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Prickly Pear Cactus (*Opuntia humifusa*) K.Patrie

June 2021

SEEDLINGS

Wild Ones|Kalamazoo Area Chapter

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



Lupine with seed pods (*Lupinus perennis*) K.Patrie

Dear *|FNAME|*,

It's the end of June already! I hope you were able to take advantage of our plant sale, and that your plants are in the dirt and growing happily.

Due to our cautions yet with Covid, we have no field trips planned for June, July, and August. We do, however, have some [summer ideas for you on our website](#), and a late summer plant exchange in the works for August; stay tuned!

If you missed any of our fall 2020 or winter/spring 2021 programs, watch them at your convenience on the [KAWO Youtube Channel](#).

Be well, and enjoy the sunshine,

Kim Patrie

Editor

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Invasive Insect: Viburnum Leaf Beetle

Ilse Gebhard

Late May I came across an Arrowwood Viburnum (*Viburnum lentatum*) with lacey-looking foliage. Something(s) was(were) having a feast. A close look on the undersides of the leaves revealed 1/4" larvae, which the app SEEK on my iPhone identified as Viburnum leaf beetle (*Pyrrhalta viburni*).

VLB is native to Europe and was [first reported in Michigan](#) in 2008. It has now been found in many locations in the southern half of the lower peninsula and is expected to spread across the entire state. It only feeds on leaves of the genus *Viburnum* and is especially destructive because the larvae feed on the leaves in spring and the adult beetle in summer and into the fall. Consecutive years of infestation will likely kill the affected shrub. As it turns out, nearby Highbush- Cranberry shrubs were also infested.

For more information see:

<http://www.hort.cornell.edu/vlb/index.html>

[http://www.canr.msu.edu/news/viburnum leaf beetle now in michigan](http://www.canr.msu.edu/news/viburnum%20leaf%20beetle%20now%20in%20michigan)



Viburnum leaf beetle larva, left, and their handiwork, right. *I.Gebhard*

Michigan's Largest Butterfly A Beauty

Ilse Gebhard

Every summer Michigan's largest butterfly, the Giant Swallowtail (*Papilio cresphontes*), visited our yard to nectar on native species like Joe-Pye-Weed (*Eupatorium maculatum*) and Cup Plant (*Silphium perfoliatum*). But I needed host plants for their caterpillars. The two native host plants for this species in our area are Hop Tree (*Ptelea trifoliata*) and Prickly-ash (*Zanthoxylum Americanum*).

Prickly-ash is somewhat of a misnomer as it is not an ash. We had numerous impenetrable thickets of this shrub out back but the prickles kept me from diving into the thickets and search for Giant Swallowtail eggs and caterpillars. We found and bought a Hop Tree in a gallon pot, but this was no instant solution as trees don't grow as quickly as we might like them to.



When a friend offered me some Common Rue (*Ruta graveolens*) plants, I was delighted. Common Rue, like Prickly-ash, is in the citrus family and is another caterpillar host plant for the Giant Swallowtail. It made a nice addition to the herb bed where I could keep an eye on it, as it is native to Southern Europe and Northern Africa and I did not want it to spread.

Common rue I.Gebhard



My motto “If you plant it, they will come” proved true again, at least in part. Right that first summer I found 11 round, yellow-hued eggs on one of the Rue plants. After a few days eleven tiny caterpillars emerged which would eat Rue but, surprisingly, not Prickly Ash.

Giant swallowtail larva I.Gebhard

On closer inspection, they turned out to be Black Swallowtail (*Papilio polyxenes asterius*) caterpillars. While Rue is mentioned as host plant for Giant Swallowtail in several butterfly books I own, it is mentioned in only one as host plant for Black Swallowtail. Lesson learned.

Late August the following year I again found 6 eggs of similar shape and color on two of the Rue plants. Five days later the caterpillars emerged and upon immediate close inspection turned out to be the longed-for Giant Swallowtail. Hurray! My elation was short lived though, as five of the six caterpillars “failed to thrive” and eventually died.

But one “orange dog,” as the caterpillar is called, did live and grew to be over two inches long over a period of 37 days. It was dark brown with an off-white mottled abdominal saddle, rump patch and lateral collar running from the top of the head back along the lower sides of the thorax. Master of camouflage, it resembled a large, slimy bird dropping. Hidden behind the head was a Y-shaped structure called the osmeterium, typical of swallowtails. During the later instars, every time I cleaned out “orange dog’s” jar, it would stick out its red osmeterium from the body and exude a foul-smelling liquid. This liquid is highly acidic and fatal to predatory insects like ants and spiders.



In preparation for chrysalis formation the caterpillars of many butterfly species, including the Monarch, attach their hind end to the substrate so that they hang head-down and then shed their skin for the last time starting from the head-end at the bottom.

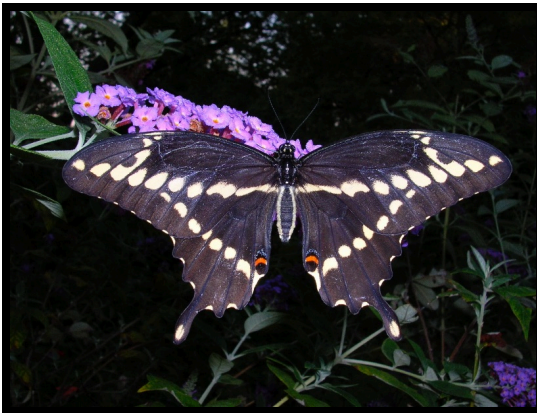
Giant Swallowtail Pre-pupa I.Gebhard



Swallowtails do just the opposite. They attach their hind end at the bottom and the head end is held in place with a fine silken thread to give them an upright position. They then shed their last skin starting from the head end at the top.

Giant Swallowtail Pupa I.Gebhard

The chrysalis of the Giant Swallowtail resembles that of the Black, except it is a bit larger. It's bark-like appearance of tan and brown provides excellent camouflage in the wild.



Not that this individual needed camouflage protection as it over-wintered in its jar on the porch. Seven months later, in the middle of May, the butterfly emerged. Above, the wings were dark brown with diagonal bands of large yellow spots.

Giant Swallowtail Upper Side of Wings I.Gebhard



The body was cream-colored and so were the undersides of the wings, with a band of blue spots through the middle of the hindwings. What a striking creature!

Giant Swallowtail Lower Side of Wings I.Gebhard

The Hop Tree, aka Wafer-Ash

Ilse Gebhard

The Hop Tree (*Ptelea trifoliata*), also known as Wafer-ash, is not an ash but along with Common Rue and Prickly-ash, in the family Rutaceae. Plants of this family have characteristic oil glands, often seen as translucent dots on the leaves and an aromatic fragrance when crushed or wounded.

Hop tree leaves I.Gebhard



All parts of the Hop Tree produce, when bruised, an odor that many people perceive as disagreeable, although it seems pleasant to me. If beauty is in the eye of the beholder, then smell is in the nose of the sniffer, I guess.

Hop tree flowers

B. S. Walters, Michigan Flora



The Hop Tree is a tall shrub or small tree with a short, often crooked trunk. Its twigs are slender, shiny, reddish brown to dark brown.

The leaves of the Hop Tree are mostly alternate and divided into 3 leaflets. The upper surface of the leaves is dark green and very shiny while the lower surface is slightly pubescent and paler. They are dotted with translucent glands as is characteristic for this family.

Small greenish white flowers, borne in corymbs, appear in June and are pollinated by insects. The plants are polygamous, which means that they have both unisexual and bisexual flowers on the same plant.



Hop tree fruit (samaras)
M. Demmon, Michigan Flora

The fruit of the Hop Tree are samaras with a roundish membranous wing surrounding the seed cavity. They are borne in drooping clusters that persist into fall and become quite visible after the leaves fall.

The Hop Tree is characteristic of open areas, sandy beaches, dunes, river floodplains. While moderately shade tolerant it is rarely found in the forest understory. At our house it thrived in sandy soil at the edge of the woods.

I have not only found eggs and larvae of the Giant Swallowtail (*Papilio cresphontes*) on our Hop Tree but also those of the Tiger Swallowtail (*Papilio glaucus*).

While Michigan Trees by Burton W. Barnes and Warren H. Wagner, Jr mentions Michigan's Biggest Hop Tree to be in Kent County, I looked through the Michigan Botanical Club's [Big Tree database](#), both under common and Latin name, and did not find even a single entry for the species.

Some helpful definitions:

Pubescent - covered with short, soft hairs

Corymb - a flower cluster whose lower stalks are proportionally longer so that the flowers form a flat or slightly rounded head

Samara – a dry indehiscent, winged fruit

Indehiscent – not opening at maturity along definite lines

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the KAWO YouTube channel, where you can view our programs at your convenience.

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

Community Events of Interest

July 8 & 20 - 9:00-11:00am: Community Garden Workday at Paris Cleaners. Get hands-on knowledge about maintaining native plants in a garden setting, and improve your community! Please bring your own garden gloves and hand tools if you have them, some tools and supplies may be available to share. [More Info](#)

July 21 - 5:30pm-7:30pm: Wild Ones River City Chapter (Grand Rapids) Annual Native Plant Sale, Pre-order and Pick-up only. Ordering begins June 23. [More Info](#)

August 16 - 6:30pm-8:00pm: Invasive Species Action: Best Practices to Protect Michigan's Native Flora & Fauna from Intruders, Presented by Jessie Schulte, Manager, Kent Conservation District A Wild Ones River City Chapter (Grand Rapids) field trip to Greenwood Cemetery [More Info](#)

August 29 - 1:00-5:00pm: Annual Fall Plant Exchange, Jessie and Bill's Home *Check [website](#) or the [KAWO Facebook page](#) for details closer to the date*

September 22 - 7pm: The Language of Trees, presented by Ellen Holste, Program Coordinator, Pierce Cedar Creek Institute *Zoom or in-person meeting; check [website](#) or the [KAWO Facebook page](#) for details closer to the date*

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

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,

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Thank you for your interest and support of Wild Ones!

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SEEDLINGS is edited by Kim Patrie. It appears mostly monthly.
The next regular issue will arrive mid-July. **Deadline for July issue is July 1.**

[Send Submission](#)

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

We look forward to hearing from you!

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