There is a \$10 non-refundable fee required with the submission of your sign-up request. The sign-up form can be found at http://www.cyberdriveillinois.com/publications/pdf_publications/vsd702.pdf. Instructions for submitting a request are on the form.



October Meeting Recap Jerry Paulson

photos by Tim Lewis

Native Plants in the Home Landscape

The speaker at our October meeting provided a primer for the home gardener who is interested in using native plants in their yard. Jamie Ellis, a botanist and plant ecologist with the Illinois Natural History Survey and the Natural Areas Coordinator for the University of Illinois, provided many useful guidelines to make home yards and gardens an important part of the landscape.

Jamie is active with the Grand Prairie Friends, was the head of the Critical Trends Assessment Program for Illinois from 1997 to 2006, and now coordinates research, teaching, management, and protection for the University's 1,000 acres of natural areas. As head of the Critical Trends Assessment, he was able to see that our state's landscape is more than just corn and soybeans, and to learn about the biodiversity of Illinois.

The original landscape of the Prairie State was a mosaic of prairie, forest, and wetland. The geography, glacial history, topography, and climate created the Natural Divisions of Illinois, which determine what plants grew where. Based on the natural divisions, Illinois has 93 different habitat types or natural communities that support 54,000 species of plants and animals, including insects, with about 3,000 plants – approximately 1,275 of which are found in Winnebago County. The Rock River valley includes portions of three natural divisions: Northeastern Morainal (recent glacial deposits), Rock River Hill Country (older glacial deposits over bedrock covered with wind-blown silt), and Grand Prairie (glaciated area of northern Illinois dominated by tall grass prairie and wetlands).

So, what is a native plant? Around 2,000 species of plants in Illinois are native and 1,000 are non-native species. Some of the non-natives are native in other parts of North America, while most are exotic species imported from other continents. The definition of a native plant that Jamie uses is "a plant that develops, grows naturally, or has existed for many years in an area." Designation as a naturalized species does not mean that they are native. As examples, Jamie pointed to nodding onion, *Allium cernuum*, which is native in northeastern Illinois, but not the rest of the state. It is often planted in native gardens and restoration projects, but isn't native in the Rock River Valley. Another example is sweet gum, a tree that is native in the southern third of Illinois, but nevertheless commonly planted in other parts of the state.



Jamie quoted Douglas Tallamy, author of the popular book *Bringing Nature Home*, to highlight why native plants are important to use in the home landscape: "Much of our wildlife will not be able to survive unless food, shelter, and nest sites can be found in suburban areas." Plants are part of our ecosystem that we can manage by choosing what we put in our own yards.

Using native plants in your home landscape provides many benefits:

- Native plants contribute to conservation of local biodiversity.
- Native plants create habitat for insects, birds, and other wildlife.
- Native plants are locally adapted to the soils and climate of the area.
- Native plants reduce the use of chemicals, mowing, and watering.
- Native plants sequester carbon by pulling CO₂ out of the air and into the soil.
- Native landscapes offer opportunities for nature education.
- Native plants help to suppress weeds and invasive plants.
- Native plants add beauty to the landscape through all seasons.
- Native plants provide a sense of the ecology of

October Meeting Recap (cont'd)

place.

Jamie shared a quote from Lady Bird Johnson to elaborate on this last point: "Wherever I go in America, I like it when the land speaks its own language in its own regional landscape." To get started using native plants in your home landscape and garden, he outlined several steps to plan, plant, and maintain your native garden.

Make a plan

- First, set some goals for your landscape design based on what you have to start with, your budget, and what you want to accomplish.
- Make a site plan. You can get aerial maps of your lot or land from the county or Google Earth to use as a site map.
- What are the site conditions? Consider size, shape, sun/shade, soil, and drainage. Prairie plants need a lot of sunshine, while woodland wildflowers and ferns need shaded areas.
- Do your homework. Visit local natural areas to learn what plants grow where, consult wildflower guides and nursery catalogues, read books on gardening with native plants (our chapter's Library has several of these available for members to check out), talk to local experts on native plants, search the internet, and talk to friends and neighbors.
- Keep it simple, start small, and be patient.

A good reference guide recommended by Jamie is *Native Plants in the Home Landscape for the Upper Midwest*, by Keith Gerard Nowakowski and published by the University of Illinois Extension Service (Circular 1381). A copy of this guide is also available from our chapter's Library.

Jamie reminded that there are more than wildflowers to choose from when planning your natural garden. Consider native grasses and sedges, ferns, shrubs, and trees. When planning your garden, consider the height, color, blooming time, and growth habit of the species. You don't want to put in species that will grow too large for the space you have, crowd out other plants, or bloom all at the same time.

Also, think about providing a range of flowers and habitat for bees, butterflies, and other insects. Butterflies need both food plants for larvae and



nectar sources for adults, as well as places to overwinter. Bees need a variety of pollen sources and nest sites. Using native plants also cuts down on the use of pesticides that can kill bees and other pollinators. Four native plants that are good for bees are golden Alexanders (*Zizia* sp.), grey-headed coneflower (*Ratibida pinnata*), leadplant (*Amorpha canescens*), and purple prairie clover (*Petalostemum purpureum*).

Jamie shared photos of a number of prairie and woodland species that can be successfully used in the home garden. He encouraged homeowners to consider using some of the late-blooming woodland wildflowers, like elm-leaved goldenrod (*Solidago ulmifolia*) and great blue lobelia (*Lobelia siphilitica*). Native oaks are another valuable species to plant. Oaks provide a home for 570 butterflies and moths, which create caterpillars that birds feed to their chicks, according to Doug Tallamy.

Prepare the bed and maintain the planting

Jamie then walked us through the steps to prepare a good planting bed for your native garden. Making a weed-free bed is essential. You can use herbicide, wood chips, wet newspapers, black plastic, or other ways to kill turf and weeds. Avoid tilling or disturbing the soil in order to prevent weed seeds from sprouting. Put down 1-2 inches of clean mulch (compost, bark chips, nut shells, or straw), and place plants directly into the mulch, spaced about 1-2 feet apart. If direct seeding, prepare the bed, scatter the seed, and mulch with straw to suppress weeds. Maintenance is key to the long-term success of your native garden. Learn to recognize the weeds, and pull them out! Plan for burning or mowing the plants during dormant periods.

October Meeting Recap (cont'd)

He ended his useful and informative presentation by saying that natural landscapes and native gardens can look messy at first, but be tolerant and be proud of what you have done for biodiversity in your neighborhood.

Thank you Jamie for sharing your love and knowledge of native plants with us.

Create Wildlife-Friendly Spaces With Habitat Network

The Nature Conservancy and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology have launched Habitat Network, a free online citizen-science platform that invites people to map their outdoor space, share it with others, and learn more about supporting wildlife habitat and other natural functions in cities and towns across the country.

Forty million acres of U.S. land are covered by lawn – usually non-native grass that has minimal ecological function and costs property owners more than \$30 billion to maintain. Habitat Network offers alternative solutions for yards, parks, and other urban green spaces to support birds, pollinators, and other wildlife, as well as manage water resources and reduce the use of chemicals, (e.g., pesticides, fertilizers). Habitat Network can be used on properties of all sizes and types – from a backyard to a nature preserve.

A Habitat Network can help you:

- attract a variety of birds and wildlife to your home, school, or business;
- manage rainwater;
- help protect bees and other pollinators; and
- compare your map to other network members' and become inspired to add habitat features with the goal-setting tool that analyzes your map.

“Science shows us that small changes in the way properties are managed can make a huge impact towards improving our environment,” said Megan Whatton, project manager for Habitat Network at The Nature Conservancy.

The mapping tool is also a social network, inviting participants to share information and learn from their neighbors. And over time, the self-reported information from citizen scientists using the Habitat Network will provide data that can be used by the Nature Conservancy and the Cornell Lab to understand how much habitat exists in our cities and towns and what role that habitat can play in benefiting wildlife and humans.

The Habitat Network website, which builds on prior habitat programs at the Cornell Lab and the Nature Conservancy, already has 345,000 users – primarily in the United States – who have mapped more than 20,000 yards, gardens, and parks.

Go to <http://content.yardmap.org> to sign up for an account and get started mapping, sharing, and learning about sustainable practices that you can implement in yards, schoolyards, parks, and corporate campuses.



Many Thanks to Our Volunteer Mentors!

Every year, a few of our more experienced chapter members volunteer to help other members who don't feel quite as sure about how to best use native plants in their yard. This is one of the many benefits of membership in the Rock River Valley Chapter of Wild Ones. As the growing season is winding down and folks are getting ready to put their yards to rest for the winter, it is a great time say thanks to our mentors.

Being a mentor isn't challenging and really doesn't involve a huge time commitment; mentors visit their mentees' yards 2-3 times, providing advice and resources. While it doesn't seem like much, it can make a big difference to someone who is hesitant to make changes to his/her yard without having trusted information from those who have been doing this for a while.

So, thanks to all those who volunteered to serve as mentors this growing year. We could not offer this valuable program without your help! If you'd like to take advantage of the mentor program, please contact our mentor program coordinator, Melanie Costello, at melhhj1@hotmail.com. We are also always looking for members willing to give a little time as a mentor.

Membership Update Ginnie Watson, Interim 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!

214 memberships as of October 22, 2016

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

Pam Mott, Rockford, IL
Jean & Michael Maloney, Belvidere, IL

Welcome to our returning member!

Melodee Rearden

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!

54 attended the September meeting, including 11 guests

A big thank you to our September meeting volunteers!

Greeters: Marilyn & Don Heneghan
Refreshments: Khrista Miskell, Anita Johnson
AV/Sound Equipment: Bob Arevalo
Meeting Recap for the Newsletter: Jerry Paulson
Photographer: Tim Lewis
Library Assistants: Craig & Glenda Shaver

A special thank you to:

Ron Hendrickson for his donation toward future refreshments!

Anniversaries

5 years:

Joe Hemlock
Barbara Kober
Audrey Johnson

It is preferred that renewal memberships 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:

Wild Ones Rock River Valley Chapter
1643 N Alpine Rd Ste 104, PMB 233
Rockford, IL 61107-1464

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 at membership@wildonesrrvc.org. Email or call (815) 627-0343 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!



2016 Chapter Programs and Events

November 17
6:00-8:00 pm

Potluck, Seed Exchange & Annual Meeting-members only. All members welcome with or without seeds. Bring a dish to share.

Chapter Co-Presidents to present annual report

Unitarian Universalist Church of Rockford
4848 Turner Street
Rockford, IL 61107

December

No Meeting-Happy Holidays!

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



NATIVE PLANTS. NATURAL LANDSCAPES

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 **11/1/2016**, 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:

Wild Ones Rock River Valley
1643 N. Alpine Rd., Suite 104
PMB 233
Rockford, IL 61107

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

Co-Presidents: **Ginnie Watson**
(815) 398.0138 ginnie@wildonesrrvc.org

Constance McCarthy (815) 282.0316
constance@wildonesrrvc.org

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

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

Treasurer: **Janet Giesen** (815) 899.6139
janet@wildonesrrvc.org

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

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

Immediate Past President:
Lenae Weichel (815) 282.5482
lenaew@wildonesrrvc.org

Coordinators

Membership (interim): **Ginnie Watson** (as to the left)

Newsletter-Production: **Pambi Camacho**
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Newsletter-Editorial: **Constance McCarthy**
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(815) 963.2137 jodell@wildonesrrvc.org
marty@wildonesrrvc.org

Prairie Plant Sale: **Rick Freiman**
(815) 871.7424 rick@wildonesrrvc.org

Tree & Shrub Sale: **John Peterson**
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Plant Rescues & Seed Collection:
Mary Anne Mathwich (815) 721.5187
maryanne@wildonesrrvc.org

Programs: **Bob Arevelo** (815) 332.3343
bob@wildonesrrvc.org

Show Me/Help Me: **Claudia Fleeman**
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Youth Education & Grants:
Kim Lowman Vollmer (as above)

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

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

Library: **Ginnie Watson** (as above)

Mentors: **Melanie Costello** (815) 645.8430
melanie@wildonesrrvc.org

Merchandise: **Cynthia Chmell**
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Publicity: **Doreen O'Brien** (as above)

Meeting Recaps: **Pat Hollingsworth**
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