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Ramps in the forest. (Allium tricoccum) B.Cool

March 2022

SEEDLINGS

Wild Ones|Kalamazoo Area Chapter

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



Pollinator garden explanatory sign. M.Luna

Dear ***|FNAME|***,

This is the kind of sign that makes me feel like I am in the right place - and although they can't read, I'm sure all our insect friends feel the same way! Speaking of reading, check out this month's book review. And speaking of bugs, Ilse shares stories with us about the lives of a different little creature each month. It's always a treat to see what she finds. Brad Herrick will be joining us via Zoom in our March program on the twenty-third to tell us what he's been finding out about invasive jumping worms. More on that below.

Winter isn't done with us here in Michigan, but can you feel the energy building? Tom's plant profile for March is the wild leek, also known as a ramp. I'm sure you will discover something new to chew on in that piece, either literally or figuratively.

Worms! Ramps! Fascinating moths! It's always exciting to share each month's newsletter with you.

Happy Spring Equinox,
Mel Luna
Editor

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Invasive Jumping Worms:

The Impact of a New Soil Invader

March 23, 7pm

Brad Herrick, University of Wisconsin-Madison Arboretum

This month's presentation Wednesday, March 23rd features the charismatic earthworm! Please join us in welcoming Brad Herrick as he speaks on a topic near and dear to his heart: Jumping worms endemic to Japan and the Korean peninsula. Herrick has been studying them since 2003.

Did you know that the glaciated regions of North America are devoid of native terrestrial earthworms? The common nightcrawler and red worm are European species that have become naturalized. This talk will focus on how jumping worms differ from other earthworms, how they spread, potential long-term impacts to the environment, and what steps we can take to minimize their spread and impact. [Learn more.](#)

Jumping Worm (Amynthas spp) B.Herrick



Although this meeting is free (as always!) you must register ahead of time, so we can send you the online meeting information through Zoom.

Registration Instructions - Click >>>[Register Here](#)

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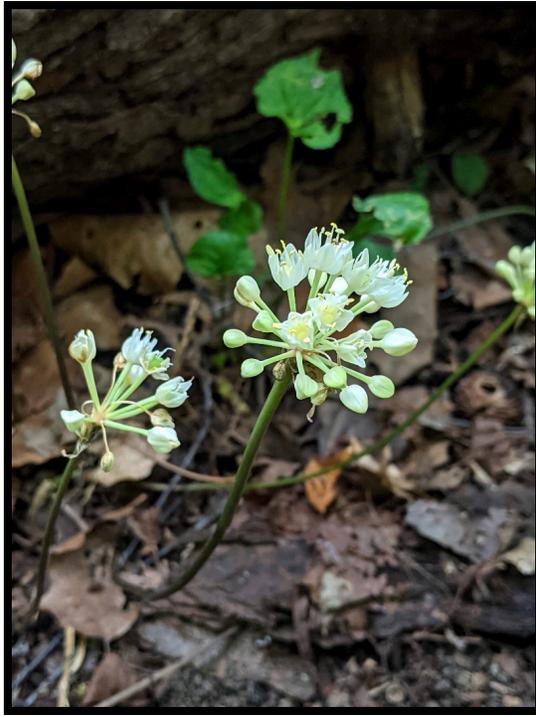
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You can also click on the small red YouTube icon above, underneath the Table of Contents.

Eating Plants, Eating the Future

Tom Small



For thousands of years, ramps or wild leeks (*Allium tricoccum*) have been honored and relished as a tonic, an elixir of life, and a zestful taste of early Spring.

I first saw them, many years ago, and learned what they were, on the grounds of the Kalamazoo Nature Center. Now we grow them here at home, under the shade of redbud and dogwood. Sometimes we see them for sale, commercially. We don't buy them. They are, for me, an essential part of the commons—the wild land open to us all, free of charge, for renewal of both body and spirit.

Wild Leeks/Ramps (Allium tricoccum) Q.Edwards

Like so much of the commons, wild leeks are vanishing. Paved over, and over-harvested. Even over-celebrated, in the Spring “ramp festivals” increasingly popular throughout Appalachia and into New England, when hundreds of bushels of ramps are gathered for “wild” community breakfast. Ramps are considered threatened in many areas, and are an endangered, protected species in Quebec.

If conditions are right—rich soil, no strong competition—ramps spread to form patches of groundcover. But they grow slowly. A 10% harvest will take 60-80 years to recover; 10% harvest every year amounts to local extinction.

Wild leeks have a rich lineage and cultural history. A wild European cousin, *Allium porrum*, is the national emblem of Wales, commemorating a 6th century victory over Saxon invaders on a battlefield covered with wild leeks. Leeks provide protection in battle and power to foretell the future. For my Welsh ancestors, the wild leek is sacred to St. David, the warrior patron saint of Wales. The Welshman's leek is a symbol of free, independent spirit.



Robin Wall Kimmerer, at the end of *Braiding Sweetgrass*, tells the story of another battle involving wild leeks. In her story, Nanabozho, manitou hero of the Potawatomi, triumphs over Windigo, the ultimate consumer, a greedy, gluttonous monster who tries to eat everything, including the future.

For Kimmerer, Windigo is the imperialist invader, stealing the common land and its free produce from native species and Native peoples. Kimmerer ponders the mystery of how Nanabozho could overcome Windigo.

Windigo by N. Morrissette, Anishinaabe Artist

Nature's profusion, she realizes, is Nanabozho's ally. The field of battle is covered with wildflowers, including wild leeks. And after victory, as the monster lies near death, Nanabozho restores and transforms him with a potent brew of wild leeks and other sacred Native food plants.

Chicago, the monster megacity, consumed the wild leeks that gave the city its name, from *shikaakwa* (Chick-Ah-Goo-Ah), the Miami-Illinois Algonquin word for the wild leeks that grew on the banks and flood plain of the Shikaakwa, now called the Chicago River. Chicago, the Windigo City, ate up the wild land and the wild leeks, exiling the previously free, independent Natives who held both land and wild leeks as sacred.

There is something of Chicago in all of us, both the monster City and *shikaakwa*, the wild leek. How are we, the wild ones, to overcome and transform our monster? With a potent brew of native flowers and ancient story, Kimmerer believes.

So begin this spring with your own Appalachian festival. Invoke the wild leek, accompanied by Aaron Copeland's musical celebration of Appalachian Spring, with its lovely melody from the old Shaker song, [Simple Gifts](#). "It's a gift to be simple, it's a gift to be free. It's the gift to come down where you ought to be. When true simplicity is gained... To turn, turn will be our delight."



Relish the gift, both ephemeral and eternal in the wild leek. Harvest from your own garden. Take only a few leaves, or follow the Native practice of cutting only about $\frac{1}{4}$ inch of the bulb, leaving the root and the rest of the bulb to return next year. Or just enjoy the zesty, garlicky fragrance. Your senses of smell and touch are portals of the spirit.

Ramps/Wild Leeks growing in the author's garden. R.Small

Another meaning for the Algonquin name was “striped skunk,” not because the leeks smell bad but because, as you step on or touch them, they *spray*, like skunks, a strong, assertive scent that clings and lingers. You are in touch with the sacred, with a powerful elixir. Allow her to transform herself and yourself, and always to return. “By turning, turning, we come round right.”

A Most Unusual Moth: **The Evergreen Bagworm**

Ilse Gebhard

Having moved from a rural setting surrounded by mostly large native trees and shrubs to a new suburban development of duplexes with mostly lawn and small alien ornamental trees and shrubs, my expectations were pretty low for finding interesting insects to study. Luckily for me, some insects are quite adaptable and I was very pleased to receive in mid-October a photo of a cocoon, new to me, from a resident down the street.

The “bag” was attached to a twig of a Japanese Maple in the neighbor’s front yard and turned out to be of the Evergreen Bagworm Moth (*Thyridopteryx ephemeraeformis*). While often found on evergreens, it feeds on many different deciduous trees.

The Evergreen Bagworm Moth is unusual even for moths in that neither the male nor female have mouth parts and as adults their only aim in life is to mate and reproduce.



Evergreen Bagworm "Bag" B.Toshalis

The female does not even have legs, antennae or wings. After she emerges from her pupal case inside the outer bag, she emits a pheromone that the male detects with his antennae to locate her. She never leaves the bag but instead the male, who does emerge from his bag, makes it inside her bag to fertilize her eggs. The male emerges from the bag and dies. The female after laying her eggs, dies and falls out of the bag or may spend the winter inside the bag, mummified, along with her eggs.

In spring the bagworm eggs hatch and the tiny larvae emerge, spinning silken strands to hang from and be blown into the surrounding vegetation by the wind. They start building a bag around themselves with silk they produce, incorporating bits of vegetation.

As they eat and grow, they move about carrying their bag with them and ever enlarging it. When fully grown in late summer they attach the bag to a twig or other solid object to pupate and emerge as adults in time to reproduce before winter sets in.

Evergreen Bagworm Male S.Morris



The Humane Gardener: Nurturing a Backyard Habitat for Wildlife

Quyên Edwards

The snow fell and the wind blew during the week I read this book. Many of the species mentioned are not active now, but it was wonderful to think that spring is on its way and the baby birds, bees, and butterflies will soon return. Nancy Lawson writes of why and how you should welcome wildlife to your backyard. When we stop seeing leaf damage as negative and instead think of the creatures your garden is supporting, we start to learn how to resolve those conflicts traditional gardening has ingrained in us.



Robber Fly on Downy Sunflower (Helianthus mollis) Q.Edwards

With chapters such as "The Beauty of Letting Go: Let Nature Guide Your Garden" and "Safety Zones: Create Sanctuary in a Treacherous World" we learn how to peacefully coexist with nature and step away from conventional standards that are wreaking havoc on the ecosystem.

Color photographs, profiles of home gardeners, and interviews with scientists support the message Nancy shares. While the information provided will not be news to Wild Ones who have already experienced the joys of planting native, this is a gentle yet convincing book to help guide those who are ready to look at their garden in a new light.

35th Annual Michigan Native Plant Conference: Native Plants Coming of Age

March 6, 2022 One-day Webinar Series begins at 10am *Sign-up details below*

Join the Wildflower Association of Michigan as they host their thirty-fifth annual conference online this year. The keynote speaker for this one-day event on Sunday, March 6th is [Jim McCormac](#). His presentation is titled *Native Plants with a Purpose: Growing Moths*. Six other speakers will present on a range of topics from how to get your neighbor to build a rain garden to the ecological communities of prairie fen and vernal pools. The conference also includes five additional webinars throughout the year from April - next January. [More info](#) can be found on their website, or [register here](#).



Great Blue Lobelia (Lobelia siphilitica) K.Patrie

Community Events of Interest

March 6 - 10:00am: The 35th Annual MI Native Plant Conference with keynote speaker [Jim McCormac](#) is virtual, with five additional webinars throughout the year. [More info](#).

March 9 - 2:00pm-3:30pm: "Maintaining & Restoring Native Plant Gardens" a virtual ([register here](#)) and in-person ([register here](#)) seminar by Vern Stephens at the Auditorium of Matthaei Botanical Gardens, 1800 N. Dixboro Rd., Ann Arbor, MI 48105.

March 11 - 11:00am-12:00pm - "Birds, Box Turtles, and Beyond: John Ball Zoo's Conservation Program" with Bill Flanagan through Pierce Cedar Creek Institute. This presentation is available in-person and virtually. Learn more and register [here](#).

March 15 - 10:00am - "Seed Sharing and Seed Law" a webinar with Dr. David Francis through Ohio State University's bee lab. Topics include seed borne disease, seed law, propagation to ensure plant identity, and updates on sharing and saving. [Register here](#).

March 21 - 6:30pm-8:00pm: River City Wild Ones (Grand Rapids) presents "Managing Habitat for Monarch Butterflies" on Zoom with Dr. Nathan Haan. [More info](#).

March 23 - 7:00pm-8:00pm: Join [KAWO](#) for our monthly program, "Invasive Jumping Worms: The Impact of a New Soil Invader" with Brad Herrick, University of Wisconsin-Madison Arboretum on Zoom. [Register here](#).

March 24 - 9:00am-10:00am: The Michigan Clean Boats, Clean Waters (CBCW) program provides \$1k - \$3k grants annually for groups interested in aquatic invasive species prevention. [Learn more](#) at this webinar from EGLE.

March 26 - 10:00am-3:00pm - Vernal Pool Workshop at Pierce Cedar Creek Institute. This is an in-person event. Space is limited, so please register early and be prepared to go outside on uneven, muddy terrain. Learn more and register [here](#).

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!

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 Mel Luna. It appears mostly monthly.

The next regular issue will arrive in April. **Deadline for April issue is March 20.**

[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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