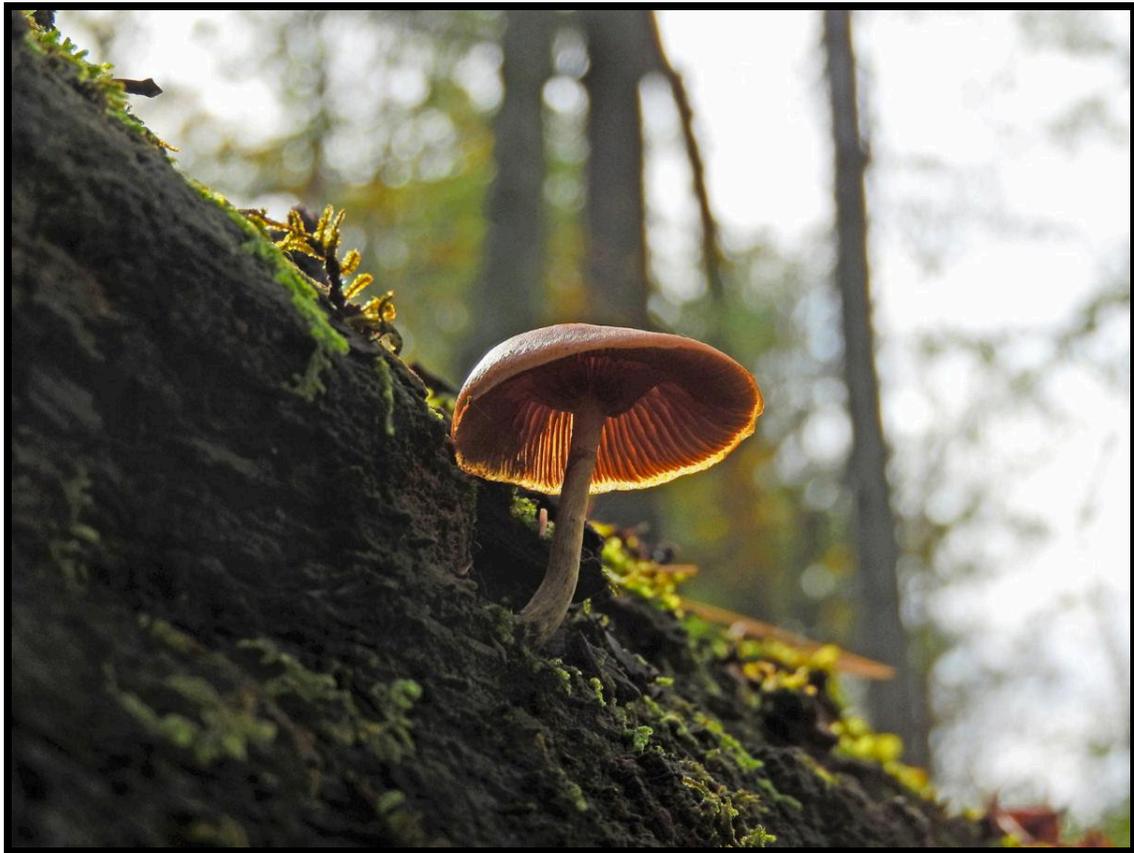


*Trouble reading this email? [View it in your browser](#)*

\*|LIST:ADDRESS\_VCARD|\*



*Mushroom and Moss Nan Pokerwinski*

November 2022

**SEEDLINGS**

# Wild Ones|Kalamazoo Area Chapter

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



*Milkweed Pods (Asclepias syriaca) M. Luna*

Dear \*|FNAME|\*,

What a gorgeous autumn we've had! I hope you've been enjoying playing in the leaves and letting them naturally mulch your garden beds. Besides the fate of overwintering caterpillars and other creatures, I've also been thinking a lot about seeds and roots.

After going to seed, until the ground freezes solid, our plant companions continue to grow their roots. What seeds - both literal and figurative - would you like to tuck into the soil for spring germination? November and December are the months to sow the seeds of native plants that need cold to germinate. Read more on that below in my detailed how-to.

How can you tend to and deepen your roots? Roots are origin and connection - to ourselves, our families, communities, and the living planet. If you are feeling called to root deeper into your Wild Ones community, we welcome you to join one of our several committees in 2023 - or even the Executive Board! [Read more](#) and [contact Kathy](#) with your interest.

## In This Issue

**From The Editor**

**November Program:  
A View from the Glen**

**Congrats to Nan!**

**Book Review:  
Planting in a  
Post-Wild World**

**Homegrown National  
Park Update**

**How to Find a  
Cecropia Moth  
Caterpillar**

**Winter Sowing 101**

**Community Events**

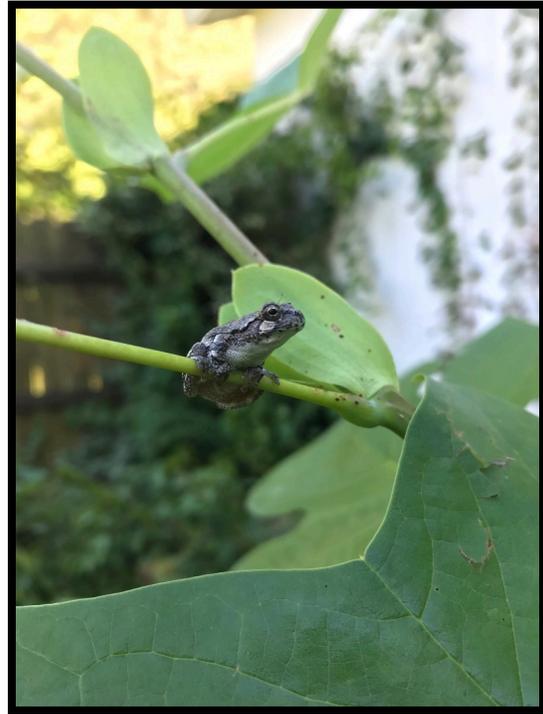
**Contact Wild Ones**



I recently happened upon the pocket park on a hillside where a bench was installed in honor of Tom Small. That park is the focus of this month's program. [Learn more](#). You may recognize yourself in Ilse's humorous essay on getting side tracked in the garden. I know I see something new every time I step outside.

Thank you for reading, and for being a part of this dynamic movement to welcome biodiversity back into the landscape. In keeping with tradition, there's no newsletter or programming in December.

With warmth and good cheer,  
**Mel Luna**  
*Editor*



*Tree Frog on Tulip Tree (Liriodendron tulipifera) M. Luna*

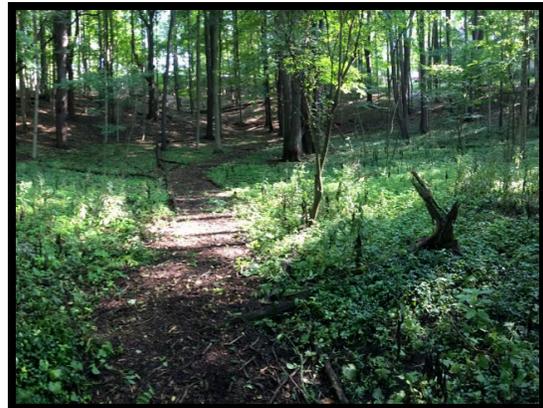
## **A View from the Glen:**

### **Restoration of a Small Urban Park in Kalamazoo**

**November 16, 7pm-8pm**

**Paul MacNellis**, *Former Director, WMU Landscape Services Department*

Wild Ones has recently become an active supporter of the local Pocket Park located just off of Kensington in the Oakland Winchell Neighborhood. This month's presentation will highlight the work being done at Glen Park by the Stewards of Glen Park with the support of Kalamazoo Area Wild Ones. You will hear an overview of the recent history as well as the efforts to create a more sustainable environment. [Read more](#).



**Congratulations to River City Wild One, Nan Pokerwinski, for her winning contribution to the National Wild One's Photo Contest!**

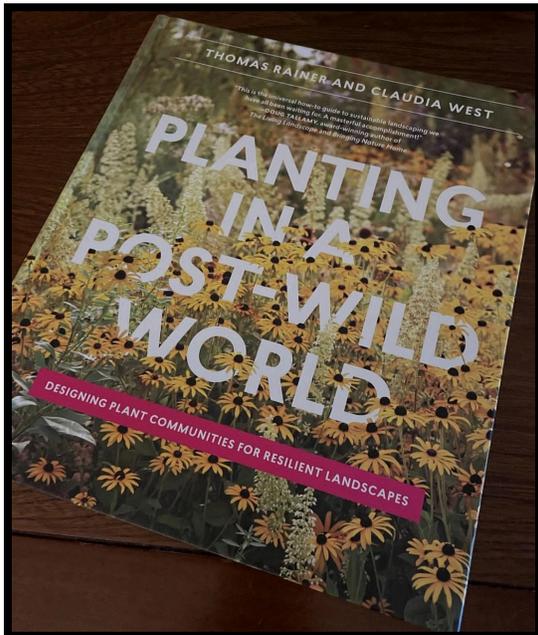
We are delighted to feature Mushroom and Moss this month and celebrate everyone who

contributed to the contest. Special shout out to Nan for winning three years in a row! If you have photos you would like to see in this newsletter, send them in an email [here](#).

## **Book Review: Planting in a Post-Wild World**

**Corey Critchfield**

This is a must read! Before I read this book my approach to native gardening was limited to bloom time, height, sun exposure and soil moisture. This book will help you expand on those ideas and allow you to look at your gardens as dynamic plant communities that reflect natural ecosystems. Although it focuses primarily on large scale, public gardens, the lessons can easily be applied to our own plantings, big or small.



Here are three concepts the book explores in depth that I've since incorporated into my own plantings:

- 1.) Vertical layering and the importance of ground covers.
- 2.) The relationship between long-lived perennials and short-lived species.
- 3.) Overall structure and feel of a planting.

Not only will these ideas improve the aesthetics of your plantings, but it will increase their resiliency and ecological value.



“As populations expand and resources become increasingly limited, plantings can no longer be just ornamental backdrops for our buildings. They must instead perform double duty: cleaning our storm water, providing a food source for pollinators, and acting as a kind of genetic reservoir for diversity. Achieving this requires understanding how plants fit together, how they change over time, and how they form stable compositions.”

Follow along as I restore 2 acres of old farmland in SW Michigan with native plants [\*\*@hazelnutprairie\*\*](#) on Instagram

*Jacob's Ladder (Polemonium reptans) blooming in late October. C. Critchfield*

---

**I'M on the MAP ARE YOU?**

**Planting Native Regenerates Biodiversity**

**#ImOnTheMAP**

**HomegrownNationalPark.org**

There's a [new feature](#) in the HNP resource directory: Container Gardening with Keystone Plants. This has been created for those of us with balconies, terraces, porches, decks, patios, and rooftops. Link to the list for SW Michigan [here](#).

---

## **How to Find a Cecropia Moth Caterpillar**

**Ilse Gebhard**

Someone once asked me how I find all the butterfly and moth caterpillars that I write about. After considerable reflection on the subject, here is how to find a cecropia moth caterpillar.



*Cecropia Moth Caterpillar* R. Schipper

One Labor Day weekend evening years ago, before visiting friends the next day, I set out to dig up a couple of plants as a “garden-warming” gift. The previous spring we had taken out some alien, invasive honeysuckle bushes, leaving a patch of bare ground. Bare ground is, of course, an invitation to plant or seed and the only thing I had around at the time was a grocery bag full of chaff left over from cleaning seeds of various composites. Plenty of seeds were left in the chaff because I had grown tired of hand-sifting seed heads smashed by walking around on them with my hiking boots to loosen the seed. Mixing the chaff with moist sawdust, I had distributed the mixture on the bare soil, resulting in a nice patch of largely Black-eyed Susans that I could share.

Back to my evening’s mission.

Armed with a garden trowel and a couple of pots, I could not, along the way, resist checking a Common Milkweed plant for Monarch butterfly eggs or caterpillars. Sure enough, I found a caterpillar. So I trudged back to the house, took off my boots, went inside and put it in a jar.



*Monarch caterpillar on Common Milkweed* M. Luna

Resuming my quest, I came to a small side-path along which I had planted some Butterflyweed (*Asclepias tuberosa*) several years before as another food plant for Monarch caterpillars. The plants were doing their job admirably - as a matter of fact so well that they were having trouble surviving. In spring, the Monarchs arriving from the South, find the tender young plants, lay their eggs, and the munching caterpillars leave nothing but the stalk. That spring and summer I had made it a point to patrol the surviving three plants for eggs and caterpillars and bring them inside to raise. Two of the three plants had rewarded me with their bright orange blossoms. So a quick side-trip was needed and another Monarch caterpillar found.

After the second trip back to the house, the light was waning. Crossing the pond inlet on the small footbridge, something white caught my eye. A blooming Turtlehead! And another one! The food plant for the Baltimore butterfly caterpillar. I chuckled to myself as I remembered planting them all along the pond's edge several years before. Ponds can have mucky edges and ours was no exception. Garden trowel in one hand and a tray of Turtlehead seedlings in the other, I had gone to take a step forward at one point when my knee-high rubber boots decided to stay behind. Saving the seedlings, the only thing tarnished was my dignity as I extricated myself from the muck on all fours. A hosing down and I was good as new. Besides, it was hot and sticky and the cold water felt good.



*Turtlehead (Chelone glabra) R. Schipper*

Prone to be side-tracked from my mission, as you can tell by now, I followed the pond's edge but it was getting too dark to make out any more Turtlehead flowers. As I was turning around next to a Flowering Dogwood tree, a huge green caterpillar jumped out at me. It must have been watching me all along because it knew the routine and made me go back to the house, take off my boots and put it in a fish bowl.



*Flowering Dogwood (Cornus florida) B. S. Walters*

I was totally defenseless. Of course I had to quickly consult the caterpillar book to confirm that it was a cecropia moth caterpillar. It was 3.5 inches long and 0.75 inches in diameter. Its body was bright green with yellow knobs called tubercles along the back, blue ones along the sides and four reddish-orange ones on the thorax behind the head. Yes!

By this time I felt a little like Billy in the Family Circus cartoon and in near-darkness finally potted up two Back-eyed Susans. Nothing further distracted me, but then, nothing further could top my kidnapping by a caterpillar.

---

# Winter Sowing 101

Mel Luna

For many native plants, in order to break the dormancy of their seed, the seed must be exposed to a period of cold and moist conditions. This process is called cold stratification. Often you will read about putting seeds in a bag with vermiculite in the refrigerator to create the conditions artificially; but why complicate things? Let nature do it for you over the coming winter months. Jump start next year's garden with this cheap and simple method of winter sowing.

This is an excellent way to end up with lots of plants and an "established-looking" garden in a fraction of the time it would take if you bought each plant individually. All you need are: plastic gallon jugs, a way to cut them (I use a box cutter), ProMix (or another fast draining seedling soil mix), optional extra perlite, seeds, water, and labels. (Free native plant seeds available at the [seed library](#) or seed swaps.)





Distilled water/ apple cider/ milk jugs are perfect mini greenhouses to germinate native plants from seed over the winter. After you cut them, they can be re-used for years.

Discard the caps of all the jugs. Wearing gloves to protect your hands, cut your jug in half *below* the handle. Leave the handle-edge attached. Cut good drainage holes in the bottom, from the inside to the outside, so plastic isn't pointing up toward the roots. You want to prevent any puddling.

In a bucket or storage tote, wet your seedling mix well. It takes more water than you think to saturate it. You should be able to form it into a ball. Then fill your jugs. I leave about an inch or so at the top so I can tuck the upper flap into the bottom of the jug to close it.





Label as you go. I learned the hard way that Sharpie marker will disappear by the time your seedlings pop up in the spring. Figure out a system that works for you. This year I'm putting labels *in* the jugs below the soil surface so the sun won't bleach them out.



You can go heavy with the seed. I use an entire packet of seed per jug. If the seeds are small, sprinkle on the surface; if the seeds are big, poke them in or cover lightly. Give everything a final watering and tuck the top flap into the bottom to close.

Your set-up may look something like this.



Set them in a sunny uncovered location on the ground. I like to use milk crates to keep them upright, contained, and easy to move in the spring. Let the snow pile up on them and the rain drench them for the next few months. *Fuhgetaboutit.*

*Propagation jugs covered in snow.*



As the weather warms, check for germination. Plants germinate at different rates, so be patient.

Once your plants have sprouted, keep an eye on them and don't let them dry out. In May you can usually open the tops up during the day, but you'll want to move them to a shade or part sun location so they don't get burned. Remember - they're babies!

*Bellflower (Campanula americana) seedlings from the end of April.*



When they have a set of true leaves and/or the roots are coming out of the bottom, then they are ready to go in the ground - this photo is from the end of May.

Planting is easy! Just invert the jug like a pan of brownies, then break the chunk of seedlings into smaller chunks depending on how dense the germination is. I usually get four to six smaller chunks per jug to plant in a grouping, or in a variety of locations to see where they'll be happiest.

*A grouping of Hoary Vervain (Verbena stricta) using the "brownie method" - broken into five chunks.*



This is the Hoary Vervain from the photo above four months later, in September. It was still flowering!

Can you spot the Preying Mantis hunting the many moths who would frequent it?

For some plants, the seedlings remain small - just at the soil surface. These will need to be "up-potted" (in smaller chunks) to get them to mature. In my experience, if you put super small seedlings in the

ground directly, they die. But if you put them into slightly larger pots, they'll be ready to plant in the ground by the middle or end of the summer. Much better!



It's fun to see which plants flower in the first year, and which make you wait until next. My Hoary Vervain (*verbena stricta*), Downy Sunflower (*Helianthus mollis*) and Evening Primrose (*Oenothera biennis*) flowered the first summer after winter sowing. But the Pasture Thistle (*Cirsium discolor*), Blue Lobelia (*Lobelia siphilitica*), Bellflower (*Campanula americana*), and Ironweed (*Vernonia missurica*) all need time to establish their roots. Maybe next year...

Special thanks to Jon Warner for presenting on this method at the Portage District Library in 2021, and to Quyen Edwards for the inspiration and encouragement!

*Last year's modified jugs hanging in the garage, ready for re-use this year!*

---

## Community Events of Interest

**November 10 - 8:00pm-9:00pm** "Restoring Good Oak Communities with Doug Tallamy" webinar hosted by the Aldo Leopold Foundation. [More information.](#)

**November 14 - 6:30pm-8:30pm** "Annual Meeting & Seed Swap" hosted by River City Wild Ones in Grand Rapids. [Learn more.](#)

**November 16 - 7:00pm-8:00pm** - "A View from the Glen: Restoration of a Small Urban Park in Kalamazoo" KAWO's in-person program with Paul McNellis. [More details](#)

**December 12, 14, 15 - 8:00pm** - "Sandhill Cranes in Your Living Room" [virtual event](#) hosted by the Aldo Leopold Foundation. [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,

[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 Mel Luna. It appears mostly monthly.

The next regular issue will arrive in January. **Deadline for January issue is December 20.**

[Send Submission](#)

Contributing Editors:

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)



Copyright © \*|CURRENT\_YEAR|\* \*|LIST:COMPANY|\*, All rights reserved.  
\*|IFNOT:ARCHIVE\_PAGE|\* \*|LIST:DESCRIPTION|\*

**Our mailing address is:**

\*|HTML:LIST\_ADDRESS\_HTML|\* \*|END:IF|\*

Want to change how you receive these emails?

You can [update your preferences](#) or [unsubscribe from this list](#).

\*|IF:REWARDS|\* \*|HTML:REWARDS|\* \*|END:IF|\*