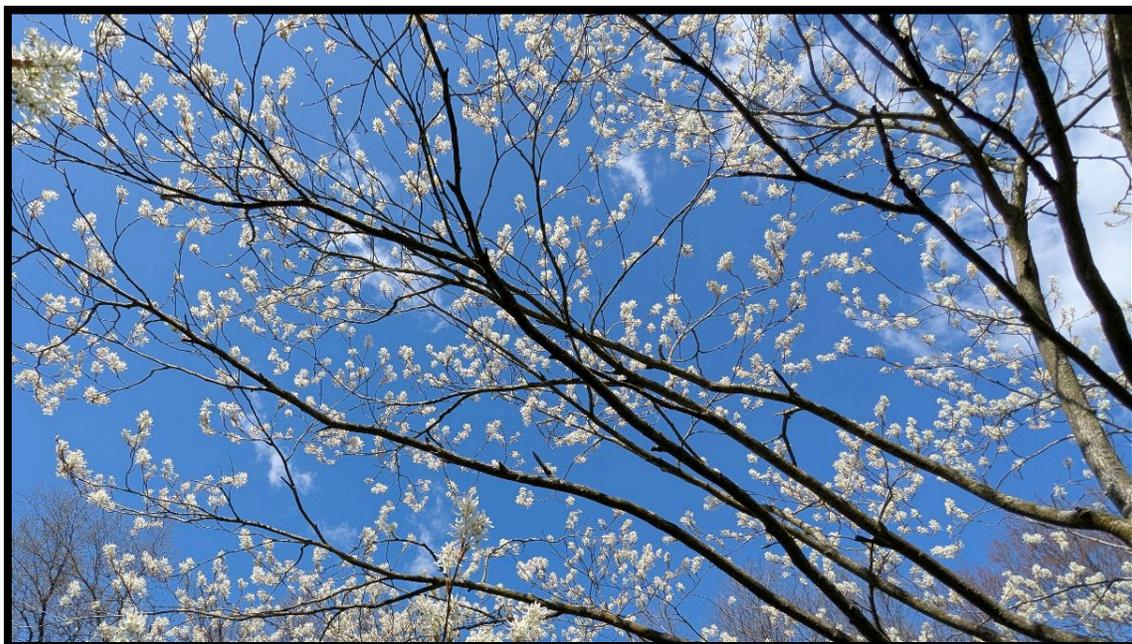


*Trouble reading this email? [View it in your browser](#)*

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*Common Serviceberry (Amelanchier arborea) B. Bradburn*

May 2025

# 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



*Pawpaw (Asimina triloba) B. Bradburn*

Dear \*|FNAME|\*,

To Tom Small's tribute below, I will add a personal expression of sadness at the loss of our friend Paul Olexia. Paul was one of the first people to welcome me into Wild Ones, and I have fond memories of wading through the muck of Axtell Creek with him and the other community projects volunteers. He taught me a lot, and encouraged me to become more involved with KAWO. The community won't be the same without him.

On a different note, please keep in mind that our May program is unusual in two ways: it is on Zoom and it is on the third (rather than the fourth) Wednesday this month. We also look forward to seeing you in person at the spring plant exchange and many other spring and summer events.

**Beth Bradburn**

*Editor*

### **Announcements**

[May Program](#)

[Plant Sale](#)

[Spring Plant Exchange](#)

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## **Our May Program: Neonics, The Toxic Truth**

*with Dan Raichel and Lena Freij, Natural Resources Defense Council*

**Wednesday, May 21, 6:30-8:00pm on Zoom**

This webinar will explain the science behind the threats posed by neonicotinoid pesticides, aka “neonics,” to pollinators, biodiversity, and our own health, as well as neonics’ surprising prevalence in our environment—and our bodies. The popular pesticides contaminate soil, water, and plant life on a nearly unprecedented scale, driving mass losses of birds and bees, and raising alarm bells for wildlife, clean water, and human health. Learn more about the speakers [here](#). This program will be on Zoom. You can go directly to the registration link [here](#).



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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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## **Plant Sale Begins Saturday**

KAWO's annual native plant sale will once again take place online this year. This is our only fundraiser of the year and proceeds from the sale make it possible for us to support multiple community projects and provide free educational outreach programs and field trips for the community. Here's how it works:

The order form will be accessible from [this web page](#). We will activate the link at 9:00 am on Saturday, May 3, and also send an email with a link to the form. When you reach the form you will be able to view all 60 species available, including information about cultivation, and make your selection. (The selection of species is different from 2024.)

We will email Wild Ones members on Friday, May 2, with a code for a 5% discount. You can apply this code upon checkout. (To check on your membership status, visit [this web page](#).)

Sales close at 4:00 pm on Friday, May 16, or earlier if our stock sells out. We sold out quickly last year, so we recommend ordering early. Once you check out, we'll send a receipt and detailed instructions for pickup by email.

Wild Ones volunteers will have your plants ready for pickup at our supplier, Hidden Savanna Nursery ([100 N Van Kal St, Kalamazoo, MI](#)), on Wednesday, May 28 and Thursday, May 29, between 4 and 8 pm.

### **Important Plant Sale Dates**

**Friday, May 2:** KAWO members receive discount code by email.

**Saturday, May 3, 9:00am:** Order form opens and sale begins.

**Friday, May 16, 4:00pm:** Sale closes.

**Wednesday, May 28, and Thursday, May 29, 4:00pm-8:00pm:** Orders available at Hidden Savanna.

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### **Spring Plant Exchange June 1**

The 2025 spring plant exchange is **Sunday, June 1, from 1:00pm to 4:00pm**, at the home of Tom and Ruth Small, [2502 Waite Ave](#), Kalamazoo. Instructions about bringing and taking plants can be found [on our website](#). We ask that you take no more than 5 plants within the first two hours, to ensure that those arriving later in the afternoon have a selection of plants to choose from.

We will dedicate this plant exchange to Paul Olexia, with a brief ceremony where friends can offer a few words of remembrance. All attendees will receive a plant, one of Paul's favorites, to take home and enjoy in remembrance of him.

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### **Monarch Weekend at Sarett Nature Center**

Sarett Nature Center will host Dr. Karen Oberhauser of the Monarch Larva Monitoring Project (MLMP) of Madison, WI along with Jennifer Thieme of the Monarch Joint Venture (MJV) of Lansing, MI and Liz Goehring of the Monarch Butterfly Fund (MBF) of Denver, CO to lead free programs and butterfly monitoring workshops on the weekend of May 31-June 1. The event will include talks, walks, and volunteer training opportunities as well as activities for children. View or download [this flyer](#) to learn more and find out how to register.

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## **Kalamazoo River Cleanup**

The second annual Kalamazoo River Cleanup will take place at Mayors' Riverfront Park on May 17. The cleanup is from 10:00am to 2:00pm, with an afterparty from 2:00pm to 5:00pm. Download a flyer [here](#) or learn more and register [on the project website](#).

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## **Site Visits for New Members**

We offer site visits to new KAWO members! An experienced native plant gardener will visit your land and help you assess its conditions and figure out what to plant, with continuing mentorship available for up to a year. To arrange a visit, please contact [Ann Klobucar](#).

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## **Celebrating Earth Day Together**

**Quyên Edwards, KAWO Vice President**

This year I spent Earth Day at Upjohn Park for a "Signs of Spring" guided nature walk as a representative of our Kalamazoo Area Wild Ones chapter. I had the privilege and the pleasure of spending time with representatives of a number of other local organizations to celebrate stewardship, sustainability, and our shared commitment to protecting the planet we call home.

Now more than ever, it's time to show up—for each other, for our neighborhoods, and for the future we want to build together. There's so much good happening all around us: local gardens growing native plants, food and friendship, volunteers lending a hand, neighbors turning ideas into action.

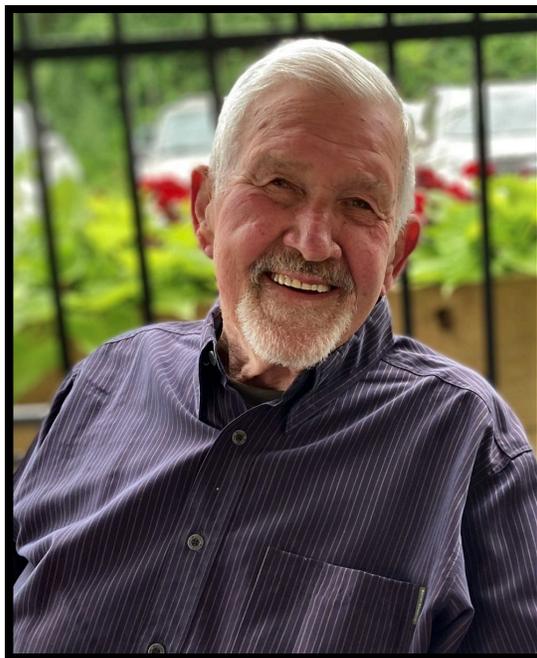
Join in. Be part of the good. Let's strengthen the roots of our community—together.



From left: Seth Chapman, Audubon Society Kalamazoo; Joe Byars, Reforest Vine; Patrick Hershberger, Kalamazoo Earth Day Committee; Jessica Hagen, Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy; David and Heather Benac, Kalamazoo Earth Day Committee; Quyen Edwards, Kalamazoo Area Wild Ones; Donna Keller, Audubon Society Kalamazoo.

## A Tribute to Paul Olexia

Tom Small



We have lost a friend. Paul Olexia. An invaluable friend to Wild Ones. A good and faithful friend to all of us. Paul died on April 1. His death was sudden and unexpected. He and his wife Sally had been gathering their belongings, preparing to leave their longtime home in the woods north of Kalamazoo and move to a condominium. Following a joyful evening and quiet night together, Sally found Paul slumped over his morning coffee. She and all their family grieve for his loss. All Paul's many friends will miss him. He made a difference in our lives.

*Photo Karin Larson*

Paul started attending Wild Ones meetings shortly after we founded the chapter. When Nancy and I, the founders of the chapter, felt we could no longer continue to serve as co-presidents and no one else

was willing to serve, thus endangering the future of the chapter, Paul came to the rescue. He not only brought new spirit to Wild Ones, he also became the guiding force for the Community Projects Committee, working tirelessly to establish educational native gardens at area schools, parks, and churches, along Axtell Creek, at Peace House and the Peoples Food Co-op. He was indispensable to our Programs Committee, because he knew all the experts, all the lovers of native plants; he provided connections and speakers for many years of Wild Ones programs.

At the same time, Paul served on the board and as president for the Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy. He was a tireless worker for the “Wednesday Warriors,” helping to save and enhance biodiversity on the Conservancy’s preserves throughout southwest Michigan. He worked through fatigue, pain, heat, and storm, and he never gave up. Paul was a man for all seasons.

I hold in my heart a few cherished images of Paul. Above all, his wonderful smile. His quiet presence at every Spring plant exchange, an event he dearly loved. I see him holding a tiny seedling, leaning just a bit towards the person he was advising about just where and when to plant it. And I see him, when the rush of plants and people was over, relaxing on a bench in the yard, smiling, enjoying the food, the air, the gently moving spirits of the trees, ferns, and flowers. I hear the delight in his voice when we discovered, in our yard, “Beercan morels!” and gave them all to Paul.

Paul was a mycologist, a lover of fungi. He was fascinated by mycorrhizal fungi, and like the mycelia, he worked quietly, constantly, to share intelligence, information, and sustenance, connecting all that he knew to everything else.

On many occasions, Paul expressed his deep gratitude to Wild Ones. And Wild Ones is deeply grateful to Paul. For his generosity as a teacher, a leader, a worker, a spirit, a friend.

We will miss his kindly presence and thoughtful guidance. He lives on in our hearts and in the soil, the fungi, and the plants where his breath, his sweat, his words, his love, and his spirit mingle and endure.

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## **Planned Memorials**

We will dedicate the spring plant exchange to Paul, as noted above. There will be a brief ceremony where friends can offer a few words of remembrance. All attendees will receive a plant, one of Paul’s favorites, to take home and enjoy in remembrance of him.

There will be a memorial bench for Paul to be installed at Glen Park, where he was a leader in the efforts to restore the small neighborhood park’s native biodiversity.

There will be a memorial gathering at the Kalamazoo Nature Center on June 21. Stand by for details.

# Milkweed Breaking Ground and First Monarch Eggs

Ilse Gebhard

Because I participated in the [Monarch Larva Monitoring Project](#) (MLMP) and [Journey North](#) (JN), both Citizen Science projects, I collected all kinds of data and sometimes it's fun to analyze it. And sometimes it's instructive.

Temperatures and snow cover in March and April definitely influence the emergence of milkweed in Kalamazoo. Finding the first monarch eggs is a lot more complex. It depends on weather patterns starting in early March in Mexico and subsequent weather patterns from Texas to southwest Michigan. It also depends on the size of the monarch population - more monarchs, more likely a female would find my milkweed patch.

*Common Milkweed sprout R. Schipper*



At our former property I collected data for 18 years on first emergence of milkweed and first monarch egg found. One example of how adverse weather conditions can affect monarch populations occurred in 2012. The earliest that milkweed emerged over those 18 years was in 2012 on April 11.

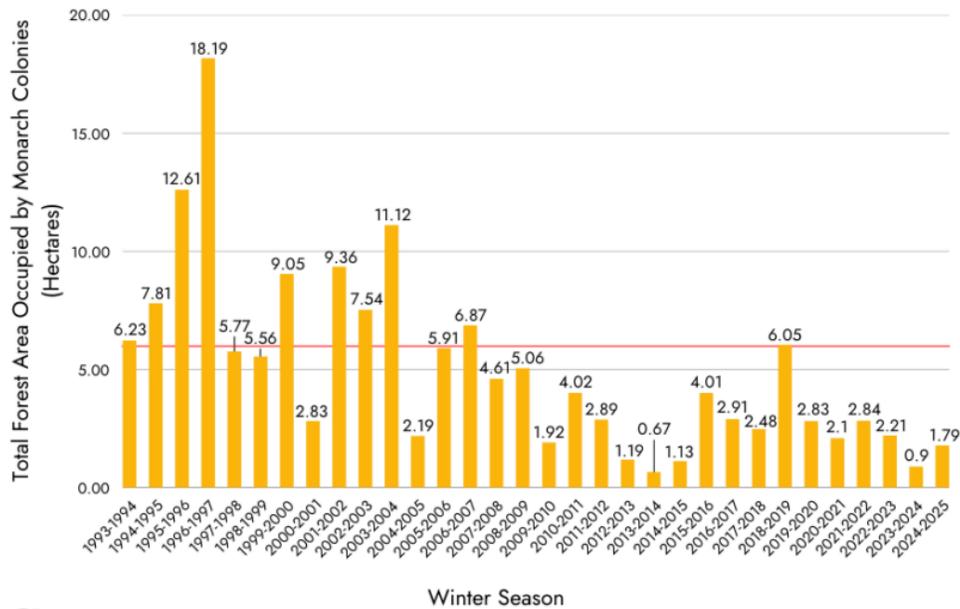
*Monarch egg MLMP*



That same year, on May 2, was also my earliest egg record. This data shows that spring was unusually early in 2012, and unfortunately, we had a hard frost after the first eggs were laid, killing the eggs and freezing the tender milkweed that had emerged. The early spring was followed by a very hot and dry summer. Both the spring and summer conditions conspired against monarch reproduction and the winter of 2012-13 was the first of three very low overwintering populations in Mexico before rebounding in 2015-16.

In Texas, the emergence of milkweed and the arrival of monarchs from Mexico can be a real nip and tuck, with monarchs occasionally overshooting the milkweed emergence. This overshoot negatively affects monarch reproduction. Another case of out-of-sync phenology involves migrating birds. Many migrants stop at the southern shore of Lake Erie to fatten up on midges before crossing the lake and heading north to their breeding grounds. If weather conditions have either sped up or retarded the emergence of midges, the effect on birds can be devastating.

**Total Area Occupied by Monarchs at Overwintering Sites in Mexico  
1993/1994 - 2024/2025**



Scientists estimate a minimum of 6 hectares of overwintering monarchs is needed to sustain the eastern populations (Semmens et al., 2016)

Data from 1994-2003 were collected by personnel of the Monarch Butterfly Biosphere Reserve (MBBR) of the National Commission of Protected Natural Areas (CONANP) in Mexico. Data from 2004-2025 were collected by the WWF-Telcel Alliance, in coordination with the Directorate of the MBBR. 2000-2001 number as reported by Garcia-Serrano et al. in 2004

As milkweed is disappearing from the landscape, it is becoming increasingly hard for the monarch population to recover from a year of poor reproduction due to adverse weather conditions. Scientists estimate that an average overwintering population of 6 hectares is needed to sustain the monarch population and save the migration phenomenon. The overwintering population in Mexico is measured by the total area the monarchs occupy each winter. Not only can adverse weather conditions during the breeding season affect the monarch population, but a freak winter storm hitting the area of the sanctuaries can cause high mortality, with fewer monarchs moving north in March.

We are of course aware that the loss of milkweed on the landscape has been a major factor in monarch population decline. Less milkweed, less food for monarch caterpillars, which feed solely on milkweeds. Along with the loss of milkweed, there has been a decline of nectar sources for the adults, the butterflies. We need to increase these resources to sustain the monarch population.

Can we increase these resources to sustain the monarch population? Only time will tell. But we can help by planting more milkweed and nectar plants. And report your first adult Monarch to Journey North using [their sightings form](#).

# When will the monarchs arrive?

First Journey North reports of adult monarchs in 2024



Read more by Ilse Gebhard [on our blog](#).

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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

**Saturday, May 3 - 9:00am:** KAWO Native Plant Sale begins online. [Learn more.](#)

**Saturday, May 3 - 10:00am-12:00pm:** Michigan Botanical Society Field Trip to Southern Floodplain Forest, Warren Woods State Park. [Learn more.](#)

**Saturday, May 3 - 9:00am-11:00am:** SWMLC Habitat Heroes Volunteer Workday, Pilgrim Haven Natural Area. [Learn more and register.](#)

**Sunday, May 4 - 1:00pm-3:00pm:** Native Garden Work Day at Jerico, cosponsored by KAWO. [Learn more.](#)

**Thursday, May 8 - 6:30pm-8:00pm:** Gardening for Wildlife, a presentation by Emily Demorest, Portage District Library. [Learn more.](#)

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

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

**Saturday, May 17 - 10:00am-12:00pm:** Michigan Botanical Society Field Trip to Rich Tamarack

Swamp and Rich Conifer Swamp, Pierce Cedar Creek Institute. [Learn more.](#)

**Saturday, May 17 - 10:00am-2:00pm:** Kalamazoo River Cleanup. [Learn more and register.](#)

**Saturday, May 17 - 10:00am-2:00pm:** Foraging Local Abundance: Spring Salads, Kalamazoo Nature Center. [Learn more and register.](#)

**Tuesday, May 20 - 5:30pm-7:00pm:** Field Trip, "Lupines at Chipman," with Jessica Hagen, Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy. Chipman Preserve, Kalamazoo County.

**Wednesday, May 21 - 6:30pm-8:00pm:** "Neonics, The Toxic Truth: The Pesticides Threatening Bees, Birds, and Our Health" with Dan Raichel and Lena Freij, a monthly presentation by Kalamazoo Area Wild Ones. **This month's program is on Zoom.** [Learn more and register.](#)

**Thursday, May 22 - 6:00pm-8:00pm:** Native Garden Work Day at Jerico, cosponsored by KAWO. [Learn more.](#)

**Saturday, May 24 - 10:00am-12:00pm:** Tour the Preserve with an Expert, Asylum Lake Preserve. [Learn more.](#)

**Wednesday, May 28, and Thursday, May 29, 4:00pm-8:00pm:** Pick up [plant sale](#) orders at Hidden Savanna.

**Saturday, May 31 and Sunday, June 1:** Monarch Weekend at Sarett Nature Center. [Learn more.](#)

**Sunday, June 1 - 1:00pm-4:00pm:** KAWO Spring Plant Exchange, 2502 Waite Ave, Kalamazoo. [Learn more.](#)

*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!**

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

**SEEDLINGS** is edited by Beth Bradburn. It appears mostly monthly.  
The next regular issue will arrive in June. **Deadline for the June issue is May 20.**

[Contact the editor](#)

Contributing Editor:

Ilse Gebhard

**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](https://www.Facebook.com/KalamazooAreaWildOnes)



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