

***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

January-February, 2016 — Contents

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Drawing by Amelia Hansen

***Nate Fuller Opens 2016 for Wild Ones with
Overview of "Stewardship of Natural Areas"***

NATE FULLER, CONSERVATION AND STEWARDSHIP DIRECTOR for the Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy (SWMLC), will present the first program of the new year on Wednesday, January 27, at 7 p.m.

In exploring how principles of "Ecological Stewardship of Natural Areas" apply to all properties, large or small, Nate will draw on his long experience in supervising SWMLC's nature preserves.

In evaluating the role your yard plays in supporting the natural ecosystems of southwest Michigan, Nate emphasizes location, location, location! The first step in undertaking ecological stewardship of a natural area, whether a small urban yard or a large nature preserve, is considering the relationship of the land to its context in the broader landscape. Nate will explore the connectivity between the natural areas of southwest Michigan, identifying regional features that tie together diverse plant communities.

What can you do with your land to support regional ecology? Nate will discuss with us many of the underlying concepts that help direct ecological stewardship of natural areas and he'll show how they are applicable to all properties, regardless of size.

Nate will explain what goes into developing and implementing restoration and maintenance plans for natural areas. He'll use, as examples, two or three upcoming field trip destinations, all of them SWMLC preserves: Augusta Floodplain Forest, a relatively intact forest (our May field trip); Chipman Preserve, offering oak savanna and prairie restoration sites (August field trip); and Lime Lake Preserve, that combines extremely high quality wetland with areas of serious degradation (September field trip). Nate will be leader of the field trips to Augusta Floodplain and Lime Lake.

Nate's goal, he says, is to engage the audience in sharing both the big-picture concepts that direct the trajectory of ecological stewardship and also the challenging details that arise when taking on a restoration project, whether large or small.

Nate Fuller has been with SWMLC since 2001, when he became its first Stewardship Specialist. Now the Conservancy's Conservation and Stewardship Director, he works with volunteers and staff to protect and enhance the diversity, stability, and beauty of SWMLC's preserves and other important natural areas in southwest Michigan. Nate received his B.S. in biology from Northland College, in Ashland, Wisconsin. He worked for several years as a naturalist and volunteer coordinator for Sarett Nature Center in Benton Harbor. He has also worked in Chicago as an education program coordinator for The Nature Conservancy. Nate is a former board member of The Stewardship Network and current board member of the Natural Areas Association, Stewards of Kleinstuck, and Long Haul Productions. He lives in Kalamazoo with his wife Erin and son Theo.

Wild Ones will meet Wednesday, Jan. 27, at First United Methodist Church, 212 S. Park St., downtown Kalamazoo. Socializing at 6:30; program promptly at 7

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Bill Schneider, Veteran Native Plant Grower, Poses Tough Questions for Wild Ones in February Program

BILL SCHNEIDER, OWNER OF WILDTYPE NATIVE PLANT NURSERY, in Mason, Michigan, will pose some difficult questions for our February program, "Re-evaluating Our Goals with Respect to Restoring the Landscape." He intends to share with us some of the many changes his thinking and practice have undergone during the 30 years he's been in the business of growing native plants.

“Since I began working in this field in 1986 in California,” Bill says, “our collective understanding about the challenges of restoring the native landscape have very much changed and evolved. It’s always easy to get caught up in the conventional wisdom of the day. It’s easy, and it’s natural, maybe even beneficial. But it’s important from time to time to challenge the conventional wisdom and question one’s basic assumptions. That’s what I find myself doing now.

“I hope to share with Kalamazoo Wild Ones some of the questions I’m asking myself these days, in these times of change and challenge. Here are a few of the questions I hope to raise:

- What is the value of pre-settlement vegetation maps? How should we use them?

- How has the term “native plant” changed over time? How will it continue to change?

- What are realistic expectations with regard to managing invasive species?

- Are the environmental problems we face simply biological, or are they social, economic, even political? I think we’d all agree they’re a combination of factors. When we take a closer look, how does that impact the work we do?

“I’ll have some Powerpoint visuals, but I want to leave a lot of space and time for the entire group to participate in exploring some very basic questions about what we all are doing.”

A native of Michigan, **Bill Schneider**’s interest in agriculture led to a degree in animal science from Michigan State University. After graduating, he worked in an entomology lab before moving to California, where he created an impromptu native plant nursery beside his Menlo Park home, growing trees from acorns he gathered in the wild. He estimates that he grew about 2,500 trees which he gave away to individuals and organizations.

Returning to Michigan, Bill earned a master's degree from U. of Michigan in landscape architecture, specializing in ecological restoration. In 1996 he established Wildtype Nursery, starting with his first love, oaks and a few other tree species. Now, 20 years later, the Wildtype catalog offers the widest variety of herbaceous and woody species of any nursery in the state, from aquatic to wetland to woodland, savanna and prairie. For more information about Bill and Wildtype, see www.wildtypeplants.com.

Wild Ones will meet Wednesday, Feb. 24, at First United Methodist Church, 212 S. Park St., downtown Kalamazoo. Socializing at 6:30; program promptly at 7

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Wild Ones Monarch Committee Succeeds in Collecting 750,000 Milkweed Seeds for Restoration Projects

By Ilse Gebhard

THE KAWO MONARCH COMMITTEE had a very active year, ending with a new and wildly successful project.

Large grants had been made for monarch conservation work this fall (see link below). Now that money had become available for milkweed restoration projects, milkweed seeds were needed, especially common milkweed. I have been loath over the years to ask people to collect many seed pods for me because I have not had a way to easily separate them from the floss, that white fluffy stuff. And shipping the entire pods is just too costly.

But that changed. I met Bob Lee, a fellow monarch conservationist, at one of my monarch outreach events this summer. Bob and I experimented with a seed separator for which we found a plan online. It did not work very well. But then we came up with a method that separates the seeds from the floss fairly easily, using a garbage can and a shop vac.

While we were experimenting, I had put out an e-mail to Audubon Society of Kalamazoo and Kalamazoo Area Wild Ones members, plus various other people I knew, asking them to collect milkweed pods for me. In the end 32 people collected pods, and for a couple of weeks we had bags of them sitting all over our garage.

I had made arrangements to use the Kalamazoo County Land Bank's unheated red barn at Riverview Launch for two "seed separating parties." Since the high for the day of the first party was only 40 degrees, they let us use their newly refurbished greenhouse instead. Ahhhh.



A tub of milkweed seeds collected for Monarch restoration projects

We had 10 people helping at the first session and 11 at the second one. The result was a total of about 20 pounds of seed, some of which came from batches that people had separated by hand.

Keeping some seed back for local projects, we sent 17 lbs, or about 750,000 seeds, to Monarch Watch for milkweed restoration projects in states in our ecoregion that have lost most of their milkweed due to agricultural practices like the growing of genetically modified crops. Michigan, being on the edge of the cornbelt, luckily still has a fair amount of milkweed left.

The project had nice media coverage by MLive. See link below.

<http://www.nfwf.org/monarch/Documents/monarchgrants15-0925.pdf>

http://www.mlive.com/news/kalamazoo/index.ssf/2015/10/local_effort_to_help_the_decli.html

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Quotations for Contemplation

The slow poisoning of the life of the soil by artificial manure is one of the greatest calamities which has befallen agriculture and mankind.

--Sir Albert Howard, *An Agricultural Testament* (1940)

The secret world of soil life, out of sight and long out of mind, is the key to building—and keeping—fertile soil. As we started looking into recent advances in soil ecology, we found they helped explain how and why [Albert] Howard’s ideas worked. Today the emerging view of soil ecology as the basis for soil fertility is not only undermining the chemical foundation of conventional agriculture, it is changing how we see nature.

--David R. Montgomery and Anne Biklé, *The Hidden Half of Nature: The Microbial Roots of Life and Health* (2016)

Don’t let the defeats of this year harden your heart. As Scrooge said: "Ghost of the Future, I fear you more than any spectre I have seen." But like Scrooge, we have a choice, and only by leading with our hearts can we hope to write a different ending for next year and beyond.

--Wendell Berry, *Home Economics*

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Events Cancellation Policy

If the weather is questionable and you're wondering whether a Wild Ones indoor program is canceled, please watch WWMT Channel 3 for a cancellation announcement of our program. If time permits, an e-mail cancellation notice will also be sent to you if you are a member.

Field trips and plant exchanges are held rain or shine and canceled only in severe weather: i.e., raining cattails and dogwoods, mit donner und blitzten.

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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 **March-April, 2016**, will come early in March. **Deadline for submission is Friday, Feb. 26, 2016.** 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