

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

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May/June/July, 2012—Contents

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First 2012 Field Trip to Wild Ones Members' Yards Takes Us to Diverse Properties of Olexias and Dirckses.

On Saturday, May 12, from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., Wild Ones will visit two very diverse and rich rural properties where Wild Ones members Paul and Sally Olexia and Judy and John Dircks have been working hard to establish and foster native plant communities.

In the April SEEDLINGS, Paul Olexia shared the story of his efforts to restore seven and a half acres of second-growth woodland on Old Douglas Road. Paul, a now retired Kalamazoo College biology professor, began his struggle to find native woodland plants to restore his land well before Nancy and Tom established the Wild Ones chapter. His story is one of perseverance

and a wide-ranging search for plants he could rescue from development and logging.

Now, in this issue, here is Judy's story of hers and her husband John's efforts to restore 77 acres on Douglas, just west of the Nature Center.

Join us on May 12 for visits to two rural properties where Wild Ones members have been learning, experimenting, and gradually restoring properties that had been previously degraded.

THE JUDY AND JOHN DIRCKS PROPERTY
by Judy Dircks

Our property, 77 acres in Cooper Township, is mainly forest land. Dear friends, Mary and Ed Williamson, purchased the land in 1951 and built a house on it. The land, previously part of the farm just to the north, had been used for grazing and farming and was very open. Mary and Ed proceeded to plant trees on the site. On advice of a conservation group, they first planted over 40,000 red and white pines, many of which no longer exist. They then proceeded to plant a diverse selection of trees. Ed would fill a pillowcase full of black walnuts and plant them as part of his "recreation." There are now various maples, cherries, oaks, hickory, ash, butternut, sassafras, redbud, beech, basswood, dogwood, elm, hawthorn, pawpaws, tulip, red and white pines, honeylocust, hackberry, buttonbushes, spicebushes and others.

In November 1990 we purchased the land from Mary. Our first efforts of caring for the land included maintaining the flower beds, adding new garden beds with the house and barn addition, and cutting down overgrown vines from the trees. Since the property was now mostly forest, John had to clear a strip of land to open a view of the pond. John used seed to plant wildflowers in the clearing. The pond was re-dug out and enlarged for wildlife, not fish, later. I added hostas to areas near the house as the area was shaded and I was not yet aware of the true benefit of native plantings. The land has a pond, a ravine, the forest, and a swamp created by John's damming up a wet area.

As we learned about invasive plants and became members of Wild Ones, we started to rid the land of garlic mustard, oriental bittersweet, honeysuckle, myrtle, and ailanthus trees. This is an ongoing project. Removing much of the honeysuckle has left areas without much understory; so we're adding more native bushes and smaller trees, including serviceberry, American plum, striped maple, high-bush cranberry, pagoda dogwood, bladdernut, more pawpaws, and others.

My first attempts to add wildflowers to the garden was bringing some of the ephemerals and wildflowers from the back to add to the bloodroot near the house. Then near the front door I started two native gardens. One, my learning lab, teaches me about the natives as well as delights us by all the wild creatures it attracts. There's a native garden near the barn and several other gardens of mixed natives and non-natives. Another island garden in the backyard helps to decrease the amount of grass lawn. I try to incorporate as many different plants as possible but have a somewhat sun-challenged location. I prefer a more carefully landscaped look to my gardens, so I use "clues" to remind a visitor that this is what I planned. Nature, of course, alters the plans quite a bit.

John has built several natural birdhouses out of hollow logs, bee boxes from solid logs, and a bat house. He basically maintains the woodlands while I plant and tend the flower beds. We both plant the trees.

In 2012 I ordered some zebra swallowtail butterflies in various stages to introduce to our property. The larva's host plant is the pawpaw tree and we have many of them. This is close to its northernmost range. I sell the pawpaw fruit and enjoy sharing information about this tree with others, many who have not heard of or tasted the fruit.

In 2006 we participated in the Japanese Beetle Biocontrol Project sponsored by MSU. I dug up grubs infected with a pathogen and planted them into our lawn. This resulted in the predicted outcome of a decreased Japanese beetle population each year and a significant change in 5 years.

As we learn more, we work to improve this land by removing as many invasives as possible and by adding as many beneficial native plants as possible. It's a learning process and a gradual one that we'll continue to do as long as we physically can.

DIRECTIONS FOR DRIVING AND PARKING

Come to the Dircks property first to carpool. Arrive by 9:45 AM. The home is located at 6343 Douglas Ave., one road west of the Kalamazoo Nature Center. Take 131 to D Ave. Go east a few miles to Douglas. Turn right (south) & go a little less than two miles. The Dircks' home is located on the west (right) side and just after an old Victorian farmhouse. Take the stone drive just north of the Dircks' home and driveway. Someone can direct you to park behind the large barn, or you can continue a little ways & take Landfair, a street across the road from the Dircks' home, and park in the development. We can first carpool to the Olexia home (where parking is limited), which is an immediate right turn onto Old Douglas very near the Dircks' home. Paul lives at 5648 Old

Douglas, on the east side of the street. After visiting Paul's home, we can return to the Dirckses to see their yard and woods.

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Tom and Wild Ones Host 20th Annual Spring Plant Exchange: Find New Native Plants, New Friends

The spring plant exchange that Nancy Small began in 1992 is now in its 20th year and has provided many hundreds of people with native plants and information about natural landscaping. The exchange, on Sunday, May 20, from 1 to 5 p.m., will offer numerous plants from Nancy's gardens, as well as plants brought by other Wild Ones members and supporters. In keeping with the principles Nancy 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. 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, or free to members of Wild Ones, including new members joining at the exchange. This will be one*

of the last opportunities for members to obtain a free copy; the offer expires October 31, 2012.

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*, and a panel discussion that included Nancy. The cost of the film is \$10, with a special price of \$5 for 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 yard2prairy@gmail.com.

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Bring a Stone to Contribute to a “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 Small doesn’t live on a mountain, but his house is near the highest point for three watersheds: Axtell Creek, Arcadia Creek, and Woods Lake. On May 20, 2012, the day of the 20th annual spring plant exchange, to observe the first anniversary of the first “Life Cairn,” he and anyone who wishes to bring a stone will begin a Life Cairn here in Kalamazoo, in his front yard, easily visible and accessible from the street.

Please bring a stone from someplace familiar and important to you, preferably a small stone—even a pebble will be fine—and preferably a light-colored one—one that will reflect light. At several 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.

You may also, if you wish, bring a somewhat larger stone, preferably more or less flat on at least one side, to contribute to a spiral pathway leading to the cairn. Tom will use these stones to construct the pathway.

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.

Tom will be going to England in June and July. He hopes to be able to visit the Life Cairn in Sussex, contribute a stone from Kalamazoo, and bring a small stone from Dartmoor, Devon, a place of very ancient stone circles and dolmens, to the Life Cairn here.

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Melanie Manion Leads Wild Ones on June Field Trip to DeLano Homestead, to Study Invasive Species and Habitat Restoration

Our first June field trip, Saturday, June 16, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., will be to the DeLano farm area of the Kalamazoo Nature Center, to learn about control of invasive plants and KNC's work to restore plant ecosystems and wildlife habitat.

The principal leader for the trip will be Melanie Manion, Natural Resources Management Supervisor for the Ottawa County Parks and Recreation Commission. She'll be assisted on the tour by either Sarah Reding, KNC's Vice President for Conservation Stewardship, or Ryan Koziatek, Great Lakes Ecological Management Field Director for KNC.

Melanie will discuss recognizing invasive species and what property owners can do on their own properties to eliminate and control invasives. The DeLano farms area has a variety of habitats—wooded, meadow and fen, each with different invasive species and restoration problems.

Previously Stewardship Coordinator for the Land Conservancy of West Michigan, headquartered in Grand Rapids, Melanie has also worked for the Blandford and the Chippewa Nature Centers, coordinating educational and stewardship programs. In her work on stewardship of natural areas, she has specialized in control of invasive species. She has bachelor's and master's degrees from Central Michigan University in Biology and Environmental Science and in Conservation Biology. She and her husband also have a baby daughter, Alison Mae, just over one year old.

The field trip will begin at 10 a.m. from the DeLano Homestead parking lot, on E Ave., just west of North Westnedge.

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**Wild Ones Viewings of Members' Properties Continue
June 30
With Trip to 80-Acre Rural Property of Carol and Mike
Klug**

Mike and Carol Klug, Co-Presidents of Kalamazoo Area Wild Ones, moved to an 80-acre parcel in southern Barry County eight years ago. The property included 29 acres of recently seeded but subsequently neglected prairie, diverse woods with large populations of invasive plants, and about four acres of lawn. In other words, many challenges.

Besides their help with organizing the Wild Ones chapter's educational work, they've been spending their retirement working to remove invasive plants, convert portions of the lawn to native plant beds, and improve the grasslands on their property.

With the luxuries of a root cellar for cold stratification and a hoop house for early growth, they've been propagating their own grass and forb plugs. They have also been planting and fostering bare-rooted trees and shrubs to replace invasive species in the woods. They have made many improvements, but their projects are definitely works-in-progress.

Join us on Saturday, June 30, from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., to view Carol and Mike's progress and hear about their challenges and their plans for the future. This will be a joint field trip with the Calhoun County Chapter of Wild Ones; so come make some new Wild Ones friends. We hope to do more cooperative programs with other WO chapters in the future.

You may wish to bring a lunch or snack to gather for conversation after the conclusion of the tour.

There will be more details about the trip in the June SEEDLINGS, including directions for driving and carpooling.

**July Field Trip Takes Wild Ones to Kimberly Ginn's
Work
in Progress—Pondscaping Her Neighborhood's
Retention Pond**

Wild Ones member Kimberly Ginn has been working since 2005 on turning her suburban development's ugly retention pond into a living habitat for frogs, toads, herons, cranes, fish, butterflies, and countless other species. For much of that time, Kimberly was doing the work singlehandedly, battling against resistance and what she calls "turf-grass mentality" from her neighborhood association.

Using every possible educational opportunity at association meetings, Kimberly has succeeded in winning over some skeptics and turf-grass neatniks. Comprehensive soil testing, water testing, species monitoring, invasives removal, and native plantings have gained her some volunteer support from neighbors and a budget this year of \$2000 from the association, enough to purchase many native plants and get some professional consultation from Steve Allen's Geum Services.

In April, she and some volunteers planted 70 shrub seedlings from the Soil Conservation District sale. During May and early June, 700 native plants from Bill Schneider's Wildtype Nursery and from Geum Services will be added. The plants will include submergent plants in the pond, emergents on the banks, and upland species on the slopes.

By the time of our field trip, Saturday, July 21, from 9 a.m. to noon, Kimberly will be ready to show what persistence, politicking, and love can accomplish in converting the skeptics and turning an eyesore into a natural area for the whole neighborhood and for wildlife. Her program will include a display board showing what the pond area of more than an acre has looked like, from the beginning through the various phases of her work.

"It's still very much a work in progress," Kimberly says, "and I'm eager to hear suggestions from Wild Ones on what the next phases of the project should be. It looks more and more as if this project is turning into my life's work. I love what I'm doing."

This program replaces the field trip originally announced to the Kellogg Biological Station's demonstration project on shoreline control and planting. Please join us to learn about nativescaping for small ponds and shorelines and to see what members of Wild Ones can do not just on our own properties but in our neighborhoods, to change landscapes, habitats, and minds.

DIRECTIONS: Go out Gull Road to N. Sprinkle. Turn left on Sprinkle, continue on past the light at G Ave, and turn right at DE Ave. In about a half mile, you'll see a sign for Prairie Crossing on the left; turn into the development, and the pond will be on your left.

AN IMPORTANT MESSAGE FROM YOUR CO-PRESIDENTS

We would like to thank the KAWO Executive Committee and all the members who have helped make this a very successful start to the year's programming. Vicki Berglund continues to do a wonderful job of keeping our website updated and for setting up the chapter's display at our meetings and other venues. Kathy McGoff, new Hospitality Committee Chair, has co-ordinated an outstanding presentation of snacks at our meetings. Ruth Caputo continues to try to keep the Program Committee on track, which is certainly not an easy task. Our new treasurer, Neil Sikora, has been a quick study at keeping us solvent. And thanks to Tom Small for his countless contributions to the Kalamazoo chapter.

Attendance at our first four programs ranged from 55 to 78 people. The number of active member households grew to 184 as of April 20th.

With this said, we hope for, and encourage, more of you to become active in our chapter's day to day operations. Your increased involvement is essential if we're going to continue our successful programming. You needn't be an expert on native plants in order to participate. We certainly aren't. What's needed is an interest in learning more about native plants, and in contributing some of your time and energy to our chapter and its activities. Check out all the opportunities to volunteer on our website, www.kalamazoowildones.org.

The by-laws list the standing committees and their responsibilities. Also get information on-line about our summer field trips.

Please contact us to talk further about the many opportunities that exist for you to be more involved in our growing organization. We look forward to hearing from you – and seeing you soon at one of our upcoming activities.

--Mike and Carol Klug

Wild Ones Projects Begin Early This Year, with Schools, Spring Plant Exchange, People's Food Co-op, and Nature Center

**Friday, May 4, 3 to 5 p.m.
PEOPLE'S FOOD CO-OP**

We'll do some weeding and maintenance, and we'll check on whether we need some replacements for plants that didn't make it through this first year.

Wednesday, May 16, 9 a.m. to noon

EL SOL BILINGUAL MAGNET ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Corner of Vine and Oak Streets

We'll be working with the Kalamazoo Nature Center and El Sol schoolchildren, doing the first native planting on part of the school playground. We'll do some organizing and supervising. We'll help with planting if the going gets tough. It should be fun. Join us if you can.

Friday, May 18, 2 to 4 p.m. (or thereabouts)

TOM'S HOUSE, 2502 WAITE AVE.

Preparing for the 20th annual spring plant exchange at Tom's house on Sunday, May 20. We'll be working on the paths, helping with final clean-up and preliminary set-up, digging and potting plants for the exchange.

Tuesday, May 29, 1 to 2:30 p.m.

AXTELL CREEK, BEHIND PARIS CLEANERS, AT WESTNEDGE & CROSSTOWN

Maintenance and clean-up of our best creekbank planting. We'll have company and help from some youngsters from the Montessori School on Howard St.

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MEET OUR MEMBERS: BRUCE ALDEN

by Dave Wendling

For me, the best part of writing this column is getting to know our members better and sharing this information with all of you. We're fortunate to have a very diverse and interesting membership, which makes us a vibrant group. Bruce Alden is no exception.

A relatively new member of our chapter, Bruce was introduced to Wild Ones by Harry Bird when they met on a volunteer work day at the SW Michigan Land Conservancy. After joining he immediately got involved with our Community Projects. He's a boots on the ground type of person who shares with me the love of visiting our natural areas just for the sake of being there and to see what he can find. He also shares with me the fact that he was born in Saginaw MI and that he likes unusual plants.

Bruce has many talents, and one of them is writing; so here is Bruce in his own words.

BRUCE ALDEN

I was born in 1953, in Saginaw, Michigan. Beginning in 1960, I grew up near Detroit in Walled Lake. There was (and still exists) a wetland that bordered the tract neighborhood. I felt pulled to that area by the adventure of spotting wild animals! Nearby, there was Little Hawk Lake, and other wild places. I considered the plants as furnishings of the places where the animals lived; turtles and frogs didn't need what rabbits needed. The best spots seemed to be where the water met the land. As a result, I soon accepted the inevitable bracing shower from a garden hose when I arrived home and then dropping my muck-blackened clothes outside the laundry room door. There was Little Hawk Lake nearby and other wild places.

Out of high school, I tried college at CMU in Mt. Pleasant. I had a wanderlust, though, and nourished my love of traveling to new places by laboring within the Merchant Marine. Ah, but springtime in Michigan has always had a pull on me. Whenever I resisted, I regretted it; and the following spring I would return. In May, 1980, I interviewed at a videocassette facility in Farmington Hills. Hired as a shipping clerk, I eventually trained myself to become a videotape editor. I worked there for 18 years. But, as you know, things change; analog technology went digital, the industry "right-sized" itself, and I no longer had to work in dark rooms without windows!

Before I became dis-acquainted with the last steady job I'll ever know, I had saved and bought a house in Farmington Hills. The backyard was shaded by awesome white oak and ash trees. The front yard received afternoon and setting sun. I put in a small veggie garden in the front yard. I also removed much of the turf to put in shrubs and flowers. The front yard became my colorful home welcoming, and the backyard was a woodland setting, ringed with Eastern Redbud, wood poppies, and a slowly expanding diversity. Contact with soil (and cutting sod out of the yard) was a touchstone for remembering time spent with my father. He had been raised during the Great Depression. His family's garden, in Chesaning, was planted "fence to fence" to help feed them for a year. As I tweaked my landscaping, I found that native plants became the optimal choice for every time that my yard "challenged" me. Requiring less maintenance, they host and feed so many beneficial and desirable creatures.

I moved to Portage in 2007, became a Master Gardener in 2008, and became a Conservation Steward in 2009. That's when I met Harry Bird. I learned about the Wild Ones through Harry, and I became a member of the Kalamazoo Chapter in 2010. I'm glad that I met Harry.

One of my favorite native plants? Right now, I'm fascinated by saprophytes or, as some insist, mycotrophs. They live underground. Until they produce their identifying flower structures, you wouldn't even know that they're there. If you stir the leaf litter, you may find some wispy threads of mycelium. They seem to do their best when neglected. Without any chlorophyll, they are something of a contradiction in botany. During this spring, I'll probably have a new favorite. For example, I'll share that I like to

see skunk cabbage emerging. I like to get close enough to see if any wild turkeys have been feeding on the blossom within the spadix. And I used to go crazy about the intense yellow of Marsh Marigolds...ah, spring in Michigan.

Currently I have no property with which to putter. We've been leasing a townhouse since we arrived in Portage. This has provided me with enough energy reserves (I guess) to do stewardship on land held by others. I've tried to make the best impact that I'm able on the Gourdneck Lake State Game Area (with Harry Bird as a partner), Barry SGA, Fort Custer Recreation Area, Grand Mere State Park & National Landmark, as well as on some of the preserves held by the Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy.

I have a 16-year-old son attending Portage Northern High School. I'm comfortable in the knowledge that we have a warm and fairly close relationship. Someday, I hope he'll enjoy rejoining me in walking through woods, fields and fen. That should happen when computers become extinct.
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SIGHTINGS and INSIGHTS

Erythronium, Conspicuous, Proud, Unusual

By Paul Olexia

*Last spring while looking in a bed of wildflowers at my place I noticed a pair of lily-like leaves that reminded me of the leaves of the white trout lily (*Erythronium albidum*). I had seen that species a few times previously in other locations. In contrast to the more common species of trout lily (*E. americanum*), the leaves of the plant that I found were paler green (almost gray-green) and lacked the brownish mottling more typical of the yellow-flowered species. However, the plant didn't produce any flowers. This spring I saw those same leaves in the same place, appearing a bit more robust than previously. A week or so after that observation I saw a flower bud forming. I eagerly checked on it every day but it seemed like the proverbial pot that won't boil. Finally on April 2 (of course everything is early this year) I found one white unmistakable trout lily flower with the strongly re-curved petals and its anthers dangling conspicuously and proudly. Needless to say, I was delighted to find this Michigan rarity among the other wildflowers. Although this species had been reported earlier for Kalamazoo County, I believe from the "Big Island" woods in Schoolcraft.*

I've been told that in the Chicago region, the common trout lily is the white one while the yellow one is considered rare. I don't have any idea where this specimen (most likely from seed) originated or how it got here. I haven't been either to Chicago or the Big Island for quite some time and

certainly have not imported plants or soil from either location. But I am grateful to have this unusual specimen so readily available.

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Quotations for Contemplation

The seed has become my teacher. From the seed I learn lessons of self-organisation and renewal, diversity and democracy, giving and sharing.

--Vandana Shiva, "From Quanta to the Seed," Resurgence, Sept./Oct., 2006

To imagine the place as it is, and was, and—only then—as it will or may be. To imagine its human life only in harmony with its non-human life—as one, only one, of its possibilities. In that imagining, perhaps we may begin to see it in its sacredness, as unimaginable gift, as mystery—as it was, is, and ever shall be, world without end.

--Wendell Berry, Standing By Words (1983)

*UNLESS someone like you
cares a whole awful lot,
nothing is going to get better.
It's not.*

--Dr. Seuss, The Lorax

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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, will come early in August. Deadline for submission is Saturday, July 28. Really. Please send submissions, comments, and suggestions to Tom at yard2prairy@gmail.com.