

***SEEDLINGS, the Newsletter
of Kalamazoo Area WILD ONES
Native Plants, Natural Landscapes***

What more substantial service to conservation
than to practice it on one's own land?
--Aldo Leopold



March-April, 2013—Contents

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Wild Ones Visit Jim Krause June 8

***Half Mile Farm Mixes Prairie, Beech-Maple Forest,
Hardwood Swamp, Plant Nursery, and Great Diversity***

PLEASE JOIN US FOR THIS YEAR'S WILD ONES VISIT TO A MEMBER'S LAND and projects, Jim Krause's Half-Mile Farm, a very diverse 32-acre property near Paw Paw. The tour, with Jim as our guide, will be Saturday, June 8, from 10 a.m to approximately 1 p.m. Here's Jim's own story of his love for the land and his adventures in preservation and restoration of a relatively undisturbed area.

◇ **The Story of Half-Mile Farm** ◇

Van Buren County, Alma Township
by Jim Krause

*Hope and the future for me are not in lawns and cultivated fields, not in towns and cities,
but in the impervious and quaking swamps. -- H. D. Thoreau, in Walking*

THE STORY OF OUR PROPERTY is one of love for the land, luck, and blazing impracticality. We purchased the initial 16 acres outside of Paw Paw in 2006. My wife fell in love with the house while I fell hard for the land surrounding the house. I knew with the first look that this property, a mix of upland and lowland, dry and wet features, would offer, if nothing else, boundless opportunity to tinker and get lost in land-based and fabulously expensive projects. I had been interested in conservation, wildlife habitat, and natural history my whole life and really connected with the native landscaping concept in the early 2000s.

I started, shortly after moving in, what was to become a life-long and often painfully obsessive mission: I was going to rehabilitate the disturbed areas and passionately steward the intact habitat found on the property. That started with clearing a one-acre sandy field behind the house that was strewn with building scrap, a burn pile, and A LOT of knapweed. The blistered adventures began as we hand seeded a high-grass "prairie" in 2007 and again 2008. Since then 1000s of native plants have been hand-planted in that sandbox of a field and other disturbed areas on the property. In a good year the Indian grass stands 7 feet! At the same time seemingly 1000s of pounds of autumn olive, honeysuckle, and knapweed have been pulled, cut, girdled, or composted. Mistakes, big and small, have been made and lessons learned (Lesson #1 WEAR GLOVES...ALWAYS). Challenges remain as I work to increase the diversity of the prairie and fight the invasives therein. It will surely and hopefully take a lifetime.

"Half-mile Farm" came to be when we had the opportunity to purchase an adjoining 16 acres of undeveloped woodland and swamp in 2011. Our financial advisor saw little long-term investment value. I saw it as a philosophical, not to mention literal, completion of my dream property and the opportunity to protect a rich, contiguous habitat from future fragmentation and development. He couldn't argue with that...primarily because he had no idea what I was talking about! We finally joined Wild Ones shortly after the purchase.

The resultant 32-acre property mixes shrub swamp, mesic beech-maple forest, hardwood swamp, and dry southern forest with diverse transition zones. With a few exceptions all of the southern Michigan tree and shrub species have been documented. In spring the swamp and vernal pools roar and swirl with frogs and salamanders. Cardinal flower blooms within sight of prickly pear in summer. Witch-hazel comes alive as the oaks and maples go to sleep in November. In winter coyotes chase voles, Christmas fern pokes green above the snow, and, as I'm writing this, a tree frog inexplicably chirps at 10°, promising Spring. Great diversity reigns here though obstacles persist as the scent of autumn olive swirls among our ghostly, beetle-scarred ashes.

State-listed rare species include red-shouldered hawks, eastern box turtles, and climbing fern. An interpretive trail and bluebird trail wind through the property connecting the varied habitats. Our rustic (amateur!) nursery produces roughly 1500 wildflower and grass plugs each year for on-site planting on the 2.5 -3 acres that I consider in need of intervention. Chickens peck and honeybees sting the author on rare occasion.

In keeping with the theme of impossible-to-complete projects, I have started botanizing the property with my two young sons, Grant and Gavin. A herbarium has been started to preserve, forever, a single specimen of every common species on the property (uncommon species, if collected at all, will go to the University of Michigan Herbarium at their discretion). The

intention is to document the flora of what will unfortunately be an ever rarer place: an undisturbed wilderness.

We think this is a special place and hope you will come out to see it, enjoy it, and offer suggestions.

I SUGGEST WEARING KNEE BOOTS or something similar as we may go into the swamp for the royal/cinnamon fern colonies and buttonbush pothole. Bug spray for a head net may also be advisable.

In the woods is perpetual youth. -R. W. Emerson, *Nature*

Directions

From M-43 (West Main): South on 30th St. past LeDucs blueberry store. Left on 40th Ave for half a country block. We are on the north side of road, 29312 40th Ave.

From Stadium (Red Arrow Highway): West on Stadium (Red Arrow Highway). North on 30th St. past Heritage Glen golf course for 1 mile. Right on 40th Ave.

From I-94. Mattawan exit, then north to Red Arrow Highway, then follow above directions. Parking at the house is limited. Park on 40th then walk up driveway.

Carpooling

For carpooling, Jim suggests meeting at the 9th St. end of the Meijer's parking lot on West Main, at about 9:30 a.m..

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Tom, Ruth, and Wild Ones Host 21st Annual Spring Plant Exchange: Find New Native Plants, New Friends

THE SPRING PLANT EXCHANGE that Nancy Small began in 1992 is now in its 21st year and has provided many hundreds of people with native plants and information about natural landscaping.

The exchange, on Sunday, May 19, from 1 to 5 p.m., will offer numerous plants from Tom and Ruth's gardens, as well as plants brought by other Wild Ones members and supporters. In keeping with the principles we've always emphasized, it's not necessary to bring a plant in order to take one; and no plants will be for sale.

We do ask that attenders should bring *only plants native to Michigan*; and all plants should be potted up carefully and identified with labels. If in doubt as to whether your plant is a native, call or e-mail to inquire; or simply bring yourself, to enjoy and celebrate.

There will be refreshments, and the house will be open for rest and conversation, and for shelter in the event of rain. As always, we proceed, rain or shine.

The location is 2502 Waite Ave., one block west of Oakland Drive and one block south of Winchell. We'll block off some space near the driveway so that you can drive up to drop off or pick up plants; but you may have to park some distance from the house.

Several members of Wild Ones will be available throughout the afternoon to answer questions and to help people set out the plants they bring and to choose appropriate plants to take home.

Milkweed seeds and seedlings will be available as part of the special “Wild for Monarchs” project of Kalamazoo Area Wild Ones, in cooperation with Wild Ones chapters throughout the nation and Monarch Watch, headquartered at University of Kansas (see the story about our project, elsewhere in this issue).

Copies of Nancy and Tom Small’s best-selling book *Using Native Plants to Restore Community in Southwest Michigan and Beyond* will be for sale for \$25.

Also available will be copies of the video, “*Gardening for Life*,” a documentary film of the Wild Ones conference that Nancy organized at the Kalamazoo Nature Center in 2008, and that featured an address by Professor Douglas Tallamy, author of *Bringing Nature Home*, plus a panel discussion that included Nancy. The special cost of the film is \$5, **or free to new members**.

All proceeds from the book and film go to the Nancy Small Memorial Fund, for environmental education and restoration. Donations to the fund are welcome.

The purpose of the Plant Exchange is to foster natural landscaping with native plants. Here’s a plant-exchange etiquette guide.

1. **Respect and Share with Others**

- If you see a special plant, but there are only 5, please don’t take 2. Ask the person who brought it, or one of the expert-looking folks hanging about, what the chances are of getting more.

2. **Respect Plants:** give them the best possible chance of survival

- Plants might not get planted immediately. Please pot them up carefully so they can survive.
- Don’t bring junk, which at a minimum includes non-native invasives.

3. **From Each Person According to Ability; To Each According to Need**

- Just starting out? Don’t have plants to bring? Of course you may take plants. In fact, that’s 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.

Don’t have plants but want to bring something? Some refreshments would be welcome.

If you’re not already a member of Wild Ones, please consider supporting our work by joining.

Please provide species labels for your plants.

For questions about the exchange or about native species, please call Tom at (269) 381-4946, or e-mail yard2prairie@gmail.com.

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Bring a Special Stone to Add to the “LIFE CAIRN” at the Plant Exchange, and Let Us Rededicate Ourselves to Restoring Life

On May 22, 2011, a group of people gathered on Mount Caburn, in East Sussex, England, to place the first stones of a “Life Cairn,” to commemorate and to mourn all the species, over the entire planet, driven to extinction by human violence, development, and carelessness. Since that time, many people have made the gentle climb up the mountain to place a stone, participate in a

ceremony, or simply to meditate, grieve for a particular species or all species, and dedicate themselves to preservation and restoration. Other, similar cairns are growing elsewhere in the world—a permanent and growing web of Life Cairns.

Tom and Ruth don't live on a mountain, but their house is near the highest point for three watersheds: Axtell Creek, Arcadia Creek, and Woods Lake. On May 19, 2013, the day of the 21th annual spring plant exchange, to observe the second anniversary of the first "Life Cairn," anyone who wishes to do so may bring a stone and continue to build the Life Cairn that we began last year here in Kalamazoo, in Ruth and Tom's front yard, easily visible and accessible from the street.

Please bring a stone from someplace familiar and important to you, preferably a small stone, preferably a light-colored one—one that will reflect light. At a couple of times during the plant exchange, those who wish to participate will gather to place their stones and observe a moment of silence, to honor those species vanished from the earth, those who are threatened with extinction, and those that we may yet be able to save through our dedication to restoration of species and habitats.

As Martin Prechtel said at the dedication of the first Life Cairn, "This is a time of turning grief into beauty and the harsh confusion of these times into a possibility of a flowering earth." We shall, with both the plant exchange and the establishing of a Life Cairn, participate in the grief, the turning, and the eternal hope of flowering.

If you don't attend the plant exchange or bring a stone, you will be welcome at any time to contribute a small stone to the cairn and to observe your own moment of silent remembrance.

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Join Some Work-and-Learn Planting Sessions with School Youngsters or Help Prepare for Plant Exchange

Friday, May 17, 10:30-12:30

Tom and Ruth's, 2502 Waite Ave., Kalamazoo

Help prepare for the Sunday, May 19, plant exchange: some clean-up and clearing away to do, some setting up, some digging and potting plants from Tom and Ruth's gardens.

Tuesday, May 21, 1-3 p.m.

Axtell Creek--Wild Ones native-planting projects at the corner of Crosstown and Howard

Work with youngsters from the Montessori School on Howard Street to do spring cleanup on the planting in front of the law office and to do some maintenance on last fall's new planting on the corner, just across Howard Street. We'll be adding some milkweeds to both plantings. Meet in the parking lot behind the law office, on Howard St.

Thursday, May 30, 1-3 p.m.

Axtell Creek—Wild Ones wetland plantings behind Paris Cleaners, near the corner of Crosstown and S. Westnedge

Again, work with the enthusiastic youngsters from Montessori School to do spring cleanup on the planting behind Paris Cleaners. We'll be adding some milkweeds, perhaps some other species as well.

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July 13 Field Trip Will Take Wild Ones to Augusta Floodplain Forest for Unusual Plant Communities, Dramatic Contrasts

By Paul Olexia

The Augusta Floodplain forest has been protected by The Nature Conservancy for over 20 years as an example of a type of ecological community representative of a riparian (floodplain) ecosystem that has not been heavily impacted by humans. But it is not entirely without impact since, among other things, it likely received some of the oil from the pipeline break upstream on the Kalamazoo River a few years ago. At the time of this writing (early May), most of the forest probably is under several inches, if not a foot or more, of water following the heavy rains we had in April. But it floods like that virtually every spring.

In the wetter parts of the year the soils tend to be saturated with water, limiting the amount of oxygen available for the growth of roots of most plants. While on the one hand this can limit the types of plants that can grow there, it permits plants that require relatively large amounts of water to grow. The flow of water during periods of flooding can remove soil and sometimes plants, carrying them farther downstream. But as the floodwaters recede, new depositions of silt (and other material) can accumulate on the surface of the remaining soil. Because of the addition of new sediments every year, these soils often are quite fertile.

If the soil were to remain saturated throughout the year, the result might well be a swamp or marsh. But drying and draining of the soil during the late spring and summer allows the establishment of trees with a density enough to form a complete canopy, consequently a forest.

However, some of the trees found in this system are not found frequently in other habitats.

Among the prevalent trees historically have been American elm, black ash (specifically), sycamore, and the very limited honey locust, which bears large distinctive thorns. Like other locust trees, honey locust is a member of the bean family, which we don't ordinarily think of as tree-like. Elm trees, of course, have been decimated over the past few decades by Dutch Elm Disease. And among the various species of ash trees, black ash is the favorite of the Emerald Ash Borer. So it will be interesting to see how the composition of this ecosystem changes over time.

Backwater (low-lying) areas contain water virtually throughout the growing season and often are surrounded by button bush. Slightly higher (and drier) sites are likely to contain spicebush. Slight undulations in the surface of the land can result in significant differences in soil moisture and the types of plants growing there. Some of the interesting herbaceous vegetation consists of wood-nettle, false nettle, and green dragon (which we found on a similar trip to the Galesburg floodplain a few years ago). Of course, there are likely to be patches of skunk cabbage, iris, and some "emergent aquatic plants" that like to have "their feet in the water" such as arrow arum, pickerel weed, and arrow leaf (Sagittaria).

One additional fascinating aspect of this particular site is an area within the floodplain forest that is slightly higher (perhaps no more than six inches to a foot) and drier. This area is

completely different biologically from the surroundings and forms an “island” of classic beech-maple forest with a totally different species composition. The transition from one forest type to the other is particularly dramatic and abrupt since it is almost instantaneous, like walking directly from the kitchen to an adjacent living room.

As interesting as this field trip has the potential to be, we may encounter some problems that would force us to make some changes. As of this writing, the land is owned by The Nature Conservancy. There has been, and continues to be, an inordinately long series of negotiations to transfer ownership to the Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy. So we don’t know at present who will own the forest at the time of the field trip. An additional complicating factor is that the site is “landlocked” by private lands on all but one side, which is bounded by the Kalamazoo River. So we may need to get permission from the “intervening” landowners to get access to the site since access from the river is an option that we are not prepared to pursue. If we are unable to negotiate the hurdles that lie before us, we may need to try to schedule an alternative trip. We will provide updates in the June and July *Seedlings* supplements and post final arrangements on our website (kalamazoowildones.org) a week or so before the date of the trip (July 13) as well as carpool information.

Assuming that the trip is possible, keep in mind that this is a floodplain. There may be some areas of standing water and there is likely to be some mud. I have been there many times without rubber boots, however, and have stayed dry, with the exception of one notable year earlier in the spring. This area obviously is damp, if not wet – good habitat for mosquitoes. So arm yourselves accordingly. But if we can make the arrangements, it will be an enjoyable and informative field trip.

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More Events of Interest to Wild Ones

Saturday, May 11, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Hidden Savanna Nursery, 100 N. Van Kal, Kalamazoo

Opening sales day at Hidden Savanna Nursery, our local source for native forbs and grasses. On subsequent sales days, Sundays, May 12 and 19, from noon to 4 p.m., and Saturdays, May 25, and June 1, 8, 15, and 22, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., there will be a Bring Back the Monarch table, with information and a free milkweed plant for every customer.

Saturday, May 18, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Van Buren Conservation District

2nd Annual Native Plant Palooza

1035 E. Michigan Ave., Paw Paw MI

Native Plant sale and Bring Back the Monarch display, with free milkweed seeds.

Saturday, May 18, 1 to 5 p.m.

Asylum Lake Preservation Association

The Gibbs House, 3403 Parkview Ave.

A CELEBRATION OF THE ASYLUM LAKE PRESERVE and those who have helped to preserve and appreciate it. Tours, displays, exhibits, dedication of a plaque in honor of Renay and Monty Piercey,

pioneers in the Asylum Lake Preservation Association's efforts to make Asylum Lake truly a preserve. There will be a "Bring Back the Monarch" exhibit table, with free milkweed seeds.

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News, Thanks, Requests, and Encouragements from Our Chapter President, Dave Wendling

The Kalamazoo Area Wild Ones has had a great start to 2013 with our two-year series on "Saving Native Plant Diversity." Our indoor programs on "Understanding Threats to Biodiversity" have been well attended with a series of great speakers: Binney Girdler, Dennis Woodland, David Karowe, and Tim Dickson. We thank them all. Now we move on with our outdoor programs, plant exchanges, and our many other activities for this year. See our newsletter "Seedlings" for continuing details. You can also go to our Webpage at www.kalamazoowildones.org or find us on Facebook at [KalamazooAreaWildOnes](https://www.facebook.com/KalamazooAreaWildOnes) to keep up with our activities.

I want to take this opportunity to thank Jim Krause for setting up and managing our Facebook page for us and now Jennifer Laforest for helping to post on Facebook. Facebook is a great way for us to share with each other what's going on with KAWO and what is happening on your property. See our photo album of spring wildflowers, follow our events, and keep up with other information that is of interest to our members.

I encourage you to send photos of your native plants or of the creatures using your plants. You can e-mail your photos to Jim at itchywool30@yahoo.com or to Jennifer at laforestj@wmwisp.net to have them posted on our page and put in our photo album. Make sure to give a brief description of what is on the photos and where you took them. Or you can also post comments or photos on your own when you go to our page. Make sure you "Like Us" on Facebook and keep up with what is happening with KAWO and its friends.

I have started doing Site Visits and hope that spring will really arrive and stick around so that I don't have to wear my winter coat to any more site visits. If you would like a Site Visit, contact me at davewndlng@aol.com or call 269-624-6946.

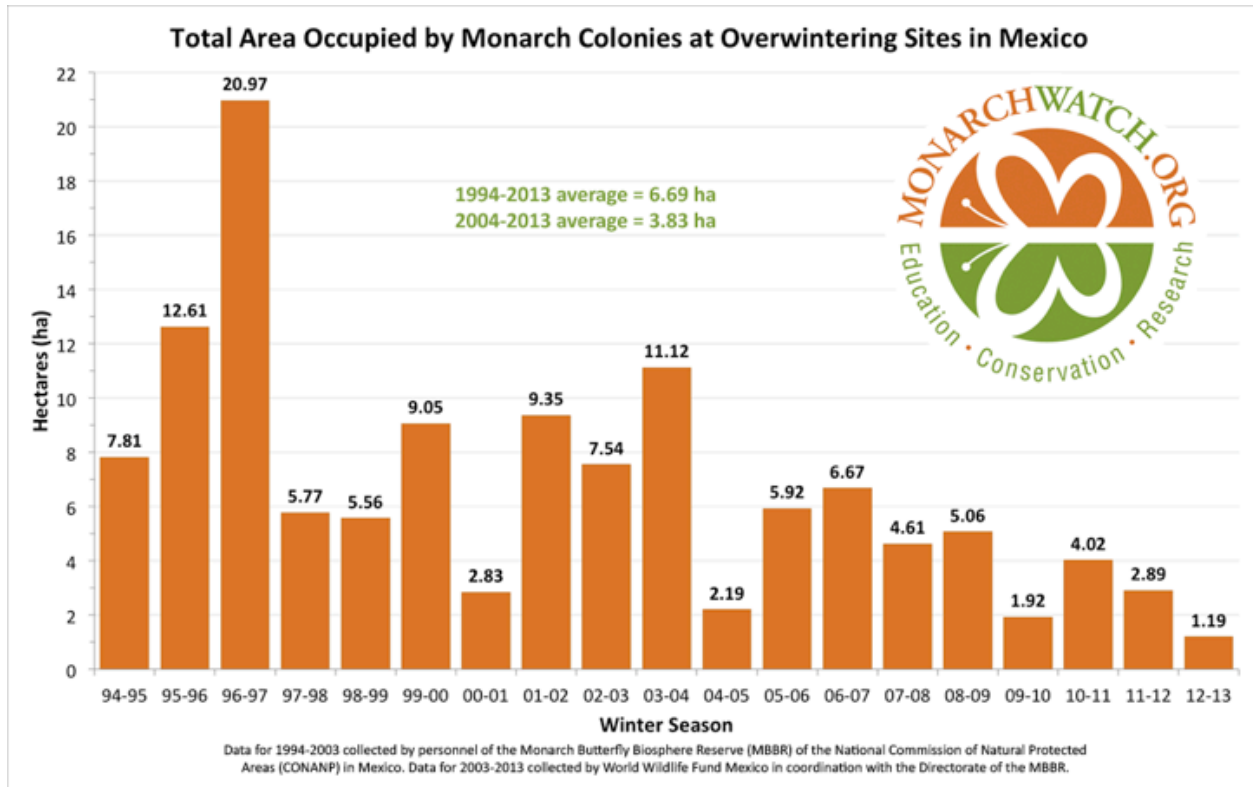
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Monarch Populations at All-Time Low

Please Join "Wild for Monarchs" Partnership to Plant Milkweeds and Help Save Monarch Butterflies

As most of you already heard, the monarch overwintering population in Mexico was at an all-time low this past winter. Not totally unexpected, it is nonetheless very disheartening.

While many forces are at work in the decline of monarch numbers, the loss of milkweeds in the monarch summer breeding range in the US and Canada is one of the causes. We must stem and reverse that loss if we want to preserve the wondrous phenomenon of our migrating monarchs.



The Wild Ones monarch committee has been hard at work this winter. The growing of milkweeds and native nectar plants from seed in greenhouses has been going well. Committee members helped transplant seedlings into plug flats, but the greenhouse owners and personnel bore the majority of the work and the costs. We thank Steve Keto and Chris Jackson at the WMU greenhouse, Ann Fraser at the Kalamazoo College greenhouse, and Wild Ones members Carol and Mike Klug at their greenhouse.

Most of the milkweeds will get planted later this year at protected areas, but some will be available at the Wild Ones plant exchanges and outreach events.

In addition, several of our members started seeds in plug flats outside over the winter for use at their properties but also for sharing. These milkweeds won't be ready for planting until fall, as they will just be germinating this spring.

We are very happy to report that we reached our spring goal of \$400 for Hidden Savanna to raise milkweeds for us to give away at its public sales, one milkweed per customer. We will have a booth at the sales with an exhibit and handouts to go along with the free milkweeds. A big thank you to the donors listed below. We hope to fund other projects, so any donations to the Monarch Fund will be most welcome.

Many monarch outreach events are already scheduled for the coming months but more can be accommodated. Ilse Gebhard has a Power Point presentation; so if you belong to a group or groups looking for programs, please let Ilse know. Or let her know of any events at which we might have a Monarch Booth. gebhard.ilse@gmail.com

Monarch Fund Donors: Audubon Society of Kalamazoo, Harry Bird, Pamela Dewey, Ilse Gebhard, Binney Girdler, Catherine Niessink, Noel Ocen, Lynn Steil, Dave Wendling, Diane White, and anonymous donors to our "Donations Box" at meetings.

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Quotations for Contemplation

I hypothesize that a loss of more than 40 percent of terrestrial ecosystems long-term—including old-growth forests—collapses the biosphere. . . . We are now at 50 percent natural ecosystem loss globally. . . . It is still possible to avoid abrupt climate change and global ecosystem collapse—but only if we both dramatically cut fossil fuel emissions AND restore natural ecosystems immediately. Based upon ecological science, an end to their industrial destruction is vital to limiting climate change.

--**Dr. Glen Barry**, President and Founder of Ecological Internet, and recently recognized by *Utne Reader* as one of “25 visionaries who are changing your world”

One impulse from a vernal wood
May teach you more of man,
Of moral evil and of good,
Than all the sages can.

--William Wordsworth, from *Lyrical Ballads*

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SEEDLINGS is edited by Tom Small and appears five times a year, with a few additional brief supplements. The next regular issue, for **August-September, 2013**, will come early in August. **Deadline for submission is Tuesday, July 30, 2013.** Please send submissions, comments, and suggestions to Tom at yard2prairie@gmail.com.

For more information and news, check us out at www.kalamazoowildones.org and www.facebook.com/KalamazooAreaWildOnes