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*Eastern white pine (Pinus strobus) B. Bradburn*

# SEEDLINGS

## Wild Ones|Kalamazoo Area Chapter

"There can be no purpose more enspiriting than to begin the age of restoration, reweaving the wondrous diversity of life that still surrounds us." —E.O. Wilson



*Partridge Berry (Mitchella repens) B. Bradburn*

### Dear Friend,

I admit that I took both of the above photos in central Pennsylvania in October, but they are of evergreen plants native to Michigan as well. The work of understanding, nurturing, and advocating for native plants continues through the winter, and this January newsletter speaks to that continuity in various ways. I hope you find it supportive and inspiring.

**Beth Bradburn**

*Editor*

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**January Program: Oak Savanna Garden Design**

Native garden designer and advocate Mike Weis will present “Oak Savanna Garden Design: Going Beyond ‘Prairie Style’ Pollinator Gardens To Maximize Ecological Services in your Yard.” Oak savanna systems are the perfect model for creating gardens that offer what entomologist Douglas Tallamy calls “hyper-productive keystone species,” which are essential to support the complex food webs in our own yards. [Learn more.](#)



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Most of our past presentations are available on YouTube to view at your convenience.

[\*Click Here to visit our YouTube channel\*](#)

You can also click on the small red YouTube icon above,  
underneath the Table of Contents.

Past issues of Seedlings can be found [here](#), and by clicking the link between the  
Facebook and YouTube links above.

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## **Big Shoes to Fill**

**Mel Luna**

Last month our out-going chapter president, Noel Ocen, organized a brunch at Martell’s to honor and celebrate Tom Small, Dave Wendling, Mike and Carol Klug, Ilse Gebhard, Ruth Caputo, and Margo Rebar for their decades of service to the mission of Wild Ones. Their dedication cannot be overstated, and their legacy continues with us.



As these leaders who founded our chapter move into their winter years, we are looking to one another to fill their roles and dream into the next twenty-five years of activism and advocacy on behalf of the living world. KAWO is 100% volunteer run and, like the world at large, belongs to those who show up. Every time you attend a presentation, plant exchange, field trip, garden tour, social gathering, or service day, we see and appreciate you! Every time you tell a friend, neighbor, or family member about the transformational power of caring for, and learning about, the plants and animals who share this planet with us, you are helping to reshape our human culture from one of entitlement, violence, and objectification to one of curiosity, reciprocity, and respect.

Right now a small group of around a dozen people are striving to meet the needs of our growing chapter of 269 members without a membership or volunteer coordinator. We'd love to see those duties attended to. Please reach out to [us via email](#) or at an in-person event if you'd like to learn more. 2026 is going to be an exciting year! We're so grateful to be in this together with you.

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## **Winter Botany Can Be Fun**

**Ilse Gebhard**

If you enjoy looking at and identifying plants in the wild, that enjoyment does not have to stop once the flowers are gone and the leaves have fallen. Looking at my bookshelf, I find a dozen books that are useful in identifying trees, shrubs, vines and herbaceous plants in winter.

For something small that you can stick in a pocket there is a series of small guides put out by Nature Study Guild Publishers. For winter I have found particularly useful *Winter Tree Finder*, by May Theilgaard Watts and Tom Watts, and *Winter Weed Finder*, by Dorcas S. Miller. *The Berry Finder*, by Dorcas S. Miller, may be most useful in late summer and fall but some berries persist into winter.



around. Two such books are *The Shrub Identification Book* and *The Tree Identification Book*, both by W. D. Symonds. In winter, when you don't have flowers or leaves to help you identify plants, you need to resort to other plant characteristics like fruit, buds (both flower and leaf), twigs, bark, or overall shape of tree. These books excel in showing these characteristics along with the flowers and leaves.

I have four books on wildflowers and weeds in winter and any one is a good start. But the way I look at it, one is good, several are better, as they vary in the plants they show and the information that goes along with the plants. Three of the books are illustrated with drawings and the fourth shows photos.

The three books with drawings are: *Wildflowers and Winter Weeds*, written and illustrated by Lauren Brown; *A Guide to Wildflowers in Winter*, by Carol Levine and illustrated by Dick Rauh; and *Season of Promise: Wild Plants in Winter*, written and illustrated by June Carver Roberts. The one with photos is *Pods: Wildflowers and Weeds in their Final Beauty*, by Jane Embertson, with photographs by Jay M. Conrader. What makes this book very different from the others is that it shows the flowers in summer, the pods in winter, and how the pods are used in decorative arrangements. If you have an artistic penchant, this might be the book for you.

Of course, nowadays you might not need to take a photo of your "winter weed" with your phone and then pore through books when you get home. A number of smartphone apps might give you an answer as soon as you point your phone at them. The one I use is [Seek by iNaturalist](#). For me the advantage that books have had is that as I looked through them multiple times, I learned some of the plants without really trying.





Top left: Michigan holly (*Ilex verticillate*) J. Esper Top right: Spotted wintergreen (*Chimaphila maculata*) K. Moore  
Bottom: Wild bergamot (*Monarda fistulosa*) E. Leduc

## **Review: A Field Guide to Trees of Ontario**

Russ Schipper

*A Field Guide to Trees of Ontario*. Contributing authors: James E. Eckenwalder, Deborah A. Metsger, Timothy A. Dickinson, Sarah H. Hodges. Royal Ontario Museum, 2023.



This review is to acquaint you with this newish guide to trees, which is one of the several field guides put out by the Royal Ontario Museum. The back cover offers this clear and accurate description: “a comprehensive guide to Ontario trees.” To some the key word may be Ontario; I see it as comprehensive. To that I would add, of exceptional quality.

Not a few times I have been frustrated with an unknown tree that’s right in front of me, and which eventually I find is not included in the guide. The excellent and detailed *Michigan Trees*, by B. Barnes and W. Wagner, falls a little short. Naturally I am excepting what is the master guide, the *Field Manual of Michigan Flora*, by Edward G. Voss and Anton A. Reznicek, and the companion Michigan Flora Online, which do cover all the plants growing outside of cultivation in the state.

However, that requires going through the detailed keys, which is what I do to figure out the problem tree. However, I admittedly have at times struggled with the key. I suspect the authors of the Ontario book have heard the complaints about complicated keys and this guide proves to be an excellent

step process leads you to the identity of a plant.

This comprehensive Ontario guide shines in that it does include all Ontario trees; one can feel comfortable that virtually any tree in Michigan is also present in the neighboring province that we in large part are surrounded by. For Michigan trees there is one guide I know of that comes close to including all Michigan trees likely to be found, but it does not cover the planted ornamentals. That is *Trees of Michigan*, by Linda Kershaw.

A particularly useful aspect of the Ontario guide, and one that I think will be appreciated, is the simplified yet effective key system that is color coded and in something of a chart form. Please have a look at a sample page in the photo below to get some idea of how it works.

KEY 4 TREES WITH ALTERNATE, BROAD LEAVES, LEAF EDGE SMOOTH WITHOUT LOBES OR TEETH						
LEAF BLADES				FRUITS	GENUS	PAGE
narrow, less than ½ as wide as long	underside with silvery scales			olive-like	<i>Elaeagnus</i>	276
	underside with woolly white hairs			catkin of tiny capsules	<i>Salix (eleagnos)</i>	461
broad, more than ½ as wide as long	10–20 cm long	heart-shaped; tip bluntly acuminate		pod 6–10 cm long	<i>Cercis</i>	218
	4–9 cm long	more or less oval; tip often slightly indented		wispy cluster of tiny drupes	<i>Cotinus</i>	471
neither narrow nor broad, between ½ and ¾ as wide as long	mostly more than 14 cm long	widest beyond the middle, a little less than ½ as wide as long		aggregate of large, yellow-green berries	<i>Asimina</i>	162
		widest beyond to near the middle, about ½ as wide as long		cone-like cluster of follicles	<i>Magnolia</i>	156–58
	mostly between 7 and 13 cm long	widest well beyond to near the middle	up to a little less than ½ as wide as long	cone-like cluster of follicles	<i>Magnolia (kobus)</i>	158
			mostly more than ½ as wide as long	long-stalked cluster of drupes	<i>Nyssa</i>	416
		widest near the middle	main lateral veins arcing steeply towards the tip	loose cluster of black drupes on red stalks	<i>Cornus (alternifolia)</i>	414
			blade ½ or more as wide as long; base broadly wedge-shaped to rounded	acorn	<i>Quercus (imbricaria)</i>	310
			blade up to a little less than ½ as wide as long; base mostly wedge-shaped	large orange berry, 2–5 cm in diameter	<i>Diospyros</i>	418
			blade more than ½ – ¾ as wide as long; base mostly rounded	warty, green, "orange-like" ball	<i>Maclura</i>	294
			widest well below to near the middle, up to ½ as wide as long	catkin of tiny capsules	<i>Salix</i>	198–210
		widest near the middle, a little less than ½ as wide as long				
	up to 7 cm long					

The columns in this sample for a tree with leaves are: Leaf Blades, Fruits, Genus, Page. For the winter key, not shown, the column headings for example are: Twigs, Bundle Scars, Genus, and Page. These headings are the principal parts of the tree one needs to examine to identify it in the respective season. It's important to note that the key is to get you to the genus; from there you leaf through the one to several pages of photos and text to determine which species matches your specimen. For good reason, it is suggested that you read the first page under a family. It can harbor important information which applies to the species you are attempting to identify.

There are over 1,400 photos and detailed drawings, with seven or eight photos for the ninety-five "focal species" which are common species or are diagnostic of a group. These have two-page treatments, which depict important features of the tree, such as leaf, flower, fruit, bark, and buds, and often a detail that is important in identification.

The guide is arranged by families. Those thirty-nine families are color-coded and listed at the front with scientific and common names. Also, in the upper left corner of the pages of each family there is a small square patch of the color, making it easy to thumb through and locate a family.

Other features that I feel are important are the illustrated and extensive Glossary, giving the authors explanations on terminology. It deals with the basics such as fruits (twenty-seven photos of fruit



and understandable. Understanding precisely what is being described is critical to successful interpretation of the key.

Some small additions would have been useful: as in the old Peterson guides, it would be handy to have a scale on an inside cover and possibly line drawings of leaf shapes as in the *Wildflowers of the Midwest* guide by Homoya and Namestni, as a handy quick reference.

I have not used it enough to give the durability of the binding the true test of time and use, but I have modestly stretched it and it held firm. But it seems that the cover could have been of heavier and more durable stock.

It has 512 pages, a firmish soft cover, and is genuinely pocket sized, in an 8x 4 ½ x 1-inch format weighing 1lb., 6oz. The book is available from the [Royal Ontario Museum](#) or from [Amazon](#). (Links provided for convenience.)

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## Overwintering Cecropia Moth Cocoons

Ilse Gebhard

Late August one year I received a call from the Kalamazoo Nature Center. Would I be interested in overwintering a large, fuzzy cocoon that had formed from a large, green caterpillar? A member had brought it in, sure that someone would be interested, and of course I was.

The tan cocoon (shown at right) was a one-and-a-quarter by two-and-a-half-inch oval with a flimsy looking, silky appendage measuring three by four inches. Could it be one of the giant silk moths? If so, a large container for overwintering would be needed. Suspending the cocoon inside an aquarium of fifteen by eight by ten inches should accommodate any of them.



Also the aquarium and the screened-in porch offered more protection from the elements than it would receive in the wild in the eight to nine months it would take for the weather to be warm enough for it to emerge.



checked the aquarium several times a day, and on the seventeenth between my early morning and noon checks, a beautiful cecropia moth (*Hyalophora cecropia*) had emerged. It had large, very feathery antennae (visible in the photo at right), which indicated it to be a male. The male's antennae have sense organs used to receive the chemicals given off by the female and thereby locating it in the dark of night.

*Photos R. Schipper*



After an evening visit by friends with a five-year-old whose awe made the moth even more special, I removed the wire mesh cover from the aquarium. It was 9:30pm and almost dark but the moth was in no hurry to leave. Well past my bedtime, I made a final check at 11pm and it was gone, another indication that it was a male. A female would likely have just remained waiting for a male to appear.

Close inspection of the cocoon showed only a tiny split at one end. How in the world had this large moth emerged from such a small hole? I tried to tear it open but to no avail, attesting to the strength of silk. Cutting it open revealed the paper-thin dark brown pupa inside with the discarded skin of the caterpillar at one end. The shape of the pupa clearly showed where the head, the abdomen and the folded wings had lain prisoner those many months.

A similar, but yet different-looking cocoon was given to me by a friend in November, and was also placed in the aquarium. A work crew organized by a Boy Scout for his Eagle Scout project was cutting alien, invasive buckthorn at Marc's Marsh, a Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy preserve on Lyons Lake in Comstock. The cocoon was attached to a branch of one of the targeted shrubs and needed a safe place to spend the winter.

A couple of weeks after the first cecropia had emerged I began to worry if the second one would. I had read in *Coming Through the Swamp* by Gene Stratton-Porter that turning it upside down while holding it close to your ear might tell you—a dull thump indicates a live moth whereas a rattle like a small seed in a dry pod meant it had been parasitized. To my joy, there was a thump and on June 13 another male cecropia emerged, almost a month after the first one.

Years later I read that the cecropia moth is bimodal, meaning that it has two periods of emergence – late May to early June and late June to early July. It has been speculated that this is a strategy of survival for the species and explains the almost month-long difference in the emergence of my two cecropias.

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## Who Am I?

**A native flora ID quiz from Ilse Gebhard**



*Photo R. Schipper*

Click [here](#) for the answer!

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## Community Events of Interest

**Tuesday, January 6, and Tuesday, January 20, - 1:00pm-2:30pm:** Winter Shrub Removal, Pierce Cedar Creek Institute. [Learn more.](#)

**Sunday, January 11 - 10:00am-12:00pm:** Volunteer Work Day, Kleinstuck Preserve. [Learn more.](#)

**Thursday, January 15 - 7:00pm:** Pints and Native Plants, an informal meetup at Brewery Outré in Kalamazoo. [Learn more.](#)

**Saturday, January 17 - 12:00pm-2:00pm:** Winter Seed Sowing, Edison Neighborhood Association. [Learn more and register.](#) (Scroll down for registration link.)

**Saturday, January 17 - 2:00pm:** The Greens of Winter Walk, Kalamazoo Nature Center. [Learn more.](#)

**Monday, January 19 - 7:00pm:** Michigan Botanical Society Program: "History and Future of Michigan Prairies," with Tyler Bassett, 2708 Wood Hall, Western Michigan University. [Learn more.](#)

**Wednesday, January 28 - 6:30pm-8:00pm:** "Oak Savanna Garden Design: Going Beyond 'Prairie Style' Pollinator Gardens," with Mike Weis, a monthly presentation by Kalamazoo Area Wild Ones at Portage District Library. [Learn more.](#)

Wildflower Association of Michigan, Kellogg Convention Center, East Lansing. Registration is now open. [Learn more and register.](#)

*Editor's note: If you know of any local events pertaining to native plants that you feel may interest our readers, please send them along to us at the address below. Thanks!*

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## **What's Happening at the National Office**

Check out our [National Office web site](#)

To read the most recent reports from the board of directors,

[Log In to the Member Only Area.](#)

Thank you for your interest and support of Wild Ones!

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SEEDLINGS is edited by Beth Bradburn. It appears mostly monthly.  
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[Contact the editor](#)

Contributing Editor:

Ilse Gebhard

To share comments and suggestions, simply reply to this email.

We look forward to hearing from you!

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and [www.Facebook.com/KalamazooAreaWildOnes](https://www.Facebook.com/KalamazooAreaWildOnes)

