



*Leaves and berries of Spicebush (Lindera benzoin)*

January 2020

# SEEDLINGS

Wild Ones|Kalamazoo Area Chapter

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

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[In This Issue](#)



*Native Southern Blue Flag Iris blooms May-July  
(Iris virginica var. shrevei)*

**Native Plants:  
Your Questions  
Answered**

**Framing Winter**

**Caterpillars  
Fascinate**

**Wildflower  
Children: Pasque  
Flower**

**Community  
Events of Interest**

**Contact Wild Ones**

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## **Native Plants: Your Questions Answered**

**Wed. January 22, 7pm**

Would you like to learn how to grow native plants in your yard? What plants work well in a difficult spot? How to handle a challenging problem? Ways to make your native plantings more interesting to your neighbors?

Bring your questions to our January panel discussion, “Native Plants: Answering Your Questions”. [\*More Info\*](#)

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## **Frame Winter With Spicebush & Witch Hazel**

**Ilse Gebhard**

*Below, Witch Hazel in bloom*

If you suffer from “Flower Deprivation Disorder” like I do between the time the leaves fall and the new ones burst forth from their buds in spring, consider planting these two shrubs/small trees: Spicebush (*Lindera benzoin*) and Witch-hazel (*Hamamelis virginiana*). You can cut winter short by two months with Witch-hazel blooming in late fall (November) and Spicebush in early spring (April).



Imagine a walk in the woods with only bare branches. If it is a dry-mesic oak-hickory forest, be on the lookout for the wispy, bright yellow petals of Witch-hazel and if it is a moist beech-maple forest, look for the dense, yellow clusters of Spicebush flowers.

Both species are shade tolerant and insect pollinated. Remember you want to have flowers as early in spring and as late in fall as possible for our native insects.

If your soil is moist and fairly rich in humus, Spicebush would be your choice. In the summer it is a host plant for the Spicebush Swallowtail butterfly and the Promethea Moth and in the fall it has bright red berries relished by birds. I find the brownish bark especially attractive with its many whitish lenticels that serve for gas exchange. Make a tiny scratch on the bark of a twig, rub your finger over it and get a whiff of the wonderfully aromatic smell on your finger. I can no more pass a Spicebush without doing that as I can pass by a milkweed without looking for monarch eggs or caterpillars.

If your soil is drier, you might choose Witch-Hazel. The seeds are not particularly attractive to birds but there are insects that are out late in the year that use the flowers for nectar and there are quite a few insects that use the leaves during the summer. I have come across two species: the Witch-hazel Conegall Aphid (*Hormaphis hamamelidis*) and the Three-spotted Nola (*Nola triquetana*). The former makes cone-shaped galls on upper leaf surfaces and the latter is a moth whose larvae make leaf rolls in which to feed and develop.

It's not always easy to find out the identity of insects that use our native plants but one book I have found that talks about what insects are associated with which plants is John Eastman's "The Book of Forest and Thicket", superbly illustrated by Kalamazoo artist Amelia Hansen. It's not only a good reference book but fun just to read and look at the illustrations.

*Photos below clockwise from top left: Spicebush in bloom, Three-spotted Nola pupa inside leaf, rolled leaf of Three-spotted Nola.*



## **Butterflies Get All The Attention, But Caterpillars Fascinate This Reader**

**Gerry Lamuno, Glen Falls, New York**

*Originally published in Birds & Blooms, February/March 2000 p.41*

Butterflies and moths bring remarkable flashes of color and distinctive patterns to our backyard gardens. You can't help but marvel at their fleeting beauty.

But many people never notice their earlier incarnations – the distinctive caterpillars (also known as larvae) that “tiptoe” tulips, herb gardens, or towering shade trees.

One reason may be that they are not quite as easy to see as their adult counterparts. Many hide from the summer heat by retreating to the undersides of leaves.

When they do reveal themselves, however, I'm awestruck by their clownish markings, bold stripes, bright colors, and bristling hairs.

**Voracious Appetites** - Some caterpillars' gaudy appearances warn birds and other predators to, "Stay away--we don't taste very good." Others use large eyespots that make them look like much larger snakes, or rely on coloring that blends into their surroundings.

It's a good thing caterpillars have this built-in protection--most of the time, they're too busy eating to watch out for their own safety.

You see they're basically eating machines, spending their waking hours feeding. The larvae eat the same plants on which they hatched from tiny eggs. These are called their host plants.

With all that eating, caterpillars grow at remarkable rates. By the time they pupate (the chrysalis or cocoon state where caterpillars turn into adult butterflies or moths), their weight may have multiplied hundreds of times.

So when you're out in your yard, don't forget to spend some time exploring from carrot tops or treetops. You'll most likely find some caterpillars fulfilling their skyward destiny. That that alone should be enough to make your spirits soar.

**Now's your chance.** Here are some photographs the author took of his favorite caterpillars and butterflies. For fun, see if you can match the caterpillars in the left column to the butterflies and moths identified in the right column. **If you're stumped, the answers are at the bottom of this newsletter.**



A: \_\_\_\_\_



Mourning cloak



B: \_\_\_\_\_



Tiger swallowtail



C: \_\_\_\_\_



Cecropia moth



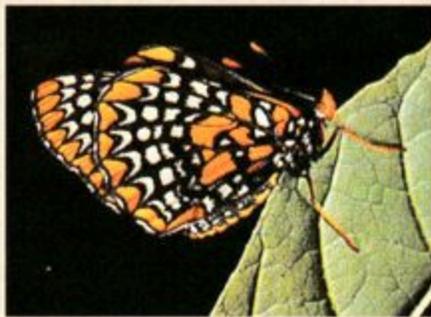
D: \_\_\_\_\_



Black swallowtail



E: \_\_\_\_\_



Baltimore checkerspot

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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.](#)

Thanks for your interest and support of Wild Ones!

Not a member? [Click Here](#) for information on how you can support Wild Ones.

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# WILD FLOWER CHILDREN



## PASQUE FLOWER

[*Anemone Patens*]

Pasque Flower is a prairie child,  
Doesn't wait 'till days are mild  
But, wrapped in furs, she trips along  
Before the Robin sings his song.

From *Wildflower Children: The Little Playmates of the Fairies* By Elizabeth Gordon,  
Illustrated by Janet Laura Scott P.F. Volland Company, 1918

## Community Events of Interest to Wild Ones

**February 4** - 7pm - Kalamazoo County Citizen Science Information Panel - many citizen science programs operate in Kalamazoo County; learn what they do and how to get involved. [Kalamazoo Conservation](#) No fee

**February 8** - 12pm– 4:30pm - Local nature, science, history, and recreation clubs will be gathered in one location for a "Club Sign-ups" type day.

[Kalamazoo Nature Center](#) No fee

**February 26** - 7pm - KAWO Monthly indoor program: [Climate Action, Citizen Action, and the Future Landscape of Kalamazoo](#) • Jamie McCarthy, Development Project Coordinator and Christina Anderson, City Planner for Kalamazoo

**March 1 - 2** - Wildflower Association of Michigan [Annual Wildflower Conference, Ecosystems in a Changing World](#).

**April 17-26** - [Run For The Trees](#) - Raise money to plant trees in Michigan State Parks.

*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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### Key to the Caterpillar Matching game:

Mourning cloak D  
Tiger swallowtail E  
Cecropia moth A  
Black swallowtail C  
Baltimore checkerspot B

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**SEEDLINGS** is edited by Kim Patrie. It appears mostly monthly. The next regular issue will come early in February. **Deadline for February issue is January 20.**

Send submissions to Kim at [safiraraks@gmail.com](mailto:safiraraks@gmail.com)

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

**We look forward to hearing from you!**

Find more information and news at [www.KalamazooWildOnes.org](http://www.KalamazooWildOnes.org)

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



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